

**No. 6**

**TUESDAY**

**First Session**

**14<sup>th</sup> August, 2001**

**Seventh Parliament**

**SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

**THE**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**ADVANCE COPY**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

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**THE**

**THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

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

**NINTH SITTING**

**14<sup>th</sup> August, 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 Hendrick Alexander

**Present**

**MEMBERS OF CABINET**

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

Dr. The Honourable Ralph Gonsalves

Member for North Central Windward

Attorney General  
Honourable Judith Jones-Morgan

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

Honourable Louis Straker

Member for Central Leeward

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

Member for South Windward

Minister of Education, Youth and Sports  
Honourable Michael Browne

Member for West St. George

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

Member for Marriaqua

Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries  
Honourable Selmon Walters

Member for South Central  
Windward

Minister of Health and the Environment  
Honourable Dr. Douglas Slater

Member for South Leeward

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

Member for North Leeward

Minister of Tourism and Culture  
Honourable Rene Baptist

Member for West Kingstown

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

Member for East St. George

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

Member for North Windward

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

Member for Central Kingstown

Minister of Transport, Works and Housing  
Honourable Julian Francis

Government Senator

Honourable Edwin Snagg

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

**OTHER MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE**

Honourable Arnhim Eustace

Member for East Kingstown/  
Leader of the Opposition

Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday

Member for Northern Grenadines

Honourable Terrance Ollivierre

Member for Southern Grenadines

Honourable Juliet George

Government Senator

Honourable Andrea Young

Government Senator/Deputy Speaker

Honourable Gerard Shallow

Opposition Senator

**ABSENT**

Honourable Joseph Burns Bonadie

Opposition Senator

# **SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

## **HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**TUESDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST 2001**

### **PRAYERS**

Mr. Speaker, read the Prayers of the House.

### **CONGRATULATORY REMARKS**

**HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to congratulate a young sports man of the soil. Let me congratulate Mr. Kenroy Martin on his tremendous performance for the West Indies Youth Cricket Team who triumphed in the first test match over England at Grace Road, in England. Mr. Speaker, he had the magnificent figures of 6 for 15 in the first innings and 5 for 38 in the second giving him a match analysis of 11 for 88. Mr. Speaker, no one could perform such a wonderful job by mere chance. Hard work, dedication and tremendous discipline are factors that contributed to this success, and Mr. Speaker, he has been consistent in all the games he has played thus far. On behalf of this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, I want to wish him greater success and I am looking forward to the day where we would once again have another fast bowler from St. Vincent and the Grenadines on the West Indies cricket team, in the person of Mr. Kenroy Martin. I believe the whole of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and more so Marriacqua where he hails from is very proud of him. Let us continue to give him the guidance and proper advice to propel him forward, and we hope that our young sports men and women, out there can emulate his example. Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** I want to offer my congratulations to two young men, one of whom is a representative in this House of Assembly, the Honourable Terrance Ollivierre and to a young man who represented my party in the last general election. Both of whom were at that time close to the final sections of their university career. I am pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, that both young men have now passed their exams, and has been awarded Upper Second Class honours in both cases. So I want to offer sincerest congratulations. One in Educational Administration and one in History.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that on both sides of this House as the world in which we live changes that our parties have been endeavouring to attract into the political arena more and more of our young people, more and more who are prepared to make the

sacrifice which is required in this particular environment and I feel particularly heartened, Mr. Speaker, that in this case these two young men were willing to take the plunge and participate in electoral process during their final year at university, not after their graduation and that calls for a certain amount of sacrifice and dedication. A certain amount of commitment to the people of this country and I sincerely Mr. Speaker just want to congratulate them.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also offer my congratulations to the Honourable Minister of National Security who I understand have reached a milestone, a milestone we find in the Bible. He has served in this House for a very long time, Mr. Speaker, and despite all the cut and thrust of politics. There are times, Mr. Speaker, when we have to forget that and simply offer our congratulations. I find it, Mr. Speaker, a bit, well it was new to me that there is a close proximity in the birthdays of the Prime Minister and the Minister of National Security so I want to offer my congratulations also to the Prime Minister on this occasion. The last time we met in this House we were offering him our condolences. Today we are offering him something else which is much more pleasant to listen to.

So, Mr. Speaker, I also want to join with the Honourable Minister in his congratulations Martin for his performance in cricket. Again, Mr. Speaker, he is right when he says that dedication and commitment is often the hallmark of success and I do hope, Mr. Speaker as time goes along we would find more and more of our citizens who are willing to make that sort of sacrifice. Display that sort of decimation and commitment. So I want to wish him well in his future endeavours. Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I first of all would like to thank the Honourable Leader of the Opposition for his kind words in respect of my own birthday. I hope that I would be able to reach the three score and ten like my dear friend and colleague the Honourable Minister for National Security and the Public Service.

Mr. Speaker, if you would permit me to just break the rules by calling by name, given the nature of these remarks; Vincent Beache has shown that he is an extraordinary statesman. He is not just merely a politician; he is in that rare-reified category of persons who see national issues beyond mere competitive politics. And I am particularly heartened by the Leader of the Oppositions comments here today, because during the recent elections is that 'Scombo come, Beache run' of course Beache is here and Scombo is nowhere around. Which is partly – he had come to clean up the 'Beache' but the Beache is here in Parliament where he is one of the few parliamentarians who is still sitting in Parliament in this country after his 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. The men apparently who were born under the sign of Leo seem to have something specially marked out for them. I don't know what is the sign of the Leader of the

Opposition but I doubt whether it is Leo. But I really accept wholeheartedly and warmly his congratulations in this regard and I am sure that the Honourable Minister of Security and Public Service would be moved to may his comments.

I want to say that yesterday evening after a tiring afternoon and into the night at Rabacca Farms where the first batch of workers were paid their severance pay, we had a Truce Burry house a small party for Vincent Beache, and his many friends were there. Very interesting that he commented to me that it was the first time he had ever been to Truce Burry house, which is another consequence of the event of March the 28<sup>th</sup>. It was the second occasion that I was there, both of them happened after March 28<sup>th</sup>.

I want very much to join in the congratulations of the Honourable Member of the Grenadines Terry Ollivierre, the Honourable Member for the Southern Grenadines, Terry Ollivierre and Patel Matthews, the defeated NDP candidate in North Leeward, both of them have done quite well in their examinations, and I congratulate them most warmly, genuinely. I know that the Member for the Southern Grenadines currently have a temporary job, as the Parliamentary representative for that area, and that Patel Matthews does not have a job, since it is my understanding in order to contest in the elections that he had to submit his resignation which he did. I've also been informed that he is in need of employment as a teacher, through the state system, and I know the Ministry of Education has indicated to him that since he had resigned he should do like everybody else, which is the procedure to reapply to the Ministry of Education to come back as a teacher. I want to say for my own part as Prime Minister that I would support him rejoining the Teaching Service. We have no problem with matters like these. Further, I would want to say that when the Member for the Southern Grenadines is retired by the people for the Southern Grenadines he also would be welcomed to a job back as a teacher. Of course, the Government itself as is well known is not responsible for the hiring of the teachers, that is a matter which is done through the Public Service Commission, but of course, the Government can always take the position as has been taken in the past by the New Democratic Party administration that if you are a public officer or a teacher and you run for office and you lose don't come and look to them for any job, the Unity Labour Party government is not taking such a position. And I am very hopeful that Patel Matthews would be given a job in the Teaching Service, a job that he in fact is seeking.

I should point out, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members that the Teachers Union is working out with the Ministry of Education a set of rules, guidelines for persons who are involved in the Teaching profession to be involved in political activities. This is another step forward in the democratizing of our country and the participation of all persons who have a contribution to make, because this is the practical manifestation of the thesis together now. I know for political reasons the Leader of the Opposition does not want to embrace the concept, since it has emanated from the Government side,

and more particularly from the Prime Minister. But right thinking persons throughout the country see that it is the spirit and practice of together now, and I am sure that he is involved in together now. He has been demonstrating this in many ways, though for the purpose of his de facto leader he has to voice a contrary opinion, and I am hopeful that in due course he would be rid of that particular shackle so that he can speak forthrightly and genuinely on this question where his words would match his action. But I want to congratulate very much the Member for the Southern Grenadines. I hope that it may be possible sometime over the next two days for us to have a drink together; of course I don't drink alcohol. I am not a friend of Bacchus, the god of wine. You don't drink either. Well, we can have a soda water together and reflect on matters of the University. And I very, very happy that you have done well and also Patel Matthews. And I hope that he is listening and if he is not listening that the sentiments of the Government as articulated through the Prime Minister would be convey to him. I am obliged.

**HONOURABLE TERRANCE OLLIVIERRE:** Mr. Speaker, also rise to join with the others to congratulate Mr. Kenroy Martin a member of the West Indies youth team for his excellent performance in England. You know as a youth I am always proud to see when other young members of the community excel in their chosen area. And I think that he should be encouraged and motivated to go on to reach for higher standards. I would also like, Mr. Speaker, to congratulate also a group of young people from the island of Canouan Club Nuevo for organizing Carnival activities for the fourth consecutive year on that island. Carnival activities were held from July 27<sup>th</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> and we see that they have taken the bold step to help to promote culture and its development in the island of Canouan, so much so that they have introduced their calypso competition for the first year, which was one by the Man Dale, a resident of Canouan and also to promote Canouan, and by extension St. Vincent and the Grenadines, by the introduction of Miss Caribbean Feista Pageant because we had a participant from Grenada, St. Lucia, and Trinidad and Tobago who were here for the first time, most of them didn't know anything about the Grenadines, in particular Canouan, and we are proud that Club Nuevo has taken the step to promote St. Vincent and the Grenadines in the Carnival activities.

I will like to thank the Prime Minister for his congratulatory remarks, and I know that we all have temporary jobs here being elected by the people and given a certain period of time to serve and we have to go back to them for another term. But let me congratulate the Minister of National Security and the Prime Minister for having reached such a milestone and let me say that if it is the will of God and reach such stage I hope to be here, as you gentlemen, serving this country with pride and dignity as you have done. Thank you, very much.

I would also like to say that Mr. Patel Matthews has a job as a Research Officer for the Opposition. Okay, thank you.

**HONOURABLE GERARD SHALLOW:** Mr. Speaker I rise to join the Honourable Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports in extending congratulations to young Mr. Kenroy Peters, and I think it is very important Mr. Speaker that we make the distinction here, because I know Kenroy Martin is also a young cricketer who is excelling, but likely Mr. Kenroy Peters from Marriagua, Richland Park to be specific is the one to whom these congratulations are extended.

I can recall Mr. Speaker, when I was given the privileged to train the Cane End Government School cricket team and we were coming up against Richland Park Primary School the school Kenroy Peters attended the only fear that my boys had was to face the speed of young Kenroy. He moved on to the Emmanuel High School Mesopotamia, his speed increased, his performance increased, his discipline, his dedication, his commitment increased and he has continued to excel. I want to take this opportunity to extend sincerest congratulations to him and I hope that his cricketing skills will grow from strength to strength and that he would continue to make St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Marriagua most specifically proud.

I also want to also take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to extend congratulations to the Marriagua Under 15 Cricket team for winning for the first time the zonal cricket championship. I must congratulate those who would have given of their time to coach the team, Mr. Neil Williams, Mr. Godfrey Gilbert, Mr. Casper Davis and Randolph Tesheira who would have given of their time sacrificially to ensure that boys receive the training that brought them the successes they enjoy. I hope that they would stick together, I hope that they would continue to improve, I would that they would retain the championship in the upcoming year and that Marriagua would also be proudly represented nationally where cricket is concerned.

I also want to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to congratulate Mr. Larry Bascombe and the Marriagua Sports Association for another very successful softball championship. I would have visited matches played at the Richland Park playing field and was quiet pleased with the massive crowds that attended the matches. The friendly rivalry that existed and the social activities that surrounded the whole competition. I think this competition has been promoting healthier lifestyles, it has produced an avenue for the youngsters and would have reduced the temptations to do otherwise. I hope the Marriagua Association would grow from strength to strength. I hope that the competition would grow, that everyone would become involved including the females and that we will have activities in the years to come that would unity among our people in Marriagua, love and strength.

I also want to join all voices that extended congratulations to the Honourable Minister of National Security for the milestone he has reached. I know it would have taken quite some discipline, quite some time, some commitment. I am a little bit jealous because I

am not sure I might be able to attain that three scores and ten, in the number of years, but I know I will do everything in my power to ensure that I not only attain three scores and ten but I go beyond. Honourable Minister of National Security I hope that you enjoy that birthday and that you may live to see many more. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to join my colleagues before me who congratulated Kenroy Peters and the Under 19, 15 Team et cetera but mostly to say thanks to the kind words that were expressed and to thanks to the wider public for those who called in and wish me happy birthday and a few more birthdays to come. I have to thank God most of all for his abundant mercies, for allowing me to attain the allotted time and if by reason of strength I go on, I still would have to thank him more, but to say thanks, I appreciate it very much and hopefully I would continue as long as health and strength prevails to try to do whatever I can towards the upliftment and development of this country and its people. Thank you.

## MINUTES

The Minutes of the sittings held on the Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2001 and Friday 20<sup>th</sup> July 2001, copies of which had been circulated previously, were taken as read and were confirmed.

### STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT, CO-OPERATIVES, THE FAMILY, GENDER, AND ECCLESIASTICAL

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I rise to give a progress report on the Kingstown Town Board.

The Kingstown Town Board launched a clean-up campaign in June 2001. This Campaign was designed to clean the streets, sidewalks and alleyways of Capital City Kingstown, from squatter construction, debris and disproportionate vending operations.

In the process of removing these squatter structures, especially from the Little Tokyo area, it was discovered that some of these buildings were used as dwelling houses. Young boys and girls who ran away from home were encouraged to live among these buildings.

Additionally, the garbage that came from, in and around these buildings was appalling. Between some of these were also used as regular toilet and laundry areas.

Those legitimate users of Little Tokyo area are saying no end of praise for the transformation that they have seen.

In relation to the street vendors, the Kingstown Town Board has done a physical check and came up with the following:

1. Many of the street vendors own shops and stalls in the New Central Market.
2. Some vendors have persons working for them and so occupy several different spaces in the town.
3. Some business houses contract person to sell their goods on the street for a commission.
4. Some vendors truly do not have an alternative site to do their business.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the fourth group is our main concern.

We offered stalls and shops within the new and old vegetable market to persons who had no place to vend.

The icebox vendors were given space on the wings on the first floor of the new Market and tents were provided to protect them from sun and rain.

New stalls were built in the old vegetable market to accommodate the Friday and Saturday vendors.

It is important to note that on Saturday when most vendors are in town, and when the police came out to ensure that the sidewalks were cleared, they were still more than twenty empty stalls in the New Market. This shows that the problem is not insufficient space, but a preference for the streets.

The Kingstown Town Board is also in the process of demolishing and clearing derelict buildings in the Paul's Lot area and cleaning and beautifying the area. When this is complete the programme will continue in other areas which for years were allowed to be used as and called slums.

In all of this, recognition must be given to the planning Board, the Traffic and Special Services Unit, the Beatification Committee and the Private Sector who progressively are offering assistance to the efforts of the Kingstown Town Board. Mr. Speaker, I thank you.

#### **PETITION**

1. The Humble Petition of the Trustees of Association of Evangelical Churches of St. Vincent.

(The Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs)

Petition laid on the table.

### QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWERS

1. *The Hon. Arnhim Eustace (Leader of the Opposition) to ask the Hon. Minister of Finance to indicate whether the Government intends to merge the National Commercial Bank and the newly formed Development Bank.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, at present the Government does not have an intention to merge the operations of the Development Bank and the National Commercial Bank. However, the Government is exploring the feasibility of merging the operations of the Development Bank with those of the National Commercial Bank in an effort to improve the efficiency of both organizations. The advocates of this merger believe that it would create certain synergies and economies of scale which will permit the consolidated bank to provide a wider variety of banking products and a better quality of products at a reduced price to all Vincentians.

The Government is now in the process of re-organising or ensuring the re-organisation of the corporate structure of the National Commercial Bank and this re-organised bank will retain flexibility to accommodate any possible merger at a later date when the Development Bank is fully established. Of course as is well known there are different models in the Caribbean for state owned banks, commercial banks and development banks, in the case of Dominica, for example the Aid Bank, which is the development bank, is separate and distinct from the National Commercial Bank. In St. Lucia that has been the case until recently there has been a merger of both the Development Bank and the National Commercial Bank, which interestingly, is part private sector owned and part state owned. So that what is happening is really one of these exercises, these analyses which is being conducted and it is prudent so to do. And I believe the Leader of the Opposition would concede that.

I want to extend an invitation to the Leader of the Opposition to have discussions with the Chairman of the Development Bank so that the Chairman can indicate what is the current position in more detail, and similarly, I would request of the Chairman of the National Commercial Bank to indicate to the Leader of the Opposition the position regarding current reorganization of the corporate structure of the National Commercial Bank.

I think you would be aware that some time ago with the National Commercial Bank there had been a study done for a possible re-organisation and we have looked afresh

at that particular study and more particularly to have a wholly owned holding company which would hold separate individual companies, the commercial bank dealing with real estate property, and there are certain reasons for this because of the requirements by the Central Bank that a commercial bank ought to own only a particular level of real estate in relation to its deposit, and those are matters which we have to take into account in the whole reorganisation of the banking arrangements, the banking structures owned by the state.

2. *The Hon. Arnhim Eustace (Leader of the Opposition) to ask the Hon. Minister of Finance to indicate the status of negotiations with:-*

*(a) The Public Service Union and*

*(b) The Teachers Union*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** There are current negotiations with the Public Service Union but those negotiations are done by the Public Service Union on behalf of the Artisans in the Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing, and those negotiations are in their final stages and should be completed, have been advised, by the end of the month.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that when I got into the Office of the Minister of Finance the Artisans had a problem at what was then the Communications and Works Ministry, that the negotiations had not been started but that the previous contract had been concluded and there was a view of the bureaucracy, other than the basic terms of the unemployment, that nothing else should be paid to the Artisans until the new negotiations are complete and to deal with them if required in some retroactive way. I gave instructions that until the new contract is concluded all the benefits due to the Artisans under the existing contract should be continued.

The negotiations on behalf of the Artisans by the PSU are in respect of a collective agreement covering the period January 2000 to December 2002 so that clearly if there is any increase there would have to be certain arrangements made for back pay from January 2002.

I have been advised by the Ministry of Education that certain preliminary discussions leading towards negotiations have commenced with the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Teachers Union. And on August the 2<sup>nd</sup>, a release was issued by the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Teachers Union in the following terms which provides information to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

“Today August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2001, representatives of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Teachers Union and officials in the Ministry of Education met to

hold preliminary discussions regarding negotiations of a collective agreement for the period 2002 to 2004. Both sides concluded that it was a fruitful exercise; Subcommittees to address issues related to productivity and remuneration for the teaching service were set up in preparation for the formal negotiations which are scheduled to commence on Tuesday August 21<sup>st</sup> 2001. The Union agreed to collaborate with the Ministry of Education, in a campaign to ensure that all educational institutions are secure from vandalism especially in light of the current school maintenance programme being undertaken by the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.”

I want to say that the relations between the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the Teachers Union, those relations are very cordial and it would be noted that issues hitherto which the Teachers Union were not prepared to address with the former administration, at least not in any detailed manner, they are now prepared to address and subcommittees have been set up to address issues related to productivity and remunerations. The link between productivity and the extent of remunerations. And that is the position in relation to those negotiations. I am obliged.

3. *The Hon. Arnhim Eustace (Leader of the Opposition) to ask the Hon. Minister of Agriculture to indicate in light of the acceptance by the Government of the WIBDECO plan for the restructuring of the Banana Industry:*

*(a) How many Banana Farmers in St. Vincent the Grenadines are projected to have to leave the industry;*

*(b) What portion of the projected tonnage of 115,000 tons for the Windwards is to be produced in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and*

*(c) The total banana acreage projected for St. Vincent and the Grenadines.*

**HONOURABLE SELMON WALTERS:** Mr. Speaker, there are at present 3,800 active banana farmers in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. No one, that is, no banana farmer will be forced to leave the industry and it is not known how many may leave the industry, but it is estimated by the BGA that when the diversification programme comes on stream about 20% of those active farmers may leave the industry.

Part (b); about 30 to 35% of the projected tonnage for the Windward Islands would be produced in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Part (c); between 5,000 to 7,000 acres are currently under cultivation; 1200 of those acres, Mr. Speaker, are currently irrigated out of a proposed 2,000 acres in phase one, and a further 2,000 acres in phase two. In the final analysis it is projected that 4,500 acres will be placed under cultivation.

## SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Can the Minister confirm with respect to the farmers who will remain in the industry that all of them would be required to sign contracts and be certified farmers? Can he confirm that this is going to be the case?

**HONOURABLE SELMON WALTERS:** Mr. Speaker, I cannot now confirm that but I can get the information and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition can access it, later.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, if I may crave your indulgence. As the person who is the spokesperson for bananas in the Quasi Cabinet in CARICOM and also the lead person on bananas in the OECS, and therefore as a consequence someone who takes a close interest in the industry here and I am intimately involved in the restructuring process, even on Sunday we had an extensive meeting, about four hours; 3 ½ hours from 12:30 p.m. at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs conference room with the Banana Advisory Committee, the BGA, other officials and other farmers, to say this, that it is expected under the WIBDECO plan and which has been accepted by all the stakeholders is that WIBDECO will have arrangements, contractual arrangements with BGA or the successor organisation to the BGA, the successor entity, for the marketing of particular quantities, packs, all the various market specifications at particular contracted prices and then this new entity which will succeed the BGA will have back to back individual contractual arrangements with the farmers who may or may not be certified, but obviously for them to meet the particular specifications they will have to be farmers who get their act in order. So that is the practical way. That is one way in which the industry is going to be restructured along commercial lines.

There is across the Windward Islands standards being adopted for certification, and the application of those standards in each of the islands would be by the banana producers' organizations. But naturally we will have an input, not in a supervisory way, but in a consultative way with WIBDECO in so far as that is concerned. On matters relating to inputs, the WIBDECO will purchase inputs in bulk but the local entity will still be responsible for the sale and distribution of those inputs and it should be pointed out too that the local entity would be responsible for matters like spraying because obviously individual farmers can't do that, it has to be done through some coordinated entity. The system has enough flexibility though, Honourable Members, for individual farmers to contract directly with WIBDECO, but if the individual farmers contract directly with WIBDECO there, clearly, would have to be a deduction for things such as spraying which is common to all the entities.

I should point out to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Members of the House that on the 21<sup>st</sup> of this month there is going to be an important meeting taking place here between all the stakeholders and the Attorney General has been invited, she

hasn't received the letter yet, but it will come from the Permanent Secretary in the office of the Prime Minister to have members for the A.G.'s Chambers there so that we can then discuss in some detail the new legal framework which will be the successor to the current BGA. I should point out that the elected members of the BGA, the management of the BGA agree that the BGA has got to be reformed and restructured and the entire structure of the industry has got to change and there would be a successor entity first of a transitional nature and then more permanent, but even the transitional one must be given a certain juridical status.

The Leader of the Opposition will no doubt appreciate that this exercise is very intricate and we have come a long way since we have taken office to arrive at this kind of consensus which consensus didn't exist hitherto as to the way forward among the major stakeholders in the industry. I should report that the Banana Growers Association is for all practical purposes a bankrupt entity, it owes, the last figures about \$28.5 million and the severance alone will cause \$1.5 million, discussions are to take place and I am to be informed shortly, maybe it may happen tomorrow morning early or maybe Thursday morning, that I am supposed to meet with the workers at the shed because on the 15<sup>th</sup> of this month we had set that date as a possible target date for WIBDECO to take over the purchasing and receiving and loading, the entire operations here, but one problem clearly as one would, imagine is the sticking problem about the extent of the severance pay, who will take responsibility for the severance pay, which is about \$500,000 I have been advised. So that is a practical problem which we are also working out. And I am to meet the workers. I tried to get WIBDECO yesterday, I didn't get them and I am going to try and get them in the lunch period today. I am very glad for this opportunity to speak on these details and I am heartened that the Leader of the Opposition has raised the question to permit me to provide this additional information as to what's the current status. After the meeting of the 21<sup>st</sup> and we have certain precise time lines, it is my intention to make a detailed address to the nation on the question of the restructuring of the banana industry in every material particular. I am obliged.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, I just want to crave your indulgence too, in respect to one thing the Prime Minister has just said, he mentioned that the successor or transitional organisation will have to be one which clearly is a reformed body. I want to say, Mr. Speaker that with respect to this industry which is so important to our economy, that they should not go the way of St. Lucia in the establishment of limited liability companies in this business. I think the lessons from St. Lucia are and there have been a number of them that have been established, none of them have any required economies of scale, Mr. Speaker, and therefore all of them are going to fail and I would hope that whatever personality we try that we avoid that, Mr. Speaker.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, if I may say this, we are specifically learning from the St. Lucia experience and there is a consensus that we

should not go that way. Of course, as the Honourable Leader of the Opposition would realize constitutionally under the law of this land if someone wishes to set up a banana producer company there is nothing in law that I or anyone could do given the current state of the Constitution. However, it is not the policy of the Government as it was in St. Lucia to encourage the formation if need be of a multiplicity of companies. We will do all which is within our power to dissuade persons from being involved in more than one company. And indeed if individual farmers would wish to sell directly to WIBDECO, that would be their choice, but clearly that itself need not be encouraged, but they will not be getting away by not having the spraying done and a certain contribution taken from it which was a major issue which accounted for a decline in the quality in a particular period in St. Lucia, until that matter of the spraying and other technical group activities. I want to say that I will be taking to Cabinet a number of names which are to be involved in this transitional body. At that meeting I should report to the House on Sunday that all the elected members of the BGA, five of them will be on the body plus, there would be two persons from the State administration, one from the Chamber of Commerce and another seven persons who are either from the broad based banana advisory committee or from other farmers who are not necessarily at the moment connected with the advisory committee. The idea is to encapsulate and incorporate everybody into this new transitional supervisory structure, but clearly we get the advise from the Attorney General because the Banana Growers Association is a legal entity but we are hoping in the transitional way, practicality good sense will prevail that we will be able to act in a supervisory manner until the new structure is put on a juridical footing. And I don't believe that the Leader of the Opposition will have too much quarrel in the manner in which we are proceeding.

4. *The Hon. Dr. Godwin Friday (Northern Grenadines) to ask the Hon. Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries to indicate:*

- (a) When the work to upgrade the fisheries complexes in Bequia and Union Island will begin and when he expects the work to be completed;*
- (b) Whether the upgraded facilities will meet the present European Union requirements and enable us (that is the fishermen) to export fish to Martinique and other European Union markets; and*
- (c) What additional assistance will the Minister provide to enable fishermen in the country as a whole, to develop and expand regional and international markets for fish.*

**HONOURABLE SELMON WALTERS:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members in 1998 the former NDP administration was informed by the European Union that the present Kingstown Fish Market facility was unsanitary, and hence unsuitable for the export of fish to the European Union countries. The then administration did nothing. A timeframe was set by the EU after which St. Vincent and the Grenadines would be

debarred from exporting fish from that facility if it does not meet sanitary and upgraded conditions, the Government then did nothing. I do not know Mr. Speaker, whether they were unconcerned about the livelihood of the fisher folk, so Mr. Speaker the sanctions against our fisher folk were implemented. When we came in office, Mr. Speaker, the Fisheries Division of the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries thought the best thing to do in the situation is to upgrade the facilities in Bequia and Union Island to meet European Union standards in order to resume the exporting of fish. Funding was sought, Mr. Speaker, and proposals were approved by the Ministry of Finance and work is expected to commence in the last quarter of this year and is expected to last for about six months.

Part (b) Mr. Speaker, when the work is completed the facilities will meet European Union requirements, some of those requirements, Mr. Speaker, are as follows, the walls of facilities are supposed to be covered with stainless steels. The floors are supposed to be tiled. The compound is supposed to be fenced to prevent the free movement of animals, vehicles and people who have no calling being there. There is supposed to be the installation of sanitary and safety equipment and Mr. Speaker, for adequate water, is proposed that two small desalination plants be put in for the facilities.

Mr. Speaker, it is also proposed that laboratory facilities be put in to test for heavy metals and other contaminants that may be in the water. You see, the Department, Mr. Speaker, and by extension the Ministry, is working along with SEDU, SEDU is the Small Enterprise Development Unit to assist our fisher folk in market research, sourcing capital and other necessary assistance to the fisher folk. Mr. Speaker, we have given our word to the fisher folk that we will do our best and as God gives us health will do our best.

5. *The Hon. Dr. Godwin Friday (Northern Grenadines) to ask the Hon. Minister of National Security and Airport Development, whether in light of the fact that the fire trucks at the Bequia airport are not working because of mechanical problems, giving rise to a potentially dangerous situation for persons using the airport, if the Minister will ensure that the trucks are repaired urgently and that the fire station is put in proper working order.*

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the fire truck at the Airport in Bequia is not working, this was due to a part that was needed, this part was ordered though Mr. Eustace Auto Supplies Limited and arrived in St. Vincent and the Grenadines some eight days ago. Arrangements have been made to have the part fitted, as such I can therefore assure the Honourable Member for Northern Grenadines that the repairs would be carried out by the end of this week.

6. *The Hon. Terrance Ollivierre (Southern Grenadines) to ask the Hon. Minister of Social Development, Co-operatives, the Family, Gender, and Ecclesiastical Affairs to please state:*

*(a) What efforts are being made to recover the funds reported missing from the School's Co-operative at Westwood Methodist School;*

*(b) Has anyone been identified as being responsible;*

*(c) If so, would this/these individual(s) be brought to justice.*

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I am very proud to say that our Government holds a strong, uncompromising, anti-corruption policy no matter who is involved. Our Government also believes in transparency, and we believe that the people have a right to know what is taking place.

Over the years, some teachers who have been placed in a position of trust have misappropriated funds from their Schools' Co-operatives. We have observed that the past Government did nothing to try to curb this dishonest practice.

Mr. Speaker, let's take the case of Mr. Julian Ollivierre, a Teacher assigned to the Mayreau Government School and who is the cousin of one of our Honourable Members here. About a year ago Mr. Julian Ollivierre misappropriated over twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000.00) from the Mayreau School Co-operative. Indeed, even the funds of the Mayreau Post Office were misappropriated. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the issue was raised in this Honourable House by Honourable Louis Straker time and time again. The matter was also publicised in the Newspaper. The New Democratic Party (NDP) Government said not a word, as the culprit was the Chairman of their party group in Mayreau.

Mr. Kevin Williams, a Teacher guide of the Troumaca Primary School misappropriated three thousand dollars (\$3,000.00) from that school's co-operative. That amount is still outstanding.

Currently all co-operative funds are intact at the Westwood Methodist School. However, within the recent past, funds were reported missing. The person responsible for the Co-operative funds is the Principal of the school. Investigations are on-going after which appropriate action will be taken.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, our Teachers are hardworking and they should be congratulated for encouraging our children to be thrifty. However, we must be a good example for them. I wish to exhort all teachers to refrain from utilising funds from their

school's co-operative. Let us remember that we must make our good better and our better best.

7. *The Hon. Terrance Ollivierre (Southern Grenadines) to ask the Hon. Minister of Social Development, Co-operatives, the Family, Gender, and Ecclesiastical Affairs to please state:*

- (a) *Whether the lands earmarked for the Community Centre at South Rivers are owned by the State;*
- (b) *If in the negative, when will the said lands be transferred to the State.*

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I can remember some time before that I hinted that Honourable Members should be a little bit more careful when questions are posed to us. The question now is not a matter for the Ministry of Social Development, a multipurpose centre is to be constructed and I can tell you now that the Honourable Prime Minister would be pleased to give the details of the project.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, as the Honourable Minister of Social Development, Co-operatives, the Family, Gender, and Ecclesiastical Affairs stated what is being built at South Rivers is not a community centre, it is a library, computer centre, and a meeting place for the residents in the area, it is not a community centre.

The lands before, I bought them, I say "I", I mean I as Ralph Gonsalves, my own money, was owned by the Cabral family. The lands were almost 8,000 square feet, 7,995 square feet with a little piece of reserve to the back, almost \$16,000 I paid, \$2.00 a square foot, in fact the going price there is \$2.50, because I was buying for a community purpose I was given a discount of 50 cents a square foot. The idea originally is that the George Stevens Sr. Group of Trustees were to be the owners of this particular land, in fact it was called, the body is called the Trustees of George Stevens Sr. Education Centre of South Rivers. And a deed was prepared by Mr. Errol Layne in the name of the trustees. The deed however has not been signed because Mr. Cabral suffered a series of illnesses and was unable to sign the deed. He is now in Canada and is unlikely, sadly that he would be in a position to sign the deed. The successor vendor came to see me from overseas just over a week ago, and the necessarily legal arrangements are being made through Mr. Layne's Office in respect of this particular parcel of land. I must say, the heirs of Vincent Cabral came to my office and said that they are prepared now to grant to the Trustees of George Stephens Sr. Education Centre of South Rivers an additional lot of land of almost the same size, adjoining free of charge. But it has to be surveyed, these lands both the original parcel

for which I paid and this piece which is given to the Trustees of the George Stephens Sr. Education Centre they would be put in the State. The land is therefore owned by the people of this country, given by me to the Centre. There is no requirement before we start to build to have a deed, because as lawyers will know real and goat-skin, that a deed is only evidence of title, it is not title, so that the title came to me when I passed the cheque and the land is being given to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, more particularly those of South Rivers. I should point out that George Stephens Sr. who taught a lot of people in that area. He was School Hill at Bellevue, he actually taught my mother, now 82 years old and he taught me at Colonarie Primary School. He was my Headmaster, and he taught a lot of people from South Rivers and Park Hill. He was originally from Park Hill and ended up his career teaching at the Sandy Bay School. He was the father of the former lawyer Eandley Stephens and Dr. "Chick" Stephens, that's also his father, and the people in the area, have decided to name it after George Stephens Sr. because there is a junior. I should point out, Mr. Speaker, and it can be checked because we want to be transparent, the survey plan is number C9/154, it was approved and lodged in the Lands and Surveyed Department on the 5<sup>th</sup> of August, 1997; 7,995 square feet and it is right near to the road going up into the village called Teach Street. The sum of money for this multipurpose, library, computer centre, meeting hall, the building costs would be US\$200,000 and this money is a grant from the Government and people of the Republic of China on Taiwan. I should say that during the last parliament I had indicated that when we were seeking to raise money on our own that I would very much welcome, since I had intended to put \$50,000 of my own money into the project, for the Government to match me with \$50,000 the then NDP Government declined to make such a match, and I am very heartened that they are now having an interest in this project in South Rivers.

I should say, Mr. Speaker, it my intention to ask of the people in the community because though it is located in South Rivers is not only for South Rivers it is for Park Hill, South Rivers and people who come from the back of Byrea, who will come over easily over Mc Kracken because the idea being in North Central Windward that we have in each school in community computers. We have in the Georgetown Secondary School now, we have in the Georgetown Primary School, in fact the Georgetown Primary School has more computers than any primary school in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and that primary school not one single computer came from the Government, they all came from donations through the organizations of the Parent Teachers Association. I want to say that at the southern end there would not be an area, a location, the southern end of the constituency where you would have a computer centre as you are having in Georgetown and some at the multipurpose centre in Georgetown. So this facility in South Rivers will act for persons who are outside of school in the community, or persons who are in school who want to use the facilities after hours. This Government is not interested in building four walls and call them a community centre, which hardly any activities take place in side of them. I want as I say to put to the community that the section which is the library, if I could have it

named the library itself, the “Alphie Roberts Library”, I’ll be very, very pleased, because Alphie Roberts donated a lot of books to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. He was a very good friend of mine. But the overall centre would be called, that has been agreed upon, the George Stephens Sr. Educational Centre.

I would like very much though, since the Honourable Member for the Southern Grenadines is interested in community centers, I would invite him to go the Ministry of Social Development and check out the facts not in relation to a real educational facility which is being built, but the phantom one which was built under the NDP at Questelles where materials were supplied for the construction of the community centre at Questelles and no such entity is known to exist in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. That is a matter which is the subject currently of criminal investigation. Thank you.

8. *The Hon. Terrance Ollivierre (Southern Grenadines) to ask the Hon. Minister of Transport, Works and Housing to please state:*

(a) *The names and addresses of the contractors in the School Repair Programme;*

(b) *The value of each contract in the School Repair Programme.*

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, it seems as if the Opposition got it right this time in directing the question to the Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing. You would recall last Parliament their question was directed then to the Minister of Education. But being Minister of Transport, Works and Housing they deliberately gave me additional work, but I have all the names for them and I will read out all 85 contactors.

I would say Mr. Speaker, that these contracted amounts are labour contracts. The contracts were not given out as full contracts, they were given out as labour contracts, and the material supplied by the Ministry because we wanted to control materials better in that way.

Alphabetically by school:

NAMES OF CONTRACTORS		SCHOOL ASSIGNED	EC\$
Edward Delecia	Cedars	Adelphi Secondary School	2,850.00
St. Clair Jobe	Cedars	Adelphi Secondary School	14,600.00
Tyrone Adams	Barrouallie	Barrouallie Multi-Purpose School	16,736.37
Steadfast Harry	Barrouallie	Barrouallie Primary School	21,489.00
Rudolph Baptiste	Barrouallie	Barrouallie Secondary School	8,360.00
Carlton Bulze	Barrouallie	Barrouallie Secondary School	9,955.00
George Barbour	Barrouallie	Barrouallie Anglican School	21,972.00

Gershon Robertson	Fountain	Belair Government School	10,050.00
Cardan James	Fairbane Pasture	Belmont Government School	18,538.00
Llewellyn Glynn	Bequia	Bequia Community High School	20,417.00
Junior Delves	Biabou	Biabou Government School	22,000.00
Ishmael Jacobs	Bridgetown	Biabou Government School	6,830.70
Robert James	Town Hill	Boys Grammar School	27,100.00
Ken Lynch	Fair Hall	Brighton Primary School	14,930.63
Seon Woods	Buccament	Buccament Bay School	24,595.15
Amos Jonas Edwards	Vermont	Buccament Gov't School/D	27,054.67
Leroy Webb	Sion Hill	C.W. Prescott School	11,000.00
Raphael Regisford	Calder	Calder Government School	15,400.00
Anthony Abbott	Calliaqua	Calliaqua Primary School	21,922.50
Ernest Dennie	Questelles	Campden Park Secondary	18,536.32
Randolph Haywood	Questelles	Campden Park Multi-Purpose	8,360.00
Carlos Tesheira/ George Hoyte	Cane End	Cane End Government School	22,811.25
Norman Sageant	Canouan	Canouan Government School	20,000.00
Norman Thorpe	Calder	Carapan Secondary School	7,902.00
Godfrey Dyer	Chateaubelair	Chateaubeliar School	15,400.00
Rawlson Mason	Chateaubelair	Chateaubeliar School	14,850.00
Tex Slater	Clare Valley	Clare Valley Gov't School	17,084.00
Dempter James	Union Island	Clifton Primary School	8,136.00
Moses Alleyne	Union Island	Stephanie Browne Primary School	6,375.00
Cornelius Adams	Colonarie	Colonarie Government School	18,000.00
Aldon Williams	Diamonds	Diamonds Primary School	27,000.00
Alwyn Yearwood	Dickson Village	Dickson Government School	36,278.00
Cecil Carib/DaBreo	Dorsetshire Hill	Dorsetshire Hill Gov't School	13,870.33
Edgerton Marshall	Collins	Evesham Primary School	13,154.67
Carlos Stay	Fancy	Fancy Primary School	25,148.00
Alanzo Layne	Fitz Hughes	Fitz Hughes Gov't School	10,523.33
Leonard Gordon	Fitz Hughes	Fitz Hughes Gov't School	11,880.00
Errol Bailey	Georgetown	Georgetown Primary School	17,469.00
Alfred Lewis	Georgetown	Georgetown Multi Purpose	4,053.00
Harris Deane	Georgetown	Georgetown Secondary School	6,666.67
Carr & Sons			
Contractors Co. Ltd	Dorsetshire Hill	Girls High School	37,481.00
Wendell Glasgow	Gomea	Gomea Government School	17,581.00
John Greaves	Largo Height	Kingstown Anglican School	48,000.00
Errol Lockhart	Lowmans Hill	Kingstown Government School	24,500.00
Phillip Alexander	Frenches	Kingstown Preparatory School	30,000.00
Curtis Henry	Langley Park	Langley Park Primary School	15,451.00
Wallace Maloney/ Robert Jacobs	Lauders	Lauders Primary School	22,700.00
Danny Jeffers	Layou	Layou Government School	27,158.95
Kenneth Bess	Lodge Village	Lodge Village School	25,110.00
Festus Ryan	Campden Park	Lowmans Leeward Gov't School	7,823.20
David Gittens	Lowmans Wd.	Lowmans Wd. Anglican School	17,725.00
Alpheus Clarke/ Anthony Cato	Glenside	Marriaqua Government School	14,305.33
Harvey Mathews	Union Island	Mary Hutchinson Gov't School	12,000.00
Victor Hazell	Mayreau	Mayreau Government School	5,970.00

Peter Gittens	New Grounds	New Grounds Primary School	21,062.30
Frederick Browne	North Union	North Union Secondary School	18,708.00
Cleophas Ollivierre	North Union	North Union Secondary School	22,300.00
Berisford Baptiste	Overland	Overland Primary School	13,395.00
Julian Baptiste	Owia	Owia Primary School	26,487.03
Jack Gregg	Bequia	Paget Farm Gov't School	7,663.00
Keith Richards	Park Hill	Park Hill Primary School	17,500.00
Lesta Williams	Petit Bordel	Petit Bordel Secondary School	12,754.78
Telford Barker	Petit Bordel	Petit Bordel Secondary School	12,308.72
Leroy Mathews	Petit Bordel	Petit Bordel Secondary School	14,520.00
Thornhill Quashie	Petit Bordel	Port Elizabeth Government	36,391.67
Dennis Barker	Questelles	Questelles Government School	48,000.00
Christopher Augustus	Richland Park	Richland Park Primary School	25,734.67
Junior Wales	Sion Hill	Richland Hill Primary School	22,000.00
Asquith Edwards	Rockies	Richmond Hill Multi Purpose	11,000.00
George Woodley	Rose Hall	Rose Hall Government School	10,171.77
Noel Cupid	Simon	Simon Primary School	8,675.00
Winston Gibson	Arnos Vale	Sion Hill Government School	10,189.00
Selwyn Cuffy	South Rivers	South Rivers Primary School	30,000.00
Colton Hackshaw	South Rivers	South Rivers Primary School	28,000.00
Lennie Charles	Spring Village	Spring Village Methodist School	13,094.07
Royston Maloney/ Arnold Conliffe	Stubbs	Stubbs Primary School	23,400.00
Rudolph Mathews	Welcome	Teachers College	3,666.67
Dolison Jack	Fountain	Technical College	16,252.00
Emil Prince	Troumaca	Troumaca Secondary School	39,462.50
Clinton Williams	Troumaca	Troumaca Secondary School	12,936.00
Westfield Stewart	Union Island	Union Island Government School	18,000.00
Elwyn Stapleton	Troumaca	West Wood School	4,076.00

These contracted amounts, Mr. Speaker, total \$1,482,852.25. I will say that the budgeted amount for labour under the schools programme was just over \$2,076,000.00, so there is still 600 plus thousand dollars or close to 600 thousand dollars remaining under labour and that we intend to have more contracts done over the last two weeks. You would have observed, Mr. Speaker, that some roofs of the building now that we have painted the walls look a little bit out of place with the new paint and the new look of the school, so we have decided that we would embark during this week and next week the last two weeks of the programme to do some roof painting, also one or two schools that were not earmarked for painting would also be painted. We would understand also that this schools programme is a one-year programme, that the Government undertook to do the majority of the work over the six weeks of the summer vacation and so we can get the physical school buildings ready for the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September. I want to guarantee this House that all our schools including toilets and roofs would be ready by the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September. This does not mean, Mr. Speaker, that that's the end of the programme, we still have a year to go, and we will be embarking on the school compound. Some school compounds are being addressed. I have also spoken to the project manager and told him that in the last week of the project that we will undertake a complete clean up of the school

surroundings; that is we will swab the yards and clear all the debris from the drains and get the school grounds clean.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to repeat here for the benefit of the listening public and also for the Members of this Parliament that this project employed some 1100 persons. Thank you, very much.

9. *The Hon. Gerard Shallow (Opposition Senator) to ask the Hon. Minister of Agriculture to please state:*

(a) *The present status of the social recovery programme which is to be instituted to assist those banana farmers who will be leaving the industry;*

(b) *How soon can the public expect to hear of the contents of this programme.*

**HONOURABLE SELMON WALTERS:** Mr. Speaker, as was mentioned in the last sitting of the Parliament, the social recovery programme of the Banana Industry is handled by Ministry of Finance and the Honourable Prime Minister who is the Minister of Finance will provide the answer to this question.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the question of the social recovery programme is not as the Minister of Agriculture pointed out strictly speaking a matter for the Ministry of Agriculture; it is a matter which is dealt across ministries, the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Agriculture will be involved in some tangential way and also centrally the Ministry of Finance and Planning.

I can understand that the Opposition is running out of questions to ask so that the matter would be repeated over and over again. I have addressed this question already in this Parliament, both in answer to a question and also in detail in the debate on the amendment to the National Insurance Act. Of course, strictly speaking a question which has been answered essentially within the same session should not be entertained at all. But we will entertain it, or at least the Speaker has already entertained it, and I wouldn't raise any objection saying what we are doing.

As has been pointed out before, there is overall a social recovery programme which is being devised by the Government in conjunction with the donor countries, particularly DEFID, the Department For International Development of the British Government and our own National Insurance Scheme. The first aspect of the social recovery programme involves 300 persons who would be given a non contributory aged pension, that has already been decided upon and the Banana Growers Association

has been in touch, I have been advised, with the National Insurance Scheme. The Director of National Insurance has advised that this is the case and these persons are not persons who are going to be selected by the Government, we set the policy and we leave the various agencies of Government to carry out the decision on the basis of the policy and in relation to the objective criteria for that policy. The criteria laid out for the non-contributory age pension are already well known and these were spelt out in this very session of the House in answer to another query by me, I set them out. The Leader of the Opposition knows them also.

The social recovery programme involves more than of course the payment of an age pension. But the way in which we are operating, since there is a discussion on it in the restructuring of the industry as a whole we have gone ahead to show that we doing what we can so that when the external agencies come in that we will say to them, this is what we have done and put ourselves in a much better position than otherwise would have been the case.

There has been a study on bananas and poverty, DEFID has been here recently and has held discussions I have been advised, with relevant agencies and in relation to the entire social recovery programme is the question of the development and proper financing of a programme of diversification, because it is not a situation of giving people handouts, it is a question of providing a programme to diversify, in some cases out of bananas but obviously in over 80% of the cases or about 80% of the cases around bananas and that is essentially what is the plan, but we have to address the restructuring of the industry simultaneously with the social recovery plan, and how the debt is going to be dealt with. It is a very complex and involved matter that the NDP administration has handed to the ULP Government, and we have been given a very bad hand, and we are putting some order in it. [Interjection] Well, in fact we have gotten a bad hand in practically everything, and the more I communicate to the public, that's not the excuse, you left me a bad hand at Orange Hill, I paid the money yesterday. You left me a bad hand at Ottley Hall, and I am making arrangements down there, I wouldn't talk about what is happening yet, but down to this morning I was working on Ottley Hall. You left me a bad hand on the question of the Off shore Sector, I am cleaning that up. You left a bad hand in relation to the IMO, the International Maritime Organisation, where we were threatened with our \$4 million shipping industry; we are now on the white list. In relation to ICATT, in relation to the Atlantic Tuna you left us a bad hand on that, with a threatened ban; we have dealt with that. Just in the week I received a "Dear Ralph" from Prime Minister, Tony Blair on that very question. You have left me a bad hand of \$7 million in debt up at the Cruise ship berth unpaid, I am not talking about the debt which is already declared to Mr. Carafe, I have to write the people in Kuwait, the Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Development that you left this debt unpaid, we are left to pay it, and I am asking for a soft loan from the Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Development. You want me to go on with more milestones that you leave around my neck? [Interjection] No, it is not the excuse, those are real things.

Then they have written to me about the debt which you have left unpaid down at the Campden Park Port. I have to deal with that. You didn't pay arrears at the United Nations, I have dealt with that. The \$7 million to the University of the West Indies, the \$3.5 million to OECS and those were not in the formal debt, you know, close to \$400,000. No I am not trying to – you have provoked me on the question of the milestone which you have left me around my neck. You have provoked me on that. So I have to reveal all of them. And the list is not finished.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Members could we go on and finish the question.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Yes, Mr. Speaker. I am very pleased that I have been given an opportunity further to answer this question in the terms I have answered, but I want to say one other matter, Mr. Speaker, to complete the answer, there are NDP operatives who are cruelly and falsely going around and telling farmers who have lands, old farmers, this is the extent of the cruelty of the NDP operatives on the ground and the Leader of the Opposition is not saying anything about this and I want him to say something, and it is this, they are going and telling the old marginal farmers on lands where those farmers don't have the title for the government lands yet, that if they take the Non-Contributory Age Pension the Government is going to take them off the land. Complaints have come to me, young people have written to me on behalf of their grandparents, that is cruelty and the falsehood and the malice which is coming from NDP operatives on the ground, stoked I may add by the de facto leader of the NDP, the one whom you are following, the real leader, not the formal leader, but I want to give the assurance to all those farmers who would receive a non contributory age pension they are getting it and they could still be involved in whatever agriculture or anything they want, and this Government and this Prime Minister will help them, and further to that this Government and this Prime Minister will help them to get title for their lands. Nobody, is going to be put off of any parcel of land, but they want to deny poor, old people the non-contributory age pension by telling them lies that Ralph is going to put them off the land. I mean it is an act of cruelty.

Yesterday was freedom day, there are more freedom days to come because before I leave office, I am going to make sure that everybody who has bought land from Government will get title to their lands. I promise you that.

10. *The Hon. Gerard Shallow (Opposition Senator) to ask the Hon. Minister of Agriculture:*

*(a) The names of the former Ministers of Government who owe the Marketing Corporation;*

*(b) The exact amounts of money owing by each former Minister.*

**HONOURABLE SELMON WALTERS:** Mr. Speaker, indeed the Opposition is running out of questions. The Honourable Senator Shallow asked this question before by way of a supplementary question. And now he is asking it again.

The Marketing Corporation, Mr. Speaker, is still in the process of examining its accounts, when the information is received by the Ministry of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries it will be made public. The Senator will not only know of the outstanding amounts owed to the Marketing Corporation, but he will also know the name of the individuals who ordered sample furniture from a supplier in Trinidad on behalf of his Department, and never turned them over to that Department.

Mr. Speaker, for the first time in over a decade the Marketing Corporation has realised a profit, and that profit is realised, Mr. Speaker in the second quarter of this year, that is after March 28<sup>th</sup>. In 10 years, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me say that no member on this side of the House would go down to the Marketing Corporation to take away groceries. The Marketing Corporation is on a good footing; it will remain so as long as this Government is in Office.

11. *The Hon. Gerard Shallow (Opposition Senator) to ask the Hon. Minister of Social Development, Co-operatives, the Family, Gender, and Ecclesiastical Affairs to please state the names and addresses of the persons whose names were deleted from the list of persons receiving Public Assistance.*

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members in the Ministry of Social Development we plan purposely. We proceed positively and we pursue persistently. Mr. Speaker, I would like to tell this Honourable House that the re-certification process continues. And for those of us who may not understand that we have to take care of the home bound and this point in time, we are working with the home bound. The officers have to leave the offices and go to the homes so that we can really find out what help we can give to those persons. We also have our foster children and we have them left to deal with. So Mr. Speaker, we cannot be pushed into giving a list of names and addresses at this point in time, but when it is ripe to do so, we would even give information that has not been asked in this question. Thank you.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** In the absence of the Honourable Senator Joseph Bonadie, I rise to ask:-

12. *The Hon. Joseph Bonadie (Opposition Senator) to ask the Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries to please state the status with respect to the purchase of lands from:*

*(a) Mr. and Mrs. Louis Mandeville of Reeves Level/Cedars for housing development.*

*(b) Mr. Basil Dascent at Adelphi, Diamond for housing development.*

*(c) Mr. Godwin Daniel at Hadleys Village for housing and agricultural purposes.*

*(d) Alban Gonsalves at Diamonds for housing and other purposes.*

**HONOURABLE SELMON WALTERS:** Mr. Speaker, the former Government acquired lands from citizens of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and did not pay for most of these lands. Among the list, Mr. Speaker, are as follows. [Prime Minister they left us a bad hand.]

Mr. Speaker, to answer this question I need to read out the list of lands that we are supposed to pay for, that this Government is supposed to pay for and to place it within its context of those of which the question is now asking. Lands that were not paid for Mr. Speaker, and people come everyday to the Department asking for their monies. Lands in Barrouallie, Mr. Speaker, occupied by the New Fisheries Complex, outstanding \$5,349.00. Lands at Bottle and Glass for cemetery purposes, outstanding \$6,000.00. Lands at Vermont at Retreat to extend the Community Centre, \$30,000.00. Lands in Burgin Hill, Lowmans Leeward, outstanding \$35,000.00. Lands at Greggs for medical clinic, outstanding \$100,000.00. Lands in Bequia for road construction, outstanding \$20,665.00. Lands in Mayreau to facilitate electricity development, \$217,800.00 outstanding. Lands at Owia for housing project \$80,000.00 is still outstanding. Lands in Tail Race for irrigation purposes \$20,000.00. Lands in Cumberland playing field, \$319,000.00. Lands at Reeves Level the one that is being asked in the question, Mr. Speaker, outstanding \$564,102.00. And all the people in Central Leeward Mr. Speaker, whose lands were acquired when the highway was being reconstructed they have not yet gotten their monies. And the Kay Bacchus lands in Lowmans that was taken for cemetery, \$125,000.00. And Mr. Speaker, all these people come to the Department almost daily asking when will we get our monies. And every time I go to Cabinet and I tell the Prime Minister people are asking for their monies, he would say to the DGF, do we have any money, and the DGF would say "no, no, no."

Mr. Speaker, it is within this context that the answer is required to this question.

- (a) The Mandeville land at Reeves Levels/Cedars we have discovered Mr. Speaker, that there are some legal technicalities which forced the Government to put a hold on its purchase. That situation is now being examined by the Attorney General's Chambers and I would not say any more about that at this moment.
- (b) Mr. Speaker, Bazil Dascent lands at New Adelphi, Diamonds was never on the list of lands for purchase by the Ministry of Agriculture, that was said willy nilly by the former representative. It was never on the list.
- (c) Mr. Speaker, Mr. Godwin Daniel's land at Hadleys Village was never on the list of lands for purchase, this was a campaign promise by the Unity Labour Party and which the Government of the ULP will seek to fulfill.
- (d) Mr. Speaker, the Gonsalves lands at Diamonds three acres was paid for by the former NDP Government. [The only piece they paid for.] The then solicitor of the Gonsalves lands has informed the Ministry that lands were not purchased for housing as the question states. The then solicitor offered the then NDP Government a further four acres of the said lands to be used for housing which the NDP Government did not take up. Mr. Speaker, that as far as I know, is the answer to the question that is being posed from the other side.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I beg to move under Standing Order 12(5) that the proceedings for today's sitting be exempted from at this days sitting from provisions of the Standing Order Hours' of sitting.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

#### 1. DISTRIBUTION OF SEVERANCE PAYMENT BILL 2001

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the Bill for an Act to make special provisions for the payments for monies to beneficiaries of former workers of the Orange Hill, Richmond and Wallilabou Estates who have died interstate without a personal representative being appointed.

The objectives and reasons of this bill that this bill seeks to address the situation of the former workers of the Orange Hill, Richmond and Wallilabou Estates. The Bill makes special provisions to allow surviving beneficiaries to receive the severance payment due to the workers of Orange Hill, Richmond and Wallilabou Estates who died interstate without a personal representative being appointed. These objects and

reasons Mr. Speaker, find expression in the Act and I beg to move the first reading of this Bill.

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

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

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

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

*Question put and agreed.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, it is well known that by now that the Unity Labour Party Government, sorry Mr. Speaker. I beg to move the second reading of a Bill for an Act to make special provision for the payment of monies to beneficiaries of former workers of the Orange Hill, Richmond and Wallilabou Estates who have died interstates without a personal representative being appointed.

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

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

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Any debate on the Bill.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the Unity Labour Party Government following upon the election victory set about speedily to implement its promise to the electorate to provide severance pay under the Protection of Employment Act 1980 for all the workers on the Orange Hill/Rabacca, Wallilabou and Richmond Vale Estates. As is known, Mr. Speaker, the former Labour Party Administration headed by the late, great Robert Milton Cato had passed in this House the Protection of Employment Act 1980, that is the first time in the history of this country that anything known as severance pay was brought into the law of this land, a historic measure by the former Labour Party administration. Persons who were severed, who retired, or who had themselves terminated, or who left their employment before the Protection of Employment Act was passed in 1980, they did not receive any severance pay. After 1980 persons who were unfairly, unlawfully dismissed, or

dismissed without due cause became entitled to severance pay, provided that they were employed for a minimum of 2 years. And severance pay under that law was calculated on the basis of two weeks pay for each year worked, up to a maximum of 52 weeks payments that is to say to get severance pay for 26 years, so if you worked for more than 26 years, the earlier years you worked are discounted for the purposes of calculating severance pay, and you get severance pay calculated on the basis of your last salary. That is in a summary form the relevant provisions of the Protection of Employments Act.

The workers at Orange Hill Estate, at Wallilabou and at Richmond Vale were entitled by law to their severance payment, and the NDP Government did not pay them. That is a fact of life. They seek to get away from that now, but it is inescapable. Mr. Speaker, this failure and or refusal by the NDP administration to pay the workers their severance pay in accordance with law was a historic wrong of monumental proportions, and it has left to another labour government, the Unity Labour Party Government to correct, to right this historic wrong. We are paying 844 workers in the three estates, costing about \$2 million for which approval has already been given in this Honourable House on the Supplementary Estimates on the 20<sup>th</sup> of July. In this number of workers there are some who are not entitled to severance pay as of right, but because of their long service and the close proximity of the years to the period when they would normally have been entitled, the Government decided to provide a number of them with what is called an ex gratia payment, that is just a Latin formulation meaning by grace, by the goodness of your heart and your soul. That's what it means. And this Government, Mr. Speaker, has done so for a number of workers. By far, the most of the workers are alive and will be receiving their severance pay themselves. I don't know how many turned up, yesterday evening at Rabacca, but there were hundreds, there was about 560 who were entitled and or received ex gratia, by grace payments. I don't think all of them turned up because some turned up without their identification cards, some turned up with their identification cards of a member of the family and they had to be informed that there is a particular process which had to be done and they will be paid at the Revenue Office in Georgetown; and that has been made clear to them, so they will get their pay. But you have a number of them who are beneficiaries who are dead, the question is how can those persons who are entitled to the severance pay and who are dead, how would their beneficiaries get the benefit of that payment.

Now there is a law called the Administration of Estates Act, that's for people who died without leaving a will, you called that in the law, you died interstate. But the procedure under the Administration of Estate Act is very cumbersome, and it is expensive, you have to go to a lawyer, and the lawyer will take some of that money for their fees, because lawyers don't work for nothing; except you happen to name Ralph Gonsalves, and Carlyle Dougan and some other such persons who have given free service from time to time in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I must put my friend Arthur Williams in

that category. So, that a deceased person, you take for instance Mr. Abbott, because his name had been called out here on the previous occasion, he is entitled to his severance pay but he is dead. He left other things in his estate. His estate would have already, I suspect, been distributed, either because he might have left executor or if he had not left an executor, it would have been administered for under the Administration of Estate Act Chapter 377 of the Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. So to go now to administrate again for severance pay money is a long time consuming process, and you have to give the lawyers a good piece of change out of the severance pay. Well this government is very thoughtful; the lawyers can fend for themselves. They have a profession. This Government is very compassionate and is looking at the concerns of the working people in every material particular, so we have decided that the cumbersome law in this big book, the Administration of Estates Act, this is too complex, too cumbersome and too expensive to let the poor working people go through to get their severance pay for those who are dead. And that is why, we put to the Attorney General's Office the idea that we will have a simple piece of law, inexpensive to operate so that the beneficiaries of those who are due severance pay but who are dead, those persons who are due and are dead and who didn't leave a will as to how it should be given to them, their property should be distributed, we work out a simple way, and I want to go through it. Because I don't think, it is important because this is being broadcast, I want to go through it so that the people would hear from the horses mouth how they have to set about to get their severance pay.

The first thing that the Government will do under this law in section 3, clause 3, sorry because I should point out to those who listen, before a bill is passed into an Act you don't call them sections, you call them clauses. It is only after you pass it becomes a section, after you pass the Bill it becomes an Act and what you have numbered would become the sections, before that it is clauses. Clause 3 (1) "the Government shall appoint an administrator to administer this Act. The remuneration paid to the administrator," that is the money which you are going to pay to the administrator shall be made from the Consolidated Fund, that is from the Treasury. Clause 4 "notwithstanding the provisions of the Administration of the Estate Act and any law to the contrary the severance payment due to a worker by the Government shall vest and be paid to the administrator, the way in which the old law, is that the money, when you died the money vests inside of the Court House, and the Administration of the Estate is to take it out of the Court House and that is why it is so complicated and expensive to get it out of the Court House. What we are doing, those severance payments where people are dead we are vesting that money in an administrator appointed by the Government, and you would see how it is a simple idea which you are trying to help poor people to get their money for their loved ones who are dead, who should have gotten their money. Imagine people gone to their graves owing their severance pay, over a hundred of them in this number you know. Well where they are I am sure they are knocking the cymbals and they are celebrating with the angels for this law today. And at the same time, woe be on to those who had committed the historic wrong by not

paying them their severance pay. They have to say many acts of contrition. Because it is a sin. It is a sin. It is a sin. You have to put your hand on your breast and say "Mia culpa, mia culpa, mia maxima culpa. Through my fault, through my fault, through my most grievous fault, and then ask the good Lord to forgive. You all can't come back to the polls, unless you ask the good Lord to forgive you, you know. And you have to do it publicly because you committed this Act against the people publicly, so I want to hear your confession today. Do it today, do your confession today. You can't say you were not there because you were Minister of Finance, Leader of the Opposition from the 1998 election. You should have paid the people their money. You can't put the blame on Sir James. He has to say his own prayers. Each man who sins has his own relationship with his Lord.

Clause 5, "all monies pay by the Government to the Administrator for and on behalf of the worker must be distributed by the Administrator in accordance with Section 62 of the Administration of Estates Act." What does section 62 say. Section 62 of the Administration of Estates Act says that if you died and you don't leave a will this is how the property is to be distributed, and I want the people who are listening to take note, and it would be explained to them over and over again by the Administrator whom Cabinet will appoint after this law is passed. If the person who dies leaves a husband or a wife, but no children, I am reading it not with all the complicated legal language, I am reading it in a manner so the people down in Wallilabou, in Richmond Vale and up in Rabacca can understand me. If the person who dies, who didn't leave a will, and who is entitled to severance pay, leaves a husband or a wife but no children the surviving husband or wife shall be entitled to one half of the severance pay and the other one half shall be distributed as if he had left no husband and wife and how is that distributed, that if you didn't leave any husband or wife or any children it was your father or mother who will get it. But of course many of them are such old people their father and mother already died before them. That is the law. If the person who dies leaves a husband, or a wife and children, the surviving husband or wife which will be most of the cases you having here now, practically every case because these people are very strong people who left children. If the person who dies leaves a husband or a wife and children, the surviving husband or wife shall be entitled to one third of the severance pay and the children will get the remaining two thirds in equal shares. So if somebody, of course we know how this thing goes, most of the children will tell the husband or the wife, it is your own, man, take it, don't bother give me any. But you have some children who are going to insist. But that isn't my problem I could only do it in accordance with the law. If the person who dies leaves children but no husband or wife the children shall be entitled to take all of the severance pay in equal shares. And if there be only one child that child will get it all. And if such in case the person who dies doesn't leave a husband or doesn't leave a wife or leave any children and doesn't leave a parent then you go on to the brothers and the sisters of the whole blood. And if there are no brothers and sisters of the whole blood, you go to brothers and sisters of the half blood. And so on and so forth. But most would have left either a husband or a

wife and certainly children. So that is how the administrator would have to distribute the money. It goes on and this is an important one and we have to decide on this here today.

Clause 6 in “in the case where a worker” and by worker here I mean the law means one of the persons at Orange Hill, Wallilabou and Richmond and it is defined in the law who a worker is, who is entitled to the severance pay and who has died without leaving a will. In the case of a worker who has not left a lawful widow or widower, the term husband or wife as it appears in Section 62 of the Administration of Estates Act which I just read to you, for the purpose of this Act, this current one which we are passing includes a person who has lived with the worker for a continuous period of five years prior to the death of that worker, and is still alive at the coming into force of this Act. So that what we are saying, we are putting an additional question here, an additional subject to help people because we know that in many of these areas you would not have had people who were married, they would have lived like how my mother and father lived in common law union, there is nothing wrong with that. Nothing wrong with that at all, from the standpoint of your legal relations, that’s a different thing in the eyes of God. I am talking about in the eyes of legal relations in law.

Now, and that has to do with the parents, it doesn’t have anything to do with the children, because children don’t make themselves, it is parents make them. If you have somebody, if a man is entitled to severance pay and he is dead and he was living with a woman for five years up to the time of his death and she is still alive, she will be treated as if she is a wife, under this Act, you may say five years is too short, you may say seven years, we suggested 5 because it seems to be reasonable. I don’t know if the Leader of the Opposition thinks five is reasonable, but I think that more than likely you would think so but it is something upon which we will hear his own view, and similarly if it is the woman who was entitled to the money and she is dead and the man used to live with her for five years before she died and he is still alive, he will be entitled in the same way as if he is was a lawful husband, that is to say for one half, one third if they left children and one half if they didn’t leave any children. But we have here how are you going to get the evidence that the man and the woman used to live together, this is where we are suggesting it, the administrator may, in determining whether sub section one applies in any particular case, that is if you are living together. The Administrator may accept an affidavit by two credible persons. That is a document you swear, so if Tom Jones is dead and Marry say, I used to live with Tom for five years up to his death, all the administrator is saying, get two credible witnesses who knew you were living with Tom swear a document call an affidavit, and then the administrator will accept that as evidence. If you don’t do that so, you wouldn’t be able to get it through the Court easily.

We go on further in clause 7 in the case where the name of the worker does not appear on the birth certificate of the person claiming to be a child, the administrator

may notwithstanding the provisions of the administration of Estates Act, the Status of Children's Act and any other law to the contrary accepts an affidavit by two credible persons attesting to the relationship of the claimant and the worker as prove of the persons status as child of that worker. Let me explain that. Well we know in many cases people live in common law union, sometimes they don't even live in a common law union but they have children as they used to say in the old days, bastard, but we don't have any bastard any more. Children born in wedlock and out of wedlock. So a child who is born out of wedlock what will happen here and he says, I am the child of Tom Jones who is dead, but Tom Jones is not on his birth certificate, we are saying you can't exclude him from getting any of the money, you can't say no he mustn't get any of the money. He can go if Tom Jones, if his father's name is not on the birth certificate, he can get two credible witnesses who will swear an affidavit saying, yes, I know that Tom Jones was the father. Tom Jones did live with Mary who is the mother, and Tom Jones sent him to school. Tom Jones used to take him to church. Tom Jones accepted him as his son, that will be taken. Two credible witnesses, as evidence of the status of that child. If you don't do that it wouldn't make sense you leave the severance pay there because the lawyers would take all, because you would have to go under the status of Children Act to make an application to Court and to make an application to Court by summons, the least a lawyer is going to charge you is a thousand dollars. And that is only part, and if there is a challenge the two lawyers between themselves they will eat up all the severance pay money. I am not saying anything against lawyers, because I am a lawyer, I am just telling you factually what will happen, because you have to pay lawyers for their work. So this is what this law is doing. For those who are dead the beneficiaries to make it easy for them to get the money. And I am quite sure that the Leader of the Opposition would applaud the manner in which this piece of legislation has been crafted to help poor people. Another joyous day for them, because the weeping has continued so long that joy has now cometh in the morning.

Clause 8, the administrator shall not distribute the severance payment of the worker to a beneficiary in accordance with section 72 of the Administration of Estates Act until a completed form one as set out in the schedule is in his position, and he is satisfied that the persons name in the form are all persons entitled to share in the severance payment. And we put a simple form at the back for people to fill out. Name and address of the worker. Date and place of death. Name and address of the wife or husband or as the case maybe somebody who you have a continuous living relationship with for five years prior to the death and that person is still alive. The name and address of each child who is entitled and if the worker has no spouse or children living, you must state which persons are entitled under section 62 of the Administration of Estate's Act setting out particularly how each person is entitled to a share and then you swear the declaration. And if it is done this way, the poor people who are getting the money do not have to pay any lawyer any money, unless they want to go to a lawyer to take their money. This is the Act of a thoughtful, compassionate

government, making sure that the severance pay reaches the hands where it is supposed to reach. I know the what is going through the mind of the Opposition Leader and members on that side, and the NDP activists on the ground, when they fellas done with this, you can't go in up there to call NDP name anymore. You can't go down Wallilabou and down Richmond to call NDP name any more. I know they have a problem, but that's their problem. When you make good policy, righteous policy in the interest of the people, it is only just that you get the proper rewards for the righteous policies. Only just.

And Mr. Speaker, Clause 9 (1) an administrator appointed under this Act is empowered to administer oaths. So what we are going to do practically, we will get a form for the affidavit. The Attorney General can draw up a simply form for the affidavit that the person goes in front of the administrator and the administrator can actually just take the name, save them the money from going to lawyer to draw up the affidavit, or if you want to go to a lawyer to do it, well that's up to you. You have your choice. You just prepare a simple form, an affidavit form. You don't have to put that in the Act because affidavits are general documents. For the purpose of this Act the provisions of the Declaration in Lieu of Oaths Act shall apply, those are just provisions which governs how you sign things.

And Clause 10 no legal action shall be brought against the administrator for anything done by him in the performance of his duties under this Act, except for willful misconduct and fraud. So that the administrator, if the administrator makes a simply error that Mary should have gotten but Elizabeth got, you can't sue the administrator for that because you have to bring a finality to this process, but if the administrator misconducts himself, or herself willfully, or if he or she commits an act of fraud, well then you can take action against the administrator. I think that is fair and reasonable. Now you see how I want the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to know how their government is acting in practical terms for the poor and the working class. Never has this been seen in the history of the Caribbean, not St. Vincent and the Grenadines only the history of the Caribbean.

I want to say this I know if I were on the Opposition, you know what advise I will give to myself over there, I would grin and bear this one. I would say the Government has played a shot through the covers and I can't stop it. And I would just stand up and just watch it, and I would applaud and keep quiet and hope that by not keeping any noise people might forget about it. You know sometimes when the shot so sweet you can't do anything other than stand up and clap your hands. As Saluce says you have to clap for that one.

Now, when this list was prepared, because we do things very, very carefully. After the law was passed here on the 20<sup>th</sup> to put aside the \$2 million, I asked the Ministry of Agriculture to check through the names again and when they check through the names

and they told me that they have checked them through because I am only Prime Minister, I can't go and check through all the names, there are people who would do that. Public Servants would do that and they advised me that they are satisfied that the list is in order on the 27<sup>th</sup> of July, I signed each page and sent the instructions to the appropriate authority for the cheques to be prepared, and the cheques were prepared at the Accountant General's Office which is the correct place for the cheques to be prepared. I want to say this, I also told the Ministry of Agriculture that there would be some people whose names are not on this list but they are entitled because the records were scrappy and they had to be pieced together, so you may well find another 50 or 60 persons maybe even a hundred might be entitled and if that is the case we will have to bring a supplementary estimate in order to pay those others who are entitled, but I couldn't wait "until thy Kingdom come" for the list, to be completely verified, I had to go with one which was 98, 99% correct, and I think practical people would have agreed with the way in which I had proceeded.

I want to say this, Mr. Speaker, the last time I was in the House, number 16 on the list Promise Bentick at Fitz Hughes, who when I had gone to his house during the Election campaign and he said no, no, I don't believe that this could happen, I said wait you will see, and I said that before we distribute the first set of money, I will go down and see him personally, and I have to report to the House that on Sunday I went up at his house on the hill in Fitz Hughes to see Promise. Because I keep my word, if I give it to the House. My word is my bound. We gave the people our word that we will pay this money, and we have paid it; and we have set out all the machinery practically.

The National Commercial Bank has been asked to make the payments, for up at Rabacca and up at the Branch at Georgetown, but you know it is a lot of money up there, its about \$1.6 million. \$1.6 million dollars, the bank may not have all that cash up in Georgetown so they may well determine that up to a particular sum they will cash, and then those with the bigger cheques can come to town. Those down at Wallilabou and down at Fitz Hughes, they would be able to go to the Revenue Office. I have been advised in Barrouallie to get their money, unless of course any of them would want to come to town to change their cheque. I just want to say yesterday, I thank Almighty God that I was alive to see that these poor workers got their severance pay. I thank Almighty God. It is one of the most joyous things that I have every experience in my political life. Old people came and danced with me, man and woman. One come to me and I asked how much you got? She said Comrade, my eyes bad, look at it for me, \$5,600.00. An old man brought one, I said how much you get, he said Comrade me na look at it yet, look at it for me, \$9,800.00. The lady who got the \$5,600.00, the lady she said I going to finish my house. How could anybody begrudge these people getting their money? You had to be the devil incarnate to begrudge these people their money. The hottest part of Hell would be reserved for people who begrudge poor people their hard earn money, and those who have received the monies as an act of grace they

also deserve it, because they have toiled and laboured hard. We have corrected a monstrous historic wrong and I want to say this, that I have kept my promise.

When we would have finished paid these workers, I will turn my attention as Minister of Finance to paying the Parliamentarians their pensions. I have indicated that their Government has not left me any money to pay them their gratuity; and the gratuity for a few people from the NDP side is like the \$2 million, not easy gratuity they getting. Then their pensions hefty, but we will pay the pensions because we are a government of laws, but they would have to wait a little while to collect the golden handshake; and those who owe the Government we will make the deductions from the gratuity. I think that is fair and that is reasonable. We are acting as a government of laws. I am sure that this Bill today will get a very speedy passage and today like on July the 20<sup>th</sup> and like yesterday on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August, when Vincent Beache was given a wonderful birthday present, being there present at that ceremony that this House will say a lusty yea, and everybody on the Opposition I will hear their voice even louder and whilst they are they quietly let them ponder, when they rise to speak to say their mia culpas, they a mia culpas, they a maxima culpas. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members it is now ten to one perhaps it is an appropriate time to take lunch. I know the Leader of the Opposition usually like two hours lunches, but I was wondering if he would be satisfied merely 1 hour and 40 minutes today. Twenty minutes short of the usual time. So perhaps Mr. Speaker, if we can be back at 2:30 p.m., that seems fair, I move the motion accordingly that this House is suspended over the luncheon period until 2:30p.m.

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

SUSPENSION FOR LUNCH 1:50 p.m.

RESUMPTION AFTER LUNCH 2:35 p.m.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, at this time, Mr. Speaker, we are looking the act to make special provisions for the payment of monies to beneficiaries of former workers of Orange Hill, Richmond and Wallilabou who have died interstate without a personal representative being appointed.

Mr. Speaker, during the last sitting of this Parliament the Government brought Supplementary Appropriations which included an amount of \$2 million to be paid for severance payments with respect to workers on those estates. We had a very spirited discussion, a debate, Mr. Speaker, on that particular aspect of the Supplementary Appropriations at the time, Mr. Speaker, in making our presentation on this side of the House we questioned, Mr. Speaker, a statement attributed to the Prime Minister about

righting a historic wrong, a statement which he dealt with again in the pre luncheon session.

Mr. Speaker, it has been presented to this House, and the public in a manner which suggest that the Opposition was opposing severance payments to workers. And I heard the Prime Minister this morning using some Latin phrases which he feels that I should use, but I don't have any intention, Mr. Speaker, of using those phrases, because we on this side of the House did not when the vote we did not oppose the severance payment, and I want to make that clear to the public because what is being played here, Mr. Speaker, is we all know a little politics.

In deed, Mr. Speaker, the genesis of this legislation really has nothing to do with righting any wrong. The genesis of this legislation, Mr. Speaker, is an effort on the part, and a legitimate effort, Mr. Speaker, I don't have any problem with it, a legitimate effort on the part of the Government to try and insure a hold on the seats in those particular areas, I have no problem with that, Mr. Speaker, because that is the cut and trust of politics, and in deed Mr. Speaker, I think the Prime Minister in his presentation today made that clear, if you recall his words, there were several occasions he mention that you can't go back out there, in those areas and talk NDP. So all of us know, Mr. Speaker we know the genesis of this legislation and really I want to repeat, really it has nothing to do with righting any historic wrong. It has to do with trying to get some security for the future. I don't know at what period, I can't pretend to say I know that. So Mr. Speaker, I want to make it absolutely clear again. [Interjection] My father is not me.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to reiterate the stance of the New Democratic Party on this particular matter, I want to repeat it for the workers out there because the Government has been trying to paint us in a particular way and again that is legitimate politics, but I want to say that we did not, and we don't now oppose any payment of severance, to the workers. If it were so, Mr. Speaker, we would have voted against it in the last session, sitting of Parliament. He distinctly made, Mr. Speaker, in terms of righting the historic wrong really had to do with our perception, Mr. Speaker, that in the context of our society and the years in which so many of our people were landless, it is clear that the NDP administration made an effort to get land to many more people in our society, than had land when we first came into office. And I don't think that that can be disputed, people will argue about the effectiveness of certain aspects of land reform and so forth and understand all that argument, but Mr. Speaker, the point I was making is that the historic wrong that we had to right was to try and deal with the distribution of land to more and more people in our country. That is essentially the position of the New Democratic Party represented in this Parliament, and I want to make that clear Mr. Speaker. You see, the Government often boasts Mr. Speaker, of its transparency and there is transparency in this particular piece of legislation, although, there are two areas which I seek clarification on a little later in this presentation.

But Mr. Speaker, we have to be careful in our presentation in this Honourable House, I know from time to time, we sometimes get exuberant and say things that we should not say, or say things that are only half-truths, and that goes against the grain of the transparency which I think the Honourable Prime Minister has been preaching. For instance, Mr. Speaker, this morning in response to a question, I heard the Honourable Minister of Agriculture speak about the Marketing board making a profit, Mr. Speaker, that was designed to say to the public of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, -- [Interruption] The point of relevance and contact is that piece of legislation appears to me to be quiet transparent, but there is no consistency in the attitude towards transparency.

Mr. Speaker, the Minister made the statement this morning and any one listening to that statement would believe that all of a sudden the Marketing Board has become a profitable in our State, but the fact remains, Mr. Speaker, that the Marketing Board made what in accounting language is called an operational profit, and Mr. Speaker, what does an operational profit means? Anyone hearing the Honourable Minister referring to a profit would think that the Marketing Board would be able to pay all of its expenses and still have something left over at the end. But what the Minister did not say and explain to the public that operational does not take into account the debts of the Marketing Corporation and the minute you take those debts into account, the Marketing Corporation, will show a significant loss. And that Mr. Speaker, is an example of the lack of transparency. I know the Honourable Prime Minister, [Interruptions] Ottley Hall didn't make a profit. I just want to make the point, Mr. Speaker, that even the Honourable Prime Minister this morning because, you have to admit that he has been consistent in his talk about transparency, had to make the statement of operational profit, because he didn't want to associate himself with the remark made by the Minister. So, Mr. Speaker, I want the public of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to understand that the Marketing Corporation did not make a profit.

Mr. Speaker, in his presentation, both in this Bill and on the Supplementary Estimates, the Honourable Prime Minister made reference to those persons who will receive, not severance payments, but ex gratia payments as a way of providing them with some form of compensation, even though they might not have been eligible for severance. I have no problem with that, Mr. Speaker, for several years now that has been done, for various numbers of the Public Service in minor categories of the public service, who have had to leave after a certain age and they have got ex gratia payment under the NDP administration year after year, so I have no objection whatsoever, Mr. Speaker, any categorization of workers not eligible for severance getting the opportunity to get payment by way of an ex gratia arrangement.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to point out, as I believe would have been pointed out in this Honourable House, before some of the persons who have been paid today lost their

jobs, before the NDP came into office in the previous Labour Administration. And no severance was paid then either, I think the Minister for National Security is fully aware of that, and I just want to make that point.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill attempts to make it easy for persons who are eligible for payments, families of persons who have died makes it easier for them to get the payments and at the same time get them at no cost, which I accept and I applaud, Mr. Speaker. There are, Mr. Speaker, a couple of areas which I need clarification.

First of all, Mr. Speaker, on the question of rights of successions which is on Clause 6 (1) and I would like to read it, in the case worker has not left a lawful widow or widower the term husband or wife as it appears in section 62 of the Administration of Estate Act for the purposes of this Act includes the person who has lived with a worker for continuous period of five years prior to the death of that worker, and is still alive at the coming into force of this Act. Am I to assume, Mr. Speaker, that five years prior to death means the immediately preceding five years? Is that the assumption, but isn't it subject to another interpretation. I am just questioning this on the basis of clarity, for instance should, it is not uncommon in our society, Mr. Speaker, for a person to have more than one five year common law relationship in his life, and I am wondering whether for the avoidance of doubt you can put in immediately prior to death, because it can avoid uncertainty.

The second issue that I wish to raise, Mr. Speaker, has to do with section 7, and again here I am seeking clarification. It says:-

In the case where the name of a worker does not appear on the birth certificate of a person claiming to be a child the administrator may notwithstanding the provisions of the Administration of Estates Act, the Status of Children Act and any other law to the contrary accept an affidavit by two credible person attesting to the relationship of the claimant and a worker as proof of the person status as child of the worker.”

What I am seeking clarification on, Mr. Speaker, I am left to understand that there is no circumstance in which an individual can raise this matter once the administrator has taken the decision, is that the case? There is no possibility of somebody asking for a review of the administrator's decision, because I don't think that would solve the purposes of this legislation, and it is not clear to me whether there is a right for a review.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** May I? The administrator is the person who is making the determination, the final determination, so if a decision is made by the administrator he can, in the normal process before the pay out takes place, he can make a review, he himself, but there is no review other than the administrator is within

the statute. So the administrator makes the decision, but if he makes the decision which, he may have made an erroneous decision before the actual pay out and the matter is drawn to his attention he can say okay I have made that decision, but I review that. If it is drawn to the attention after the pay out that's that because there is no process of review the statute, the bill as it is proposed, because you want to bring finality to this matter.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** So his decision in all circumstances would be final? Mr. Speaker, with those two clarifications and the minor amendment to insert the words 'immediately prior' or 'immediately' I think the Bill as presented in this Honourable House is acceptable to us on this side of the House. I simply want, Mr. Speaker, at this point in time to again reiterate that the Opposition in this Parliament did not oppose the payment of severance pay to the workers. [Interruptions] No, no we did it in the Parliament last time, we supported it, what we contested what you try to do by saying, trying to appear that we are opposing it. It is a tactic that you use all the time, and every time you use that tactic we will continue to address it. You do it all the time. [Interruption] No, no, that's what it relates to? You said in this Parliament that we were opposing the severance payments and we oppose any severance payments in this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, and I want people outside there to understand that, because what we are involved in here, man, is a political exercise. Yes it is a political exercise and the same way you are trying to portray us on this side of the House as not wanting to pay the severance payments, I am also saying that we have no objection to the payments of those severance payments, no objections whatsoever, so I want the people to understand that very, very clearly.

Mr. Speaker, I understand the rationale for making the payments and during the course of the year, as we have said in the last debate there would have to be occasion from time to time when there would be need for supplementary appropriations, the Prime Minister this morning did indicate and he did so in the previous sitting of the Parliament, that there may be circumstance some people may have been left off the list and it then might be necessary to have further supplementary appropriations to deal with that, and we have no particular difficulty with that, I just hope, Mr. Speaker, that as we deal with all these, because supplementary appropriations in this Parliament have always been bone of contention when what is now the Government was in Opposition, and already we have had some which we have accepted and approved; but I think the Prime Minister has indicated that he has to look closely at the fiscal situation in terms of how he deals with the supplementary appropriations, and I want to encourage him to continue to look very closely at that fiscal situation, because he well knows what is happening not only here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, but in the rest of our region, in terms of the fiscal situation and the difficulties associated with collecting revenues based on international trading. We have debated this matter in this House before, and I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that it is something that we have to take under advisement at all times. Other promises have been made, there have been

promises to pay additional two weeks pay to the civil service, that is going to amount to a few million dollars, all these are matters which we have to take under advisement as we look at the overall situation in terms of the economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The Prime Minister is well aware that in many of our sister countries in the OECS there is considerable deterioration on the fiscal, considerable, and very often, Mr. Speaker, one finds the necessity to have to make cuts to ensure that we keep things in some sort of balance. Mr. Speaker, this is not by way of criticism, this is by way of dealing with the reality of the fiscal condition. I am not suggesting that you should not pay the severance pay because of the fiscal, I am simply saying as we dealing with the additional supplementary appropriations, because I know that is what is going to be said, that we look at the fiscal balance at all times. Because, Mr. Speaker, and I want to repeat it here as I have done in the House of Parliament before on several occasions, I want to repeat it because we are subject in our agreements with contributors and donors to our public sector investment programme, we are subject to certain savings targets and much as we are like to do everything we can't Mr. Speaker, do everything, we have to prioritize and sometimes take decisions which people may not like, that is the reality, Mr. Speaker, it is not a pleasant reality, but it is the reality nevertheless.

So Mr. Speaker, very often you would find that in our system you would have arrears to institutions, sometimes, Mr. Speaker, you have to make a choice between clearing those areas and doing something like what we are doing today, that too is reality, Mr. Speaker, and you will find Mr. Speaker, that in respect of all the countries in our region including the more developed countries that that is also the case. It is a matter, Mr. Speaker, of competing activities, all coming from the same pool of funds, and it behooves us at all times, Mr. Speaker, and I can't repeat it often enough, it behooves us at all times to bear that in mind. You know we can make, or take me make political capital by saying, well you owe the university, or you owe the OECS, but check all the countries, there was a time Mr. Speaker, when we paid all our contributions to the OECS very early and other countries didn't pay so we were helping to carry the burden for them. So let us not think, Mr. Speaker, that overnight we will find ourselves in a situation where we get rid of all our arrears to institutions and indeed Mr. Speaker, and I want to make this point because I believe to some extent it has been tackled over and over again. Very often the budgets of the institutions are increased without necessarily having the full approval of the individual government, and you find yourself having to make a larger contribution to the institution, which means that you have to increase the size of your own budget, the programme or project that is proposed is not done as in the case of the Supreme Court, but the next year the entire amount is shown as arrears that you are owing, and very often, Mr. Speaker, you have to question those arrears and I believe recently the OECS made some progress in that matter where some arrears were not recognized and agreements are made to pay others and this is not something, Mr. Speaker, that will go away. It won't go away, it will always be with us, so we can make the political noises; it is nice for the public to hear. The Prime

Minister characterized it this morning as being left with a bad hand, but those arrears Mr. Speaker, in the varying quantities will always be with us, will always be with us, and it is not St. Vincent and the Grenadines alone, you will find it in every one of our countries and in many cases in a worse situation that we here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. So we understand the politics, but in the Parliament, Mr. Speaker, when we get down to the nitty gritty, let us all understand that we have an obligation to our people, and I think we understand that, we have an obligation to our people to maintain some sort of balance as far as these matters are concerned.

So I like always, Mr. Speaker, to distinguish between some of the politics and some of the more technical issues which the public does not always hear about us. It is like the Minister this morning with the operational profit. The public will not always grasp that because there is not explanation given but those things are dangerous, because we are not as our Prime Minister likes to say, we are ennobling the civilization, we are tricking, tricking, by deceiving the public rather than improving their education on matters of this sort and these are serious times,

It is the same argument that is used against the value added tax, when we presented the budget last year, for political reasons, say well, government is going to bring in value added tax and we have to oppose that for political reasons, but today reality dictates that you on that side of the House now have the task of assessing the viability of imposing the same value added tax on this country. So again, Mr. Speaker, we distinguished between the politics and the technical; but if we are to enlighten our population, Mr. Speaker, we have to look at both, and that is where my worry is, Mr. Speaker, that in our desire to score political points, we sometimes mislead the very people who elected us here to assist them in improving. And, Mr. Speaker, [Interruption] That's what you are saying now. Mr. Thompson and myself had it out on the radio yesterday. But Mr. Speaker, the issue is --- and let me say something, Mr. Speaker, you know, you noticed I was saying the political points and the technical, I was not necessarily, Mr. Speaker, referring to one party against another, I said sometimes we like, we like to score the political points; so I want to make that clear too. You know. And I understand it, but I am saying we have an obligation to the people of our country to go a step further, and perhaps that is something of the new politics, because we really, if we are to deal with the issues that are going to confront us with the FTA and so on over the next five, ten, years we have to educate our population, sensitize them to a lot of these issues so that they will understand when a government makes a decision. All of it is not easy, I admit, some of it we ourselves might not understand but at least we have an obligation, Mr. Speaker, where we do understand to try and explain it to the populace that we serve. I am worried, Mr. Speaker, as a Vincentian citizen of the country, I am worried when I look at what is happening around us internationally, it is something that I think about every day.

The problems we now face with the banana industry have their genesis, a lot of it in the international environment, in which we now have to operate, and we as a Parliament Mr. Speaker, have to come into this House here and take decisions, the government has to take decisions, and those decisions, Mr. Speaker, are not going to be popular decisions, but they have to be made. They have to be made. There is no question about it. We know that the industry has to be restructured if it is to survive, and it is not a sort term process. The Ministry has changed over the years. But there is a certain urgency because of 2005 and beyond which all of us, Mr. Speaker, has to be concerned about. So I just make these comments, Mr. Speaker, because I believe that we have that obligation in this House to try and insure that as far as is possible we try and bring further light, further elucidation to the serious issues which confront our society. In this general context, Mr. Speaker, I will support this legislation.

**HONOURABLE JULIET GEORGE:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise in support of this Bill. The Bill makes special provisions for the payments of monies to beneficiaries of former workers of the Orange Hill/Richmond and Wallilabou Estates. Mr. Speaker, at first I wish to commend the Unity Labour Party Government for this Bill, for having the insight for looking after the poor and the down trodden in society. [Applause].

Mr. Speaker, the Severance Payment Bill allows for survivors and beneficiaries of those workers. In this Bill, the severance payment not only includes severance as we know it, but it also includes ex gratia payments. Mr. Speaker, this Bill is good for the poor and the workers of the estates of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker when I look at the Bill and I tried to look at it in context of someone who does not, under the laws and how they function and were pleasantly surprised to see how well I understood it. It is well written. It is well drafted. The Bill Mr. Speaker, is simple. It is systematic and it is methodical. It is easy for the offspring, the successors, children of those workers to be able to get hold of it and read to their parents and explain to them what exactly they are coming into.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill also empowers the administrator. This is good. The ULP Government is a party of organization. It is also a party of transparency. It is also a party of accountability. Mr. Speaker, by placing the onus on administrator is easy to go that person and to get accurate account of what has taking place, and what is taken place with regards to the payments. Mr. Speaker, this Bill which I know upsets the Opposition members when we say it is definitely righting a historic wrong. It is well over due Mr. Speaker, these were State workers, men and women, they work hard to toil the soil and I am sure Mr. Speaker, that these Honourable Members in this Honourable House would agree with me when I say that working on the lands, working in the fields is one of the hardest work that they could encounter, and Mr. Speaker, when we refer to estate workers, in our mind we have no doubt about the efforts, the

labours that were put out by these workers, and Mr. Speaker, I look at the list of the payments that were paid out yesterday in Orange Hill, and I see a total of 560 persons, Mr. Speaker, there were 313 males and 257 females, Mr. Speaker, as a woman I wonder if it is because of high numbers of females why the NDP government failed to address this payment. Mr. Speaker, 257 women toil and laboured along side the men, there were 56 men more than women on that particular Orange Hill Estate, so it is with particular pleasure that I applaud this Unity Labour Party Administration for looking into the needs of those women, of those workers. This Government will continue to do all within its power to continue to assist the poor and the destitute, the underprivileged, we will continue to pay severance pay whenever it is due, whenever possible.

Mr. Speaker, at this particular point in time I would like to refer to some of the remarks made by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition in the last sitting of the House, and he made some remarks again to that particular issue, he said in fact that he felt the way to go that lands should be paid to those workers, we in the Unity Labour Party, we support ownership, we support land ownership. But Mr. Speaker, I just like to refer to that particular land issue and some of the out comes of that project that was instigated by the New Democratic Party Government. I understand that there were over a thousand persons from the London, Maggom, Field Eight and Tourama who had applied for the lease that was given out at that particular point in time when the Land Reform programme was in progress, Mr. Speaker, up to date no leases have been registered, but I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that this Honourable House knows that monies for the preparation for those leases have already been collected, yet Mr. Speaker, those persons are still without registration of their leases. Mr. Speaker, I would like to list four out comes of that particular project. Over the a thousand persons who applied, some are still paying leases with no idea when the option will be come available to exercise their option to buy, Mr. Speaker, out of frustration others have sublet the land, thirdly some have just transferred the lands to anyone who feel they can work them, and fourthly which is very sad, Mr. Speaker, others have just simply abandoned the lands. Mr. Speaker, we support the ownership of lands, but Mr. Speaker, we also support more so that ever the people must be paid, for their hard toil and labour. You cannot tell me in this Honourable House that the offer of lease with an option to buy is any compensation for monies that should have been paid because of labour that has already been expended. Mr. Speaker, what is even more ironic, only 500 of those leases can be accounted for, nowhere does anyone know what happened to the extra 500 plus of persons who applied for leases. Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition himself would like to know what has happened. The project failed, Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, it is so good that this wrong can be made right, determination of any employment, Mr. Speaker, must be consistent with to the principles of nature justice, secondly, Mr. Speaker, the principles enunciated by the international labour organization and the laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the morning we heard the

Honourable Prime Minister stating that the Employers Protection Act was drafted and became an Act in 1980. Mr. Speaker, there was also a revised edition in 1990, and the basic principles were carried over, and if we were to look at the Protection Employment Act Revision 1990 Chapter 150 part 2 which deals specifically with severance pay we will see at section 10, subsection (1) where the there the Act clearly defines those who are eligible for severance pay. Mr. Speaker, those workers on those estate qualify under part 2 section 10 subsection (1) of the 1990 Revised Edition.

Mr. Speaker, if we also look at subsection of section 12 subsection one of the same protection Act of 1990, we also see that the law clearly stated when severance pay should be made available. And he said there, I would just like to quote if I may be permitted, Mr. Speaker, it says:-

Severance pay shall be payable whenever the service of an employee is terminated by an employer, it shall be the duty of the employer to remit to the credit of the employee the severance pay due to him, Mr. Speaker, we elect governments and Governments are there for the protection of its nationals.”

Mr. Speaker, the NDP Government had all right under the Act to make sure those workers were compensated, it is a crying shame today, Mr. Speaker, that it took the Unity Labour such a time to get into Office and to make sure that this is carried out. I say once again, commendation to the Unity Labour Party.

Mr. Speaker, in this Bill that we are debating today, it also has under clause 7 where it talks about the claim by a child or also clause 6 the rights of succession, even in the act of 1990, the Consumer Protection Act section 12 subsection (5) also dealt with the rights of succession, so Mr. Speaker, by this Bill being brought to Parliament today we are not creating any Act we are ensuring that the Acts that were created particularly the Act of 1990, the Revised Edition is carried out to our people, the poor and the destitute, Mr. Speaker. I am sure that now, Mr. Speaker, the NDP party now in Opposition, they will recognize the problems that we saw as we went up and down the country, in particular these areas where these areas seem to hold the poorest people in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and it is a crying shame today that such poverty still exists, Mr. Speaker, St. Vincent boasts of its economy which is founded on agriculture, yet last year Mr. Speaker and I hate to having to go back, but in order to one plots the future and plans history, takes place and will continue to take place. Mr. Speaker, as I was saying it is a crying shame that last year on the NDP platform, they in fact try to dissuade people from going to the land, yet many of us in this Honourable House will know that most of us our education was grounded on the sweat from our parents from the land.

Mr. Speaker, it is a privilege today that I rise to support this Bill, it is a pleasure to support this Bill to make sure that Bill has a safe passage in this House. Mr. Speaker, I cannot reiterate enough how the last Government failed the poor. They failed the women. They failed the underprivileged, and by failing the women and the underprivileged they are in fact responsible for a lot of the illiteracy in our country today.

Mr. Speaker, it took a Unity Labour Party Government, a workers government, a government for the workers to put right this wrong, and we must not be ashamed of that. Mr. Speaker, this Bill has been debated, long and hard. It started in the last sitting, and I am sure what I am saying has been said before, but Mr. Speaker, I am sure that there are others who would like to speak, and there are many times when I am long but today I will be short. Mr. Speaker, again I say commendation to the Unity Labour Party. The people out there they are pleased, they are proud.

In North Leeward there is a gentleman who, since he heard of this Bill to be brought to Parliament and he knows that he has been qualified, and he has been dressing everyday saying, I don't know which day they coming to pay, and I am getting ready. I don't care whether it is a thousand dollars or two thousand dollars whatever comes I will be happy, because I thought I would never get anything. I heard in the last sitting here, I heard the Honourable Leader of the Opposition talk about a thousand dollars, two thousand dollars, well I am sure to those on that side, a thousand dollars and two thousand dollars is nothing but peanuts; but to these people real flesh and blood it means an awful lot. Don't tell me the sums of money are too small because I know it will make a lot happy.

Mr. Speaker, I wish this Bill an easy and safe passage through this House. [Heavy thumping].

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your recognition, but in view of the fact that the Parliamentary Secretary has not spoken before I would yield to him, so he might make his maiden speech.

**HONOURABLE EDWIN SNAGG:** I rise to make my maiden contribution in this Honourable House, and I want to thank the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs for yielding, and for giving me this opportunity so to do.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this Bill that is now before this Honourable House. The policies of this administration, the programmes of this administration and the vision of this administration was clearly outlined and defined in the manifesto of 2001. This Bill Mr. Speaker, is just a part of the vision of the ULP administration. [Applause]. Mr. Speaker, the sweat, the blood and the tears of agricultural workers whether paid or unpaid whether forced or willing has been the pillars and the foundation of all-Caribbean societies. And so, Mr. Speaker, St. Vincent and the Grenadines is no

exception. In St. Vincent and the Grenadines the agricultural workers have made their contributions, and the contribution of the agricultural worker must not, cannot, and will not go unnoticed under this administration. Mr. Speaker, this Bill as it is, it comes as a seal to righting of the historic wrong, regardless of how the Opposition may want to phase it, the reality is that it is a historic wrong because anytime a people happen to be denied basic or fundamental rights or privileges that they are due to receive by law and it is not given to them, it is a historical wrong. It is a wrongdoing; there is no question about that. And this Bill, Mr. Speaker, seeks to give justice to the heirs and beneficiaries of their forefathers. The 'Mighty Chalk Dust,' one of the Caribbean prolific calyposians, in one of his calypsos entitled 'Me Grandfather back pay,' says give me my grandfather back pay, I want me grandfather back pay.' This is a classic example of my grandfather's back pay. This is a classic example of my grandfather's back pay.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I am asking the members in the gallery please do not participate, please stop.

**HONOURABLE EDWIN SNAGG:** And this Government, this administration of the Unity Labour Party has a particular weakness, when I say a weakness Mr. Speaker, not a structural weakness, you know, but I am talking about a weakness, encompasses a certain love for the working class and for poor people of this country and that must be recognized. [Applause] And this Bill is a clear indication of the feeling that this administration has towards the poor and destitute in our society and that must be regarded. Mr. Speaker, the brothers on the block have a term that they use, you know, it is one thing to stand and to talk in the Honourable House, it is one thing to stand on a political platform, and it is one thing to present things in our manifesto, but it is another thing to get into government and to bring it and make it a reality according to the brothers on the block, this administration isn't just talking the talk, you know, we walking the talk.

It is the norm, Mr. Speaker, for historic compensation, people are looking for historic compensation throughout the world, there is no question about that. Right now there is talk, compensation for slavery is now high on the agenda, compensation for atrocities and injustices that have been done to people throughout various parts of the world at various times, people are not seeking for compensation. What is happening here is that St. Vincent and the Grenadines has taken a leadership role in righting of historical wrongs and the ULP is the catalyst and the leader of that particular role. [Thunderous applause] Mr. Speaker,--

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Senator, just a minute. I am going to ask those persons in the gallery please refrain from taking part in the debate. Please.

**HONOURABLE EDWIN SNAGG:** Mr. Speaker, the hours that were put in by the workers on the Estates in Orange Hill and in Richmond, the type of work that was done, the

commitment with which they worked, the remuneration that they received, Mr. Speaker, is something we need to look at, and we need to look at it carefully, in order to recognize and understand the level of the contribution that they made, because there is no question about it, the type of work that was done by those workers will not have been done by youths today, every member in this Honourable House knows that. I heard yesterday out at Orange Hill, a man by the name of Walters read a poem. The poem, Mr. Speaker, seems as if it came from the very bowels of the Estate worker, because it spoke about his toils, it spoke about his hours, it spoke about all the struggles that he went through, and it gives us an indication of the life would have been with those workers, and for them in the final analysis to go home with nothing, with no severance, no compensation. Mr. Speaker, they must be saying thank God, for this administration. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker, when a person dies interstate and most of the time, 95% of the time people who would die interstate is people who don't have anything, you know, who poor and who suffering, the man who possess tangible wealth he will make sure that he does not die that way, he makes a will and he does all the necessary legal things for proper succession, but it is the poor man, it is the poor individual, the struggler in the society who dies interstate, because most of the time they have nothing to leave, they might have a house on a little piece of land, sometimes they don't even have title for it, it passed on by some grandparents, they have no time to think about making any will, Mr. Speaker, because they think about getting through the daily struggles of life. They think about getting something to eat on a daily basis. Sometimes not knowing where the next meal is coming from. They don't have anytime to think about will. It is we who are placed in these Honourable Chairs here who must look after them, and what we are doing here is that we are righting the will for them this evening. [Applause].

Mr. Speaker, this indeed is a caring administration, this Bill was drafted, crafted because of the understanding of this administration has of the society. It is not every administration that understands the societies with which they are entrusted you know, the NDP certainly didn't seem to understand. In order to perform the leadership role in any society, in any community, in any country, one must understand the society at every level and every stratum. And want to commend the Honourable Prime Minister for the vision and the thought that went into this Bill here this afternoon, because it shows that he has an understanding, a total understanding of the Vincentian society, from the affluent to the grass root, because you cannot for one minute think about the leadership of a nation and don't understand what is taking place with the worker in the field or the peasant, or don't understand what is taking place with the man on the bayside, or don't understand what is taking place with the brother on the block who get up in the morning and has nothing to do, and have no where to go, no work, nothing to draw his attention. One must have a total understanding, you must understand what it is in your society for a man to be hungry, you must understand the feeling and the pain

of those who will get up on mornings and don't have anything to eat, or anything to drink and this Bill here Mr. Speaker, this is not a dragoon piece of legislation you know, this is a humanitarian piece of legislation, man. [Applause] This is a bill that goes to the very core; this is something that comes from the bowels of a caring administration because we understand that we are dealing with poor people who don't have the means. Most of the time Mr. Speaker, when the poor man is left with something interstate he doesn't worry to look administrate for it when he think about the cost and the hassles of administration. Sometime if it is little money he might look for a little lawyer because he want to get the little change but when he goes to the lawyer and he hears the fee for the administration, sometimes he leaves it alone. The Honourable Prime Minister I am sure could testify to certain times when people would have come to him, and that when he look at them and he look at their condition and see what it is, he has no other choice but to do it for free if you are a man of conscience.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure, you know, to see legislation like this. This is not the present you know, this little piece of document we have here in front of us entitled the Distribution of Severance Payment Act 2001 is just the wrapper on the package. The real present, Mr. Speaker, is yet to come and the real present, Mr. Speaker, is the upliftment of the way of life of all the peoples of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and this administration is out to accomplish that.

Mr. Speaker, severance is normally considered and is known by law as to be a payment or compensation for years of service. But Mr. Speaker severance goes further than that, you know, severance is an idea, is a philosophy that is based on justice and fair play and severance, Mr. Speaker, is not only when a man is severed from a job, he could be severed from anything, he could be severed from his land, he could be severed from his rights, he could be severed from his normal and natural circumstances, he could be severance from his way of life, and all of them, Mr. Speaker, required compensation. And, Mr. Speaker, I some how want for a little minute to go on a tangent, and I want to crave the indulgence of the Speaker, and I want to take this Honourable House not physically but in spirit, and I want to transport this Honourable House to the Grenadines for a second, because when we talk about historical wrongs we must know that historical wrongs exist throughout the length and breath of this country. And that the NDP has left a number of historical wrongs and historical misdoings.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition at a previous sitting tried to play down the importance of the payment of severance, and I think again it happened today, by trying to indicate that the most important aspect was that the people were able to acquire the land. Of course the land out at Orange Hill was given to the people. It was given to the people at a price. We don't have a problem with that. I don't have a problem with that in terms of people acquiring lands. But Mr. Speaker, the NDP administration is guilty of double faulting, how give in one hand then take in the next.

He gives the impression that the NDP was so caring and so concerned about the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines owning land, while at the same time you look at a tiny island like Canouan with 1800 acres and give away 1200 to an investor. And then Mr. Speaker, that is not the whole point, because I would rather to discuss that at another time, but of the balance that remain they turn around and sold 28 acres to the investors, that the Unity Labour Party administration now has to be locked in negotiations to return that 28 acres to the people of Canouan, but even more so, Mr. Speaker, when we want to talk about historical wrong doings they themselves including members of the NDP took land out of the balance that was left, they took lands for themselves at \$1.50 per square foot, 80 cents per square foot, 50 cents per square foot, 40 cents per square foot, and then trying to give us the impression here that they so care about poor people getting lands. Mr. Speaker, that is not a historical wrong doing, you know, that is historical wickedness. That is sacrilege. That is tantamount to desecrating something that is sacred, that type of action, and it is now left to this administration to right some of these historic wrongs.

Mr. Speaker, and ironically, you know, while all these were taking place, you know that there were representatives in the House of Parliament coming from that constituency which I normally like to refer to as the marginalized constituency, and my colleagues on this side will tell you that I normally refer to the Southern Grenadines as the marginalized constituency, and there were representatives in that constituency from 1989, to 2001 sitting in this Honourable House and not one them, not a single one of them raised a voice against that atrocious act, to take the people's land at 40 cents and 80 cents and 50 cents, and then the remaining plots that are left Mr. Speaker, they offer to true born and bread indigenous people of Canouan for \$3.00 a square foot. I don't know the Latin word for penitence you know, maybe the Honourable Prime Minister might be able to help me here.

Mr. Speaker, I don't think that there is any need for any lengthy debate on this Bill, I believe that any man worth his conscience, any man who has any sense of godliness in him would support this Honourable House this afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, I saw yesterday what took place out at Orange Hill and the people of North Windward for years they need a voice and what took place yesterday was clear evidence that the people of North Windward have a voice, not only the voice of the Honourable representative who is doing an excellent job but the unified voice of the Unity Labour Party administration. And the people of North Leeward they too, now have a voice, as I say not only the voice of Dr. Thompson and his representation, but a unified voice of this entire administration. But even more so, Mr. Speaker, the people of the Southern Grenadines they too have a voice. They too have a voice. Mr. Speaker, and the voice doesn't necessarily have to be a loud one, you know, its just a voice that has been molded on the anvil of political struggle and understand their woos and their dreams and their aspirations.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the Unity Labour Party and the Honourable Prime Minister in their joint wisdom has appointed me to this Honourable House because of the recognition that there is need for balance in the representation for a constituency that was once marginalized, but no longer marginalized, fully integrated into main stream of economic, social and political life of this country. And you know, Mr. Speaker, that there will be blessings, because the Psalmist declared 'that blessed is ye that considereth the poor for the Lord will have mercy on him in his day of trouble.' So the Honourable Prime Minister and the Honourable Members of this ULP administration on this side will receive their share of blessings for this Bill that has come to deliver the poor but the Honourable members on the Opposite benches if they support this Bill diligently they too will receive their shares of blessings, even though it be as small as a mustard seed. And so Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you and all honourable members in this House and I want to thank those listening on the airwaves for their patience, and I am very much obliged.

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I have been sitting in this House for the past seven years or so, and recently I have been asked to serve the people as Foreign Minister of Affairs, Trade, Commerce and as Deputy Prime Minister. Long after I am gone, either by will of the people, or by resignation, or by death I would want to be remembered, Mr. Speaker, not so much as Deputy Prime Minister, or Foreign Affairs Minister but I want to be remembered as an apostle to the poor. One who has come to the Parliament to defend their interests and to be a voice for those who are vulnerable and voiceless. But I thank God that I have cast my lot with men of like feeling and opinions. It would have been very difficult for me to serve with the NDP administration because basically that is a party that has traditionally been anti-poor, and I have cast my lot with the Labour Party, a party that not only looks out for the interests of the working class, but for poor people generally. I could have easily sat down and probably the words that I have spoken previously, or those spoken on this side by the Honourable Prime Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary, Mr. Snagg, would have been adequate to represent my thoughts and my feelings, but because of the historical nature of this occasion, because of the significance of this bill, if I were to hold my peace the very stones would cry out, for certainly when one dies, death lock his jaws, that's j-a-w-s, but on this very day what we have done here has unlocked the jaws of those who have died years ago, and I am sure that they are smiling in their graves. Theology might sound incorrect, good but it sounds good, for this Bill seeks to provide for those who have been left behind, those who are the heirs of those who worked on the estates. I do not know very much about the experiences of those, many of my colleagues here in the House, but I wear it as a badge of honour that I am the child of an estate worker. I understand the groanings and the feelings of the people who have worked hard on the estates, and it is unfortunate that my grandmother and my mother, are not here today to see me sitting in Parliament and here to defend the cause of those who have toiled hard in

the fields, the estates of the white people. Many of them have had to get up early in the morning, they were not accustomed to electric light. They got up when the moon was bright, that was the light that they were accustomed to. Many did not have a clock in their homes, but they got up with the crowing of the cock. Many of them did not have breakfast as the Leader of the Opposition did at a table with eggs and bacon, but they sat on their hoe stick on a stone in the field, not with a tea cup held daintily with their little finger cocked out, but holding what we called a bottle cup of brown coco tea and sometimes, -- that's a tin cup, and sometimes with a round nice madowngo dumpling. Many of them had their waist banded by vine strings in order to prevent their petty coat or their dress from trailing in the mud. Their tril-la-lay. They had their waist banded by vine strings with their sweat coming down their brows, shimmering like diamonds in the bright moonlight. Yes, this was their lot. My grandmother and my mother did that for me; had to deny themselves some of the fancy clothing in order to provide whatever little they could to get me a little education however meager it was. Didn't have much in terms of clothing, never went hungry because the work from the estate they went to their little garden and they provided enough food for us in the kitchen, under the dresser, but this is the class of people that I have to come here, and however much I am inclined to sit and just shake my head in agreement with what the Prime Minister and the Parliamentary Secretary said, I have to join in speaking on behalf of this Bill that seeks to correct a historic wrong.

I don't know why the Leader of the Opposition gets up set when he hears this term, certainly if he thinks that they had corrected a historical wrong by giving lands to the poor, then they had a chance to so define what they were doing by saying that they were correcting a historic wrong, but they didn't have the genius to invent the phrase, and now that we have invented it, they want to steal it from us, and saying that they are quarrelling with us to say that we said that, we said that we were correcting a historical wrong, but they are the ones what corrected the historical wrong. We have so characterized and term what we are doing, they have characterized and term what they were doing years before, and they couldn't find the proper language to express it. So don't get vexed with us, if that is the language that we in the Opposition seek to characterize it, just accepts it graciously and if you want to mimic it, make sure that you don't engage in plagiarism but give attribution to the source from whence it has come.

Mr. Speaker, had it not been for the fact that God in his infinite wisdom has so ordained that the people should sent a ULP government in office, we would never have been here discussing anything dealing with severance pay for estate workers.

The Leader of the Opposition is saying, well we don't oppose the measure before us, and we never opposed severance pay, but Mr. Speaker, this is not exactly the way he should describe it, at least he was Financial, Fiscal Advisor to the previous, that is James Mitchell, the previous Prime Minister for a number of years. He himself has been Prime Minister for some six months, if you were to search the NDP manifesto, Mr.

Speaker, there is not a single word about providing severance pay for the estate workers, not a single word, and if they say they are not opposed to it then what he is doing is akin or like a man who is near the shore and somebody is drowning and calling out for help and he sits right there and somebody has to come from a mile away in order to save that man and then he says well, I was not opposed to the man who had to run from a mile away to save the man while he was sitting on the shore. Certainly he was guilty of criminal negligence, because he was closer to the shore, he was sitting right there sitting as Prime Minister and did nothing about it, so to come here now and to say well they never oppose it, and they agree with it, he ought to say he did not do one thing to help the poor people in this country, neither did his party, so he is guilty of criminal negligence, a certain kind of malignancy, in action as well as in thought. And he must accept some blame for it.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition and his party are not truly the party that has as its primary function or his primary mission rescuing the perishing or caring for the dying, they think only about themselves. Let us look at what the NDP did while they were in office, they did not think about providing pensions or gratuities for the estate workers, what they did was to up front and present a pensions and gratuities bill to make sure that they as parliamentarians were well paid and had the gratuities bill to make sure that they as Parliamentarians were well paid and had the gratuities, the poor people they push to the back and they themselves were right up in front, no wonder the good book says, looking at these, NDP men who brought the pensions and gratuities bill he had filled the hungry, the Estate workers with good things and the rich he sent empty handed away. And that is what we are doing. We are filling the hungry and the poor and the destitute with good things by providing them with the severance pay, and we are telling those from the NDP, those greedy men who brought the Pensions and the Gratuities Bill you would not get one grass farthing until the poor people are taken care of so we send you away empty handed until the poor people have been rewarded of the severance pay. Blessed is he that considereth the poor, the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble, and he that giveth unto the poor lendeth unto the Lord.

What my experience has been yesterday at Orange Hill I wish the Members of the Opposition had the courage to present themselves out there to see how graciously and how joyfully the people accepted their severance pay. Certainly I welcome them to Barrouallie on Thursday, and I am sure that my colleague, Mr. Thompson, would welcome them down to Fitz Hughes on Friday, it is good for them to come, don't be ashamed, notwithstanding the fact that you have neglected them, come and get a feeling how poor people feel when they get a little something. I don't want you, particularly those who are younger to do as the Leader of Opposition did to wait until you are 56 years old, and when elections come you running into people's house and then declare this is the first time you know how poor people live. Don't do that. Come down with us and get an experience how poor people feel when their politicians who

look out for their interest. The Leader of the Opposition said that this is all politics. This is all politics? Well there are two things there, the Leader of the Opposition must realize that he is a politician too, although he is not a very good one, he is not so highly regarded as good politician in the region or in the country because if he were a good politician he would listen to good advice and he had sound advice this morning, from the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister said that if he were the Leader of the Opposition, he would remain quiet so that this thing could be brushed over easily, but the problem with the Leader of the Opposition is that he doesn't listen, that is why he is not a good politician. If he had listened to us when we had told him not to introduce that Pension and Gratuities Bill, he would not have had cause to go on television and on radio call in programme and say he never understood how the people felt about this Bill, and if they were to listen to us, -- I don't know, I read the questions submitted time after time by the members of the Opposition and, I must beg the Prime Minister the next time he meets with the European Union people, he should ask them for some help so that they can have some institutional strengthening of the Opposition, because when you read the questions they present it shows up how weak and pitiful they are. We were three in the Opposition in 1994, and you must say with the two Senators we had, we were a quality, we matched their quantity with quality on the other side, we were sound opposition, exposing the Government and kneeling the Government but instead of that they bring questions, the very questions they bring, they get licks on the questions, so that somebody is asking me, two people ask me what happen are you people writing the questions for the Opposition? Because the question they bring they open themselves up to such licks that they themselves have to sit with their heads hang down, it is better they don't ask any questions than bring these kinds of questions that they get so much licks from this side of the House. Instead of kneeling the Government they helping the Government to kneel the Opposition. They look pitiful and hopeless on that side.

And so it is, Mr. Speaker, we side of the House, we are trying our best to enlighten the Members of the Opposition. We have shown that we are a party, and that our primary reason is not to serve ourselves, not to serve the rich, my colleague the Parliamentary Secretary has made mention of the fact that men who got in government who were here, the previous administration, they did their best to grabble up all government lands, 40 cents per square foot, they didn't think about the poor. They thought about themselves and how well they can feather their nest. No doubt many of them came here to do good, they started off with maybe high ideals, and they came into the House to do good but they ended up doing well for themselves. So they bought lands at cheap prices that ordinary poor people cannot buy, and so it goes and when you look to what this new government has done, if they were to speak the truth, they would have to admit that this is a government that has been out front providing a solid base for good governance. Providing a solid base in seeking out the interest of the poor. Poor people who have been occupying lands for a number of years can rejoice to know that under this new administration they would have title to their lands. The poor people

would rejoice to know that we would fulfill our promise in giving ten dollars off the water metre bill. The poor people would feel glad to know that we would reduce the minimum bill on the electricity bill from \$7.65 to \$5.00. The poor people can rejoice to know that we have provided severance pay, that they are going to enjoy. The poor are happy in that they are working, 1100 of them in the repairs of the school, and they would further rejoice because it is our intention for those who are receiving the non-contributory \$20.00 a week we are going to look seriously into increasing that to \$25.00 a week. All these are programmes not to enhance our own stature, but to promote the interest of the poor. What else could you ask for?

Mr. Speaker, we are pledged, we are committed in doing whatever we can to meet the needs of the poor, but I must commend the genius and the concern of the Prime Minister not only for providing the severance, but for providing this Bill which seeks to lighten the burdens that would have fallen on the people had they gone through the motions of the Administration and Estate Act in trying to get the money belonging to their deceased loved ones. This Bill has made it far easier for them to receive the money, far less expensive to receive the money. It is a well thought out Bill, and I think there is only one thing we need to modify and that is that we should probably state explicitly in the Bill that where they have to provide an affidavit in order to make claims there would be no stamp duty, no additional cost to them, all this would go a long way towards meeting the needs of the poor.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased with what we have done here so far. There are other historical wrongs which the NDP could have corrected, you know, there are poor people who invested money in state enterprises like the sugar industry and have not received a penny. I think of Ms. Wickcombe and old lady who cannot walk too well in Barrouallie and she has the document and she pledged for 17 years with this NDP administration, if they cannot give her back her money at least put her on the poor relief so that she can get a little something per month, and they refused just because she did not support the NDP, so she was twice victimized by being out of her money she invested in the sugar industry and in her old age not receiving the poor relief that she should have received. And this is the legacy of the NDP. You must come against us on this side who think differently with a new philosophy. Yes you may try to make it appear that you were not as bad as we try to portray you in that you don't oppose this Bill but what did you do? What did you do, you did absolutely nothing, this is why you have no choice but to sit there and support this bill.

I know that there are those Mr. Speaker, who instigated by the NDP people outside there have failed to take the best chance they had to get their names on the original list, because the NDP had as their national anthem, Ralph lie oh, Straker lie oh, Miss Miguel lie oh, and that was their national anthem. As a matter of fact, the NDP supporters some of them even complained to the Christian Council that we were breaching the accord that we were making promises to the people that we could not

fulfill. They themselves never believed that we would one day sit on this side and eyeball them, watch them and they shamelessly hang their heads in shame when they tell the people that we lie, and now the people are saying really it wasn't that Ralph lie, now we can rely on him, because he has lived up to his words and his promises, so there were many Doubting Thomases and we all know the story in the Bible about Doubting Thomas who did not believe in the resurrection, when he came face to face with reality the good master said to him Thomas reach hither thy hand and thrust it into my side and be not faithless but believing. When I go down to Barrouallie on Thursday to those skeptics, those who were doubtful, I am going to tell them, reach hither thy hand and put it into my side pocket and be not faithless but believing because you will come out with a cheque. That's your severance cheque. As Thomas finally exclaimed, 'My Lord and my God.' If he were living today, what Thomas would say, although I am an NDP we are together now. What Thomas was actually saying when he said My Lord and My God, was that we are together now and those Doubting Thomases when they come on Thursday to collect their cheques, -- well we are inviting you down, we want you to come to, we don't want to share the joy alone. You might be embarrassed. Even if we have to send the State car, the Mercedes Benz for you. We are going to ask you joy us, it is a happy occasion man. You think you smiling now, you would be smiling from ear to ear, because they would hug you up too and dance with you. You should see the Prime Minister there, you can't do that because you don't have the touch of the common people. But if you were to see the Prime Minister among ordinary folks, whether they had one foot or they were laming, everybody, they would grip the Prime Minister and they were dancing with him. You can't dance that kind of dance. You would feel ill at ease with that kind of thing. And they were singing, we are marching in the light of God. What we have done is to dispense with the darkness, we have broken the key and we have pry open the door so that the light of the star could shine in on these poor people sitting in their humble homes, that is why they can sing we are marching in the light of God.

My wife often sings, this beautiful song, "If I could help somebody as I pass along, if I can cheer somebody with a word or a song, if I can show somebody he is traveling wrong, then my living shall not be in vain. If I can do my duty as a Christian ought, if I ought, if I can bring back beauty to a world of wrought, if I could spread love's message as the Master thought, then my living shall not be in vain." Mr. Speaker, I am ecstatic, I am happy, if ever there is a piece of legislation that brings joy to my heart it is this legislation, because it has brought so much smile to so many people, when they say thank you, they say it from the bottom of their hearts. I am not a rum drinker myself, the very smell of it would send me staggering, but if this is the way that some of the fellows need to take a little time out and celebrate, if this is the way they know how to do it, I am not saying that they should put all of it in it, but if they want to celebrate with a little bit of it and that's their way, let them celebrate for this is big party. This is celebration, for 17 years thy waited on the NDP to do something; they did nothing, within the matter of a couple months after the ULP has gotten into office w e have done

something, and we have done much for the poor people and this is why I feel comfortable surviving not at the foot of the Prime Minister, but at his side. Those who say they are glad to serve at the foot of a previous Prime Minister, but I am glad to serve at his side, because we march to the beat of the same drum. The man has the interest of poor people at heart. And I have the interest of poor people at heart and so is if I may be permitted, Mr. Beache, Mr. Browne, Mrs. Miguel, all of us on this side we have the interest of the poor people at heart and Mr. Speaker, this legislation, this piece of legislation will go a long way. I might have said these things before, and I may say them again, but when the snaky is sweet you have to sing it over and over again because it never gets stale in your mouth and this is why I would say it now and I would say it on Thursday, this is in deed a great day for me, what we are doing here is what I have planned all my life, and I wish the Honourable Senator Shallow had the courage to just take the leap and join us, because every one heard of the injustice that was done to his mother and I am sure his heart, and I think he has a heart if he was trained by his mother, because I know Parmis well, and no, he would come over and we would find something for him, [interjection] No, we are not getting rid of Mrs. Miguel, the Prime Minister says, in my father's house there are many mansions, we have not exhausted all the mansions here. We would find a good place in the Kingdom for him.

We are pleased, and I am happy the Minister of Social Welfare and Community Development, Parliamentary Representative for Marriacqua, is one of the most popular politician we have in the country and the region. [Interjection] Well, that's all right, you don't intimidate me with that. Well, he probably picked that up from your boss, he is bearing the message from the de facto leader of your party. That's all you are doing, look how you have reduced yourself. You have reduced yourself now to bringing message from the de facto leader of your party in coming here and saying what he said, you should be embarrassed to be talking after what he says. The truth is, when I listen to Senator Snagg, and Senator George and any member on this side, any single one would put any member of the Opposition to shame, because although we have the numbers we have the quality, and we have capable men and women who sit here as Prime Minister, as Deputy Prime Minister, or what have you. I am not one of those who feel that I have to be Deputy Prime Minister, I am just a humble leader in the party, it doesn't matter, are you trying to sow seeds of discord, because you know very well the high regard the Prime Minister holds me in, you know that. But Mr. Speaker, I know what number you are, you move from number 1, I don't know where you are. You were humbled by the people.

Mr. Speaker, the measure before us merits our unconditional unequivocal support, and I am pleased to see, forced by circumstances that the members of the Opposition have supported the measure, however grudgingly, and we hope that it would have a speedy passage in this House, so that the matter of the severance pay could be passed out to the children of deceased members, and they too can share in the celebration, and we

ask all the members whether Opposition or government as we are doing. We are not victimizing anybody out there, whether you are NDP or ULP they would be coming down in Barrouallie to receive their cheques as they did in Orange Hill and as they would do in Fitz Hughes, they would be coming and receive their cheques, and we would not ask them their party affiliation, because this is in our heart, we want to do it for the poor people and I am sure that the blessings of God would remain on this Government as we proceed to make the live of those who are poor a little better, to live their burdens and to enable them to live a little better life by having these funds put into their hands. I trust that they would use it for good purposes and it would be a blessing to themselves and to their children. I thank you.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am not sure whether we just heard a political speech or sermon from a preacher in the Church of Streams of Consciousness, but here we had the Minister representing a situation where we on this side of the House have repeatedly said that we support the measure that would put money back into the hands of the people in an area where they have benefited tremendously from the earlier policies of the NDP. This matter has been debated at length when the Supplementary Estimates were presented. I had not expected that it would be drawn out again today, and I thought that having had a full debate on the issue, having heard the matter discussed in the public media, that we would deal with the technical aspects of this Bill and proceed on more important issues that we have to cover in this House as well. There are other issues that poor people in this country are also interesting in. We support, and I know that the members on the other side of the House are very disappointed in the fact that the Opposition has not opposed this measure, because quite clearly it reveals the true motive or the motivation behind the legislation which is as the Honourable Leader of the Opposition said, it has less to do with assisting poor people and addressing historic wrongs than to do with attempting to secure the political support of the people of the areas that are directly affected.

We operate on this side of the House on a matter of principle. I have said it in the past in the previous sitting of the House, that I believe that the money put in the hands of poor people of this country would be better spent than the money left in the hands of the Government. So if you want to give ex gratia payments and the entitlements to severance payments it is something that we welcome. We have said this repeatedly, and we say it clearly and unequivocally. The Prime Minister noted that, and I agree with him on this point, that no one should be grudge the people who are about to receive these payments, or who have already received the payments, no one should be grudge them what little they receive in the severance payments. If there are members on the Government side of the House who quietly begrudge any person who receives this payment, then I think they should take heed from the words of the Prime Minister, because I can give you our clear and unambiguous statement that nobody on this side of the House begrudges the people who are about to receive these payments.

Mr. Speaker, much has been said about the significance of the payments, about the record of the NDP, in deed, the Senator from the Southern Grenadines had the audacity to say that the NDP's record in the Grenadines is one of historic wrongs and neglect. You would note that sitting on my left is the Member for the Southern Grenadines and he is on the Opposition side of the House. Myself as the Member of the Northern Grenadines, I am on the Opposition side of the House, the people of the Northern Grenadines have voted without fail for the NDP throughout its history. The seeds of neglect and discontent was sworn many, many years ago back in the Old Labour Government, and this is why even today you speak with people in the Grenadines and they will tell you that they want to have nothing to do with the Labour Party because they remember the neglect they suffered during the previous labour government. The neglect in the Grenadines including the building of airports, through out the Southern and Northern Grenadines. The neglect in the Grenadines included the building of roads throughout the Northern and Southern Grenadines. The neglect in the Grenadines includes building ferry berths in the Northern Grenadines and in the Southern Grenadines. It includes building and providing for electricity to the small population of Mayreau, yes that was provided for the NDP administration, you are simply executing the policies that were already put in place by the NDP administration. You can't deny that because the facts on that issue are clear, and if you try to deny that all you would be simply doing is revealing that you are playing politics, and you are not being truthful with the people. The coverage of electricity throughout this country has improved enormously under the NDP, and you know when you hear and this is, I regret to say is somewhat tangential to the primary issue which we came here to discuss, but the members on the government side was granted considerable leeway in attempting to paint the NDP as the worst thing that has every happened to this country, when in fact we know that the record speaks for itself, as I have said in the past, but obviously it has not sunk in, you don't get re-elected consecutively four times in a row if you are failing the people. You don't get re-elected in your second term winning every single seat in the country if you are failing the people. You fellows just came up to bat, I said that last time, you just called up to play your innings, see if you can play it like the NDP did, and stop complaining about the shortages of funds and the difficulty of government, because that is what the NDP had to contend with for 17 years in power, and it has done so and has achieved things that people any where else in the Caribbean and throughout this country recognized have been milestones, accomplishments for the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, I would venture to say as well that all the accomplishments that were done in this country, and particularly in the Grenadines, were done in the face of charges from the Opposition that because the Prime Minister was from the Grenadines that he was essentially favouring the Grenadines in almost everything that was done. We know that if this present government had been in power there would be no airport in Bequia, because as the Honourable Minister for National Security said in the last

sitting he regards that that important infrastructure piece as a white elephant. We can confidently say that many of the infrastructural development that has took place would not have been done, and you have the reigns of Government, you have the opportunity to prove me wrong, and you have the opportunity to correct the historic injustice of the previous labour government that was in power in the late seventies and early eighties. You will note that the severance payment arose around the same time frame.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister said during the distributions of the cheques, I believe that one of the people who receive the payments said that she was about to use it to repair her house. This confirms what I said earlier and what I said in the last sitting that is that the people would use these funds wisely, and this is why we support this Bill. This is why we support the payments. This is why it must be clear to the people of this country that when there is something in the interest of the people of the country, the representative on this side of the House will not hesitate to support it, even though the members on the other side, may wish it otherwise, or may attempt to be little what we say or our contributions, we know the people who are listening appreciate the efforts that we have made to raise the issues that are important to them and to keep this government vigilant and functioning in the best interest of the people of this country, which I would note Mr. Speaker, is the role of the a good Opposition. The Honourable Member would wish that we would ask other questions so that they could ramble on for five minutes about what they perceive to be the failings of the NDP, but I have no apologies to make for the questions that I ask, because I know that these are questions that are important to my constituents. I know that the questions that I ask about the fishing, is important to the constituents in the Grenadines. I know that the questions that we ask about the airports are important to the constituents of the Grenadines, so I have no apologies for those questions.

Mr. Speaker, it is well known that throughout the period of the NDP Government that the situation of women in this country has improved considerably. Take the situation of women who are teachers, who become pregnant under the NDP they received rights to continue in their profession that they never had before, so when the Honourable Senator attempts to paint the NDP as somehow being opposed to women it sounds hallow, because women throughout the length and breath of this country know that the experience is different. If the members on the other side wish a refresher, the NDP has published document on this indicating what they have done and what we intend to do, in and when we form the government again in this country.

Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, the debate on this issue really is one that has been covered. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition raised two that I thought were useful questions regarding the technical aspects of the Bill, one in Clause 6 which dealt with an expanded definition of husband and wife to permit someone in a common law relationship to benefit from the severance payments. The Prime Minister has accepted the suggestion to clarify that aspect of the Bill to make it clear that what its providing for

is for someone who was in the relationship immediately prior to the death of the worker, so that you don't have a situation arising where they may have been other persons in a similar relationship or length of time seeking to make a claim, that being the case as the Honourable Leader of the Opposition has said, we have no objection to this Bill, we did not oppose the Supplementary Estimates that included for the payment, this is simply a mechanism to get that done. This should be something that could have been dealt with rather quickly, but the members on the Government side of the House saw it as an opportunity to make political hay because that was the primary purpose of the whole project. [Interjection] I have answered that question. We on this side of the House Mr. Speaker, recognized the importance of the specific legislation that we are debating here today, that it would permit persons who were in a spousal relationship, but who were not married to benefit from the severance payment. We think that is a laudable objective and one that we on this side would support. That's what this Bill is about, essentially. [Interjection] No, it is not about politics, it is about helping poor people, exactly and that is why we support it. And your streams of consciousness that went on for 45 minutes essentially left me somewhat bewildered. [Interjection] Well you probably didn't.

So, Mr. Speaker, as we have noted in the past and as the Leader of the Opposition has said, this is hopefully the final time that we would be debating this issue in the House. We hope then we would move on to discuss other serious issues that we have to deal with, and our position would be based on the merits of the issue and the importance of the issue to the people of this country. Not on whether the measure is proposed by the Government or whether we think the Government would look good. If we think it would be good for the country and would make the country look good, it is something we can support, where we have objections we would make them clear and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition made some clear in his presentation, and it's unfortunate that I feel the need to rise and speak on these issues because of the aside comments that essentially were being made by the members on the other side of the House. The NDP has a proud record in this country, when you have been in power for as long as the NDP has or had, and you had made essentially, being elected for four times in a row, then you can claim to be of the same caliber and status of the NDP. And we have tremendous respect for the voters of this country. We know that even though the severance payments are happily received, and who wouldn't that the people in those constituencies will judge the government on its entire record, not on the receipt of any one-time payment. They will look at the entire record of the government, and then they will cast their judgment when the election time comes. And we will ensure that they understand what the full record of this Government is. We will put into perspective the matters such as victimization of the workers. We will put into perspective the matters relating to the pensions payments of people that have been cut off poor relief, we will put those in context, with the severance payments and the other things done by this government. So we have tremendous faith and confidence in the electorate. We know that they will judge you on your entire record, and that when the

time comes if that judgment is in your favour, and I very sincerely doubt it, then you are entitled to greater bragging rights, but until that happens you should continue to pay homage to the accomplishments of the NDP, because they have been unprecedented in this country, leadership which sets the standard which you, I am sure would try to meet.

Mr. Speaker, thank you for your indulgence, and I trust that this matter will be passed in the House and we would proceed to deal with other important issues that are before us.

**HONOURABLE DR. JERROL THOMPSON:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to this debate, and I would really like our minds to linger on the words of the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Labour, not every government understands the society, and the NDP clearly did not understand our society. You know I always like to take a particular passage out of the Bible, and speaks of a Master who is going away and he decided to give his servants some talents. He give one five and he doubled it to ten, he gave one two, and he turned it into four; and he gave one, one and he buried it, and on the master's return, the master was quiet disappointed; and what this tells us is not every government is the same. There are some government's who are going to attempt to double it, and there are others who are going to do very little with it. And where as the NDP could have taken the talents of our youths, of our fishermen, our farmers, our industrialists, our educators and double it, instead there was indifference and a lot to be desired. But Mr. Speaker, on listening to the Member for the Northern Grenadines, it was clear that he had nothing to say or contribute to this debate, he knows little about the history of North Windward, of Central Windward, or North Leeward and he simple rose to give his Leader of the Opposition a little bit of support, I understand. But there is some level of dishonesty here, because he does not express what really took place over the last 17 years, the highest level of unemployment, the unprecedented accumulation of debts from Ottley Hall to the Union Island Marina project, right down there in the Southern Grenadines, the decline of agriculture, the decline of the manufacturing sector, the endemic corruption, from Dr. Rolla to the \$1 million that was taken away by Bencasome Adamis, traffic lights, and we can go on and on and on. He doesn't speak about those things. There is a school of thought that the NDP actually promoted and institutionalized poverty by design, and this might have been the reason that they were returned to power in the earlier years.

Mr. Speaker, I support this Bill, the Distribution of Severance Payment Bill and over the last fifty years in the North Leeward area, we have seen the various estates, Shapes, Petit Bordel, West Wood, being distributed leaving two estates at the extreme end of the constituency, Belies, better known as Wallilabou and Fitz Hughes we know as Richmond Vale. The eventual distribution, land reform relating to these two estates was the end of an era, was the end of an estate era. However many issues remain the greatest of which was that of severance pay. The decision to pay the severance

payment has been made, it has started in Rabacca and on Thursday and Friday it is going to continue in Wallilabou and Fitz Hughes, and accurate and just distribution of severance payment is critical and this is why I rise to support this Bill. Mr. Speaker, it is said that the administration of estate and in this severance pay, to relative of persons who are deceased is costly, but really this is an understatement. It is not only costly and cumbersome, so many family bonds and relationship could be easily be broken through this distribution of severance pay. Section 5 and 6 covering the distribution and the rights of succession loops large in its importance and just distribution of the severance pay, already I know in Fitz Hughes where there has been large families there is concern about who really took care of Papa, and who was the closest to Mama, and this bill really is to outline the structure and the way in which monies are going to be distributed to those individuals whose relatives may have passed. One case in point there is a worker who died, he had a son before he was married and no subsequent child with that particular wife and this clear states and outlined how the distribution is going to be carried out, and this is important in order to avoid much of the dispute. But clearly there are other benefits to make this a distribution that is not going to cost these workers any significant money in relation to having to pay lawyers or in relation to stamp duties and things of that nature, I must support this Bill.

Mr. Speaker, when the law was passed on July 20<sup>th</sup> in the case of Spring Village which many individuals from that village worked on the Wallilabou Estate, a number of individuals names were inadvertently left off the list, I would like to public extend my apologies to Mr. Derby of Spring Village, he toiled hard, on that estate trying to make a living, however his name was not included and I am sure that among a few other individuals whose names were left off when that supplementary list which has been handed in is looked at carefully, I am sure we will deal with that. But Mr. Speaker, the historic importance of severance payment has been well established and this is not just the view of members of government, but this is acknowledged by the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, especially of Fitz Hughes and Chateaubelair. Many of the recipients, even some individuals who might have supported the ULP did not believe that this would come true. Some of those who believed felt it would come some where to the end of the five-year term. When I discussed this issue with the Prime Minister some four years ago in a shop in Chateaubelair with one of those Estate Workers called Harper, it was even as far back as then the Prime Minister made a pledge that what we are going through today is going to take place. Politicians must be seen to stand for something, Mr. Speaker, and the people have to be able to hold politicians to their word, we have to redefine and change the negative image that politician have, the image of lies, politicians have to stand for trust. Politicians have to stand for truth. When the Prime Minister stood up in Fitz Hughes and told the people of Fitz Hughes that he was going to deliver this promise of paying that severance payment, the NDP had found it so hard to pay over the years I would like to state here that the Prime Minister is true to his word. The Prime Minister spoke the truth, and I would like today to applaud him for that.

Mr. Speaker, besides this being historic and besides this being an issue of truth and trust I must say it is an emotional one for me. You see Mr. Speaker, my father, John Herbert Thompson, even though he had lost his seat in 1979 was at the forefront and the greatest proponent for the distribution of land at Richmond Vale Estate, five years before Rabacca. It came at a time when the estate had lost significant amount of money due to drought, it came at a time when estates were clearly on the way out, it came at a time when many of the individuals in the area were crying out for land, land that would help them to build their own livelihoods and create and fulfill their own destinies. But the distribution of lands was opposed by the NDP, there was significant opposition, there was a strike. Some individuals received their severance pay, those individuals who strike and much more individuals who did not. And I would like to say here today, confess those individuals at that time should have received severance pay, but for 17 years the people had been crying there in hope that the NDP would turn this wrong to a right, and I am sure that there were individuals in the NDP who would want that to take place, but I am sure that it was the fiscal advise, it was the consideration of the economics and I am sure that there were individuals who said no.

Ever since my involvement in politics, I heard the loud shouts of the people of Fitz Hughes going into their homes, some of them may not have allowed me in, because of this issue, this was something that went very deep in their souls, they felt wrong, and I am proud here today to be part of making this wrong right. Mr. Speaker, I would no longer asked the Leader of the Opposition to confess and acknowledge that this was a righting of historic wrong, that is not important for me any more. But like the Prime Minister I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to confess about another deed of his, a deed that I brought up yesterday, and was alluded to earlier in this House. You see today the Leader of the opposition said we have to educate our people and we should not indulge in politics and lies, propaganda and lies. The Leader of the Opposition says we should not be deceiving the public we should be educated the public on various matters. And yesterday I asked him why didn't he contact somebody like the Minister of Health to find out about the Chateaubelair Hospital, why didn't he go down that particular road of education, why did he take up a whole line of politics, propaganda and lies and promote that whole hoax that the Chateaubelair Hospital is going to be closed, many people wouldn't understand why I would feel so angry about this, part of it is because I am more of a medical doctor than a politician, I'll admit that, and when sick individuals are told, are fooled that the hospital is closed and they are ill and they don't know where to go, that bothers me because I know that is a prescription for ill health, and I call on the Leader of the Opposition to educate the people, once he find out the information don't just deal with politics as usual, don't promote propoganda and lies, find out the information first pick up a phone, the Minister of Health is not unreasonable he would answer you.

Mr. Speaker, much has been said about scoring political points but on Friday at 3:00 p.m. at Fitz Hughes Primary School the Prime Minister is going to be given out the first set of cheques to recipients, the first ten or so, I will give out the next five. The day before that in Wallilabou, in Barrouallie because there would be a number of recipients from Spring, I will make sure I am there too, I will be there to assist the member for Central Leeward in the distribution of these cheques. A lot is being done in conjunction with this Bill, Mr. Speaker, to make sure that this is an orderly type of transaction, that the individuals are well informed, that they are told to bring along their I.D. cards that those individuals who might be looking to pick up some sort of cheque for their relative should understand that there is a process, that this process has been outlined in this particular bill and if you are the family member to receive part of that severance pay, then you would justly receive part of that severance pay.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said again that this is the end of a chapter. This is the end of a chapter in the lives of the people of North Leeward especially those who worked on Richmond Vale Estate, and it has opened up a new chapter, a new chapter of truth, of honesty and trust. It has open up a new chapter whereby the individuals who receive lands on that industrial estate can look forward to the type of support from the Ministry of Agriculture to look forward to future plans of irrigation in that area, to look forward to truly building their destiny. Mr. Speaker, I support this bill, and I will tell you that the people of North Leeward by extension the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines also support this Bill too, thank you very much.

**HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I rise in support of this Bill that is before this Honourable House. An Act that makes special provision for payment of monies to beneficiaries of former estate workers of Orange Hill, Richmond, Wallilabou and even for those who would have died in Estate.

Mr. Speaker, I think that this bill has been presented in the most simple, methodical, well laid out, well structured so that the ordinary man can understand what is in this Bill. This Bill which is presented here, which is presented to this Honourable House is presented to help the poor.

In 1838, Mr. Speaker, the first of August is well known to be Emancipation Day. That's the day that is written down in our history that the workers on the Estates back in that year said all ah we are one. But in the year 2001 Mr. Speaker, on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August was Emancipation Day for the workers on the Orange Hill Estate. And from yesterday, a day that was made history in the constituency of North Windward, we will celebrate August the 13<sup>th</sup> as Emancipation Day for the Workers on the Orange Hill Estate.

Mr. Speaker, some 560 workers were offered severance payments yesterday. Approximately some 480 persons collected cheques, but on that list are also names of some dead persons. There are a total of some 64 names; these are persons, Mr.

Speaker, who would have toiled, who would have toiled, who would have sweat on the estate. They have passed on and their loved ones who are behind should get what is rightfully theirs, and this is why this Bill before this House seeks to give this Government that position in a much more easy way that this can be done. At the ceremony yesterday, Mr. Speaker, I made mention of two individuals who would have worked hard on the estate, who would have toiled under the conditions and really should be given their due reward. I made mention of one Vernon Lavia who in 1982, an ordinary worker on the estate was shot and lost a leg, ten years later he died. His wife, and seven children have to be taken care of, and I am sure that no right thinking Vincentian would say no to giving severance pay to a family who deserves such that is rightfully theirs. I also made mention of a lady who toiled on the estate, Peggy Pompy, she lives in the Langley Park area and one day after toiling hard. The rain began to come and soon the river was down and in her quest to get to her family trying to cross the river, when there was excess water in the river, she was pulled away by the water in the river at that time. No one has seen her since then. She has left five children behind, isn't conditions require where these individuals who have toiled for long and hard hours, isn't it that these individuals and families, should be given what is due to them.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that under the conditions that existed as I knew it at the Orange Hill estate, I am sure all of us here would be willing to support this act that is before this Parliament. When I look back in the early seventies and eighties, Mr. Speaker, at the Orange Hill estate was considered one of the worst areas to work in this country. The salaries were low, the hours of work were long and basically life on the estate was difficult, it was poor. Workers had to get up on early morning, catch a tractor at 5:00 a.m. to find themselves at their work place. You and I know it is not easy to be getting up on mornings at 5:00 a.m. to go into fields and to do a laborious estate type work that existed. And because of that, Mr. Speaker, that we on this side, this administration, we understand what it is in terms of the poor, the needy, the destitute. We understand every single constituency that exists. We understand the society that we live and that is why we are here to improve the living standards of the poor, particularly in the Orange Hill Estate, what we don't understand Mr. Speaker, is that one of the greatest recipient of the severance payment on the Orange Hill Estate of over \$230,000 has gone to one person. We can't understand that. But over the years, Mr. Speaker, the NDP administration within the last 17 years, Mr. Speaker, the NDP administration has crafted they have drafted the policies and programmes for the development of this country and including the Rabacca Farms which they took over in 1985. And all of us are still wondering, how on earth they would have come to such policies.

On the Orange Hill Estate, I mentioned the last time that they have cut lands in different parcels from two to six acres, yet the payments that the farmers had to make ranged from the first year, zero dollars, the second year \$740.00, and from the third

year and onwards they had to pay \$1520.00 and this is really ridiculous, Mr. Speaker, because you cannot tell me that you are giving me two acres of lands to pay the same amount as somebody with six acres of lands when the conditions are the same. Same soil type, same rainfall, and all the conditions that go with it. Although the farmers at that time thought the contracts they would have signed on their leases that they should have gotten extension services, new crops, improved markets, none of this was done. But it was regrettable that the policy soon after the workers got the lands, it was regrettable that the policies that came out of the NDP administration from one of largest coconut estate in the island, and the world in particular, was to sell the coconut factory. So therefore, you would have given me something in one hand but you would have taken it back on the other hand. And there are policies and programmes were consistent particular in the agricultural sector, even the day before the elections in March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the day before which was the 27<sup>th</sup>, they would have sold the assets of the arrowroot industry, again who plant arrowroot, the poor people in this country. They would have closed the sugar factory, who were affected, the rural poor, and at the same time, they refused to have given leadership to the struggling banana industry and today it is a reality that the industry must be restructured but when the restructuring is being debated here, I would have more to say, about it.

Mr. Speaker, over the years the agricultural workers, the rural poor were the ones who were affected, they were the ones who got the blows, they got the licks, but I can say to you that the people of the North Windward constituency, they now have a representative. They now have a Prime Minister, they have a government that they can depend on, and yesterday the people were singing, we are moving in the light of God. I am sure that the people in Central Leeward, and in North Leeward their hour is very near and they probably would be singing similar songs. But, Mr. Speaker, this Bill that is before this Parliament today in my humble estimation is one of the best bills, that would have come before this Honourable House. For the people of North Windward, and particularly workers on the Orange Hill Estate, I know what it cost for them to travel from that constituency into Kingstown and to give them added cost to the very expensive lawyers, that are within this country is going to dry up all their severance pay, and I want to thank the Honourable Prime Minister for his foresight in being able to help us to bring such a bill before this Honourable House. And I particularly make reference to Section 5 and 6 which would help the workers on that estate to be relieved and to ensure that what ever is given to them, that very little or nothing would be taken away from them despite the fact that they are collecting it on behalf of those that would have passed on.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to support the Deputy Prime Minister, the Member for Central Leeward when he also presented to his House that there should be a part in this Bill where workers should not pay any stamp duty, where the beneficiaries should not pay any stamp duties, on the monies that are provided for them, again a team that is

thinking rightly and a team that is working together, no doubt this will continue to help the life of the rural poor.

Mr. Speaker, there are many conventions that are now presented internationally looking at the lives of the rural poor. Who are the rural poor, Mr. Speaker? Simply, the agricultural workers, and the ULP administration here in this country in my opinion has taken the initiative, the first step to assist in the international conventions that are being presented internationally. Yesterday, at Orange Hill there were great emotions. It was a time of revival. The ULP administration has shown what it can be like, what is Christmas in August, but I also see Mr. Speaker, tears fall, I saw, Mr. Speaker, from some of the recipients of the severance payments, I saw tears, living tears fell from their eyes. And I believe Mr. Speaker, that these tears of joy. I believe that what they did not realize would have happened honestly happened yesterday. I also saw, Mr. Speaker, the people well elated, and the Prime Minister in an atmosphere of jubilation dance the cudrill dance with the people in that area. Yes, the people they jumped for joy. They are happy for their representative, and they are happy for their Prime Minister.

I also recall, hearing one NDP supporter saying "I should have supported the ULP a long time ago so that I should have had my severance pay," but I also heard one say, "My severance pay make me together now." But, Mr. Speaker, I sat and I listened the debate all day and I heard coming from the Leader of the Opposition, and even the Member for the Northern Grenadines making reference to this administration, making the gesture of severance payments because this administration wants to secure the seat of the North Windward constituency. Mr. Speaker, I am no economist, nor am I a doctor but in a simple analysis, Mr. Speaker, I want to share with you that I got involved in politics in 1989 and the polls gave me 998 votes, the polls gave the NDP 1833 votes. Ten years later I came back and I got 1817 votes in Opposition, the NDP got 1875 votes, so in a matter of 10 years the NDP can only add 42 votes, on an average 4.2 votes per year. I came back in the year 2001 Mr. Speaker, and what I have over 2200 votes, Mr. Speaker, and the NDP they manage to muster 2000 votes. So in my analysis Mr. Speaker, very time I go to the polls I have added no less than 400 votes in Opposition, whilst the NDP in government have added on average 24 votes for the last 11 years, on an average 24 votes per year. And they have been in government. I am saying to the member on the other side, that you must check your facts, you must make an analysis of your position before you state you facts. I can say to you Mr. Speaker, that I will be here after another election according to the analysis of North Windward, because I am in Government now and I would be able to double the amount that I have been having in Opposition, so while I have been getting 400 votes, every five years in Opposition, I am sure I am going to double that in the next elections.

Mr. Speaker, I am not here to trick anyone, or to deceive anyone. Our platforms, our manifesto has indicated that we would pay severance pay once we formed government in this country, we have promised the people in North Windward that and we have delivered and we will be going to Barrouallie on Thursday and we will be going to Barrouallie on Friday. Mr. Speaker, we are not here to trick anybody and knowing the Prime Minister he has said it time and time again, what I say is what I will deliver, I have learned to trust his judgment on that.

I was called to serve the people of the North Windward constituency, that I will do. I have delivered the severance payments for them in four months. And there are many more projects that I will deliver in this five-year period. I want to say that my next task for the constituency one which the NDP refuse to have done, is to ensure title of the lands to the people in that constituency.

Mr. Speaker, I am honestly proud of this Bill that is before this Parliament, and the people of North Windward are equally happy and the recipients in particular Mr. Speaker, would be much more happier, and I want to wish this Bill and easy passage in this House.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members in winding up the debate on the second reading of this very important Bill I would like to thank honourable members for their contributions. Particularly Senators Snagg and George for their excellent maiden contributions here in Parliament.

I also like to thank the members of the Opposition for their support for this bill, though it must be conceded that they came to the support of this Bill kicking and screaming. It doesn't matter how the words today are less equivocating than the last time in July, it must be remembered in July the Leader of the Opposition wanted to know whether the real beneficiaries of the payment would not be the Danes and the Barnards, those are memorable words spoken here and recorded in the Hansard.

However, having listened to the voices of the people even though he may have a thin political ear, he is finally getting the message that the people want the severance pay, so he is dropping all the talk today about helping the Danes and the Barnards; very fundamental point. So he has come to give support today but the history of this measure will show that the NDP has come to give their support, kicking and screaming. It must not be forgotten Mr. Speaker, that in 1992, of course the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines was still in Canada and he wouldn't know this and the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, I am not sure whether he was in St. Vincent and the Grenadines or in Barbados. He was in Barbados. So he would not know about this particular event which I am going to mention.

Patricia Fraser, Montgomery Daniel and others, plus the Trade Union Movement, including individuals like Casper London and Noel Jackson led or participated in a march in the city of Kingstown, the demonstration to the Office of the then Prime Minister, Sir James Mitchell, hundreds of people and they presented a petition life, and in living colour to set their severance pay, these same workers, they were told by the NDP administration, you get land why do you want severance? And the facts have been put in this House by the Honourable Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries, on the last occasion in this Parliament on July the 20<sup>th</sup>. He showed of the 560 workers who were granted ex gratia payments for severance pay, just a hundred and something of them of that number were allocated lands and the lands had to be paid for at \$1720.00 today per parcel. Those are the facts. So the NDP at no time at all had severance pay for the workers on the agenda. Let us make that absolutely clear.

And it has been painful for me to witness that they won the seats in North Windward and North Leeward, in 1989, they won them in 1994 and in 1998, returned to power in each of these elections and they were silent on the question of severance pay and now the Opposition has the gall to say that we have introduced this to play politics. They have never ever countenance the issue of the severance pay and it was left to us to correct, to right this historic wrong which was perpetuated against the people. The only reason why the Leader of the Opposition drop the talk about helping the Barnards, and helping the Danes was when it was pointed out to him that some 450 workers were taken over by the government when the government acquired the estates from the Danes in 1984 –1986, and as a matter of law all those who were entitled to severance from the Barnards and who were held over from the Danes and who went over to the government, the government was responsible for the severance payment unless the government had so indicated that it would have been the business of the Danes to take care of the severance pay. But if they were interesting in giving the workers their severance pay, they could have deducted the money from the close to \$5 million they paid the Danes for the lands, but never ever were they concerned. So when I say the NDP, the Opposition today, came to the Parliament to support this Bill kicking and screaming, the historical facts are there to support that conclusion. Never mind the nice words which are coming now, well we support it, but why didn't you support it in 1992 when the workers protested and you turn them down. Why was there such equivocation and if and butting on July the 20<sup>th</sup> saying we helping the Danes and the Barnards? It is they who are seeking to make political mileage on the backs of the workers even while the ULP was about to do them, because they were hoping that there would have been a constituency out there saying yes, is the Danes and the Barnards they helping out, rather than when they got jamming from the people, they came here finally say yes, we support it. Those are the unvarnished facts and I want to say, Mr. Speaker, I do not take kindly to assertions made by persons who have spent the most of their adult lives either in air-conditioned suites at Development Banks or in law offices in Toronto, regarding defending the rights of working people. I have a

history of over 32 years, has nothing to do with politics. It has to do principle and love of the people. It happens that good policy is excellent politics and you facing the heat now from the good policy because it produces excellent politics.

I have stated Mr. Speaker, and I will repeat it again, years ago, I went to Orange Hill, I wasn't in Parliament because I have visited every hamlet and every town and every village through the length and breath of this nation and in doing house to house visits, I went to the humble abode. A small one-room house, it was so small there was no division between hall and chamber, everything was one. A gentle man, tall, dignified in bearing but terrible bent, bent from the years of working on the estate. Bent too, from having to bend down to get inside of his house, because the front door was much shorter than him. I spoke to this gentleman, he was not an idler, he was not a criminal, he is a hardworking man of simplicity and love of the land and the people around him. Yet when I saw that this man was not getting severance from the government, had nothing at all given unto him for his years service when I came out from his humble dwelling tears came to my eye, and I promise myself quietly before God that I as long as I live, if ever I am in Government one of the first things that I will agitate for would be severance pay for these workers who are denied their severance pay, it has nothing to do with politics.

I know it is out of style to be passionate about anything. In these days of structural adjustment and IMF and the dictates from the World Bank and other places it unfashionable to hold dearly to the view that the poor must be uplifted. I know when I speak like that, there are some in their comforts will say, 'hear the sentimental fool'. Well I rather be a sentimental fool in the defense of the working people than to be idiotic in raising up the rich and the powerful.

Mr. Speaker, as the person responsible for piloting this Bill through the House, I accept wholeheartedly the suggestion made by the Deputy Prime Minister that the affidavits which are to be shown must not attract any stamp duty at all, so that when the persons go to the administrator who is administrating the property under this bill in order to take their signature, they mustn't ask for the \$5.00 or the \$10.00 stamp for them to go away and come back, we have put in a clause, it reads:

"Any affidavit required in accordance with the provisions of this Act is exempted from stamp duty, under the Stamp Duty Act."

And during the committee of the whole House I will have that inserted to be accommodated in this legislation.

Mr. Speaker, we follow sound advice and we advise one another here, and we take advice from other people where it is sound, so that the poor people those who are beneficiaries of those who are dead they wouldn't have to bother to pay out any of

these monies that is what you talk about a government of the people. The Member from the Northern Grenadines said that we should get on with this business and move on to more important things, this is what he said you know, I wrote it down, and it will come back to haunt him in the Northern Grenadines and in this land. Get away from the workers business, we have more important things to do. More important than the poor people? Well we are prepared as the Unity Labour Party Government to spend the whole day on this bill for the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to understand it and for it to become law, nobody is going to hurry this one, certainly not a new comer from the Northern Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker we are addressing overall, we would be repealing the Protection of Employment's Act which the Honourable Robert Milton Cato piloted here in 1980, we would be repealing it and replacing it, with a more superior act. For 17 years since the NDP was in power the workers and the trade unions have been asking for a repeal and replacement of that Act by an Act superior, no they have not have any time for the workers. They had too much time for Dr. Rolla and Bencosome Adames, they had time for those, those are the ones they were interesting in and trying to treat the working people as though they were working cattle. Those days are over. Those days are over! Even now why they are fighting those who have gone out to get their gratuity and there pensions, not one of them has raised his voice to say thank God the workers are getting their money. Even those who have retired or those who have voted out, still looking for themselves and not worrying about the workers who are deserving of their severance pay and who ain't get it. They have not a word thinking whether Edgar Cruickshank is going to get his severance pay, but he will get his. He will get his money around the same time that the politicians get theirs. It will come. I want to time it almost at the same time so that when they drinking Guinness, Edgar could be drinking Guinness too.

Mr. Speaker, there is something in the existing Protection of Employment's Act, there are many things inside of it that has to be changed. And it is circulated to the employers and it is circulated to trade unions. And we will have a discussion on it and the Attorney General's Chambers must be congratulated for the excellent work they have been doing in framing and bring these laws to Parliament and if you think they have been doing very well, well we have now being joined by the Chief Parliamentary Counsel, the major legal draftsman. One of the leaders in the field in the Caribbean, Mrs. Euchrista St. Hillaire-Bruce-Iyle. We have managed to woe her away from the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank. She is a Vincentian young lady born and bred between Greiggs and Rose Bank. I noticed the Honourable Minister of Telecommunications when I say Greiggs, thought I was going to leave out Rose Bank. For example, Mr. Speaker in the existing protection of Employment Act there is a provision which states that if you are dismissed for just cause you loose all you severance pay. So you are a good man working well, for 26 years, in your 27<sup>th</sup> year you make a mistake and all your good years before is wiped out because you get

fired, lawfully, now that cannot be right, depriving you of your severance pay by you making one mistake, you can't punish people like that. A severance pay is far more important than that. Because some unscrupulous employer could set up a man to make sure they don't get their severance pay, all those provisions would have to be addressed properly in the context of the review, and we are going to be fair to the employers and we are going to be very fair to the workers within the framework that the Parliamentary Secretary in the Office of the Prime Minister, the Honourable Edwin Snagg, said we do all these things within the framework of a vision.

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I want to say three things very briefly to wind up this section of the debate. We had promised in July that the workers would receive their pay in Emancipation month. We have kept that promise. Because when we say things you can put your pot on the fire and expect the food's there. We have also said, Mr. Speaker, that there are some individuals whose names are not on the list though they have satisfied the criteria for severance pay, because the records were skippy and had to be reconstructed, those persons when everything is done properly few of them who remain will get their severance pay. I want to say too, Mr. Speaker, that the workers on the various estates and particularly up at Rabacca/Orange Hill and down at Fitz Hughes, and the same point applies to Wallilabou, though to a lesser extent because it's small lands, that the working people who receive lands in one way or the other and who do not have title for those lands, and where the title for the lands is being made difficult for them to get this government would also address that particular question. When we do that again they will say it is politics. It is good policy and it makes excellent politics. The policy is good so the consequences political would naturally redone to us.

I want to thank very much the Leader of the Opposition in relation to Clause 6 for suggesting that the word 'immediately' be inserted at Clause 6 and also in the declaration I would like to suggest Mr. Speaker, when we go into the committee of the whole House in addition to the oath being taken before the administrator, it can be taken alternatively in front of the Registrar or a Notary Public, to make everything consistent. Accordingly, Mr. Speaker, as the debate winds down I move that the House resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider this Bill clause by clause.

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

*House went into Committee.*

*House resumed.*

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I think this is perhaps an appropriate time to take a brief suspension maybe for 15-20 minutes for members to refresh themselves.

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

SUSPENSION OF SITTING 6:15 p.m. (Tea)  
RESUMPTION OF SITTING 6:40 p.m.

## **2. ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES CITIZENSHIP (AMENDMENT) BILL 2001.**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Member I beg to move a bill for an act to amend the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Citizenship Act Chapter 80 of the revised edition of the laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The objects and reasons of this Bill that this Bill seeks to amend the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Citizenship Act. In this particular case, Act No. 21 of 1996 which was an amendment to the original act. Clause 2 of the Bill provides for the repeal of section 9 (a), which allows for persons not qualified for registration as a citizens under the Act or the Constitution to be so registered upon payment of a prescribed fee, and subject to certain restrictions and limitations. Clause 3 provides for the repeal of subsection 2 (a) of section 14 which made provision for an honorary citizen not to be deprived of citizenship except in certain circumstances.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move the second reading of bill for an Act to amend the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Citizenship Act.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, this in fact is a very simple bill. It carries out the policy proclaimed in 1996 by the Unity Labour Party and subsequently detailed in our manifesto. In 1996 Mr. Speaker, on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June 1996 the former NDP administration brought an Act to amend the Citizenship Act to establish a category known as the honorary citizen, and you acquire this honorary citizenship on the payment of certain monies, those fees were detailed in the St. Vincent and the Grenadines honorary citizens, fees and regulations of 1997, SR&O 16 of 1997.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House when we got into office we gave instructions that the honorary citizenship programme must not be carried forward and we gave the undertaking that we must repeal the legislation. In fact, those who are acquainted with the Offshore Finance Sector would know that this Citizenship Act, this particular amendment which confer honorary citizenship on certain persons on payment of a fee, that it is something that is frowned upon by the FATF, the Financial Action Task Force and a number of other countries. Indeed you know the government of Dominica got into some difficulties with a number individuals who had gone to Canada and they had threatened that they would impose a requirement that citizens of the Commonwealth of Dominica would require visas to enter Canada because of a number of Asians, especially of Chinese extractions, who bought citizenship in Dominica. We have always felt that citizenship is something which you cannot buy. It is a fundamental ingredient of a relationship between citizens and citizens and between citizens and the State and it goes to the heart our democratic structure of governance. We know that some other persons held a different view and some other countries, but we took the position that upon taking office we will repeal the legislation and we have done so.

The honorary citizenship programme was budgeted in the last budget to bring in \$12 million, in fact in last year's also. But the programme was not operationalised, I don't know what are all of the reasons, but I suspect that there had been a question raised by a number of persons, not wanting to buy citizenship when they know if the ULP got into power that they would be revoked, and of course I know if the machinery and the advertisement for the programme went well, in the event. Last year they had \$12 million, the NDP administration, there were no honorary citizenship granted and in this year there was also \$12 million in the budget. Of course bringing the citizenship programme to an end leaves a hole of \$12 million dollars in the estimated revenue as was left a hole last year in the estimated revenue, and all what you have to do is simply try and restrain your expenditure simply because that estimated sum is not there, it was never collected in any event in the previous years. I think they had it in the estimates; this is the third year running since the programme has been legally instituted but not operationally.

We have received, I should point out, that is to say the Government, received commendation from many countries in Europe and in North America to discontinue this

programme, and persons who are traveling to Canada now without a visa from St. Vincent, that they were able to do it in part because we had said that we weren't going to go ahead with this citizenship programme, because Canadian authorities were seeking to extend visa requirements to a number of countries which had this kind of citizenship programme. I know that people would say the Canadians also have some sort of economic citizenship, but of course that is their country. They are big. They are not running to go anywhere. Canada is number one in the world Human Development Index, HDI, in terms of the quality of life so they not running all about so they could have their own programme, they are large they can control it and there were series of questions raised about our own programme.

There are several countries in the Caribbean I should point out who have had citizenship programmes, Belize has one, Dominica has another one, St. Kitts/Nevis I think has one, Antigua has one of sorts, and so on, it is always seen as a way in which you can earn easy money; but it has its back lash, and we are now as a matter of policy, removing Honorary citizenship. You want to be a citizen of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the only following ways you can be one now, when this law is passed. You were born in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, you get citizenship by decent, that is to say you are born overseas, but one of your parents is a citizen, or you get it by marriage, or you acquire it in the way in which the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Citizenship Act prescribes that you should do it. Residence for a particular period of time or particular contributions to the economy or the society. Those are the acknowledged ways and those are the ones we wish to maintained so that we can keep our bond within ourselves as a people, and to strengthen our democratic structure of governance and not to have our passports being sold hither thither and you to embarrass us all over the world, and to let other countries put restrictions on us. And basically that is what this legislation is all about.

Clause 2 repeal section 9 (a) and clause 3 repeals section 2 (a) of subsection 14. And that is basically all that this is about. It is not a complex piece of legislation if you agree with us it is easy, if you disagree with us well we have a different point of view and it is a simple as that, and we campaigned to repeal it and the people gave us a mandate and we are carrying out that mandate and that is what democratic governance and representative government is all about. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, it is true, as the Honourable Prime Minister has stated, that his party has consistently said that it would revoke any such legislation as it relates to honorary citizenship. Mr. Speaker, it is also true that there are reservations expressed by some members of the international community with respect to honorary citizenship programmes in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and

elsewhere, it is also true, Mr. Speaker, that given some of the comments that were being made and some of the reservations expressed, that we were seeking to deal with certain specific issues which were of concern to the international community, and that is why in the previous years we did not operationalize the programme.

Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with a matter that is fundamental in a couple of important ways. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I think it is accepted in this Honourable House that we have reached a situation in our fiscal life when we cannot be dependent for much longer on taxes on international trade when pressure is being brought on us to reduce not only tariffs, but to reduce the rates of income, tax and corporate taxes and therefore. Mr. Speaker, over time this country and others like ours would have to find ways and means to increase our revenues in order to meet the services that government must of necessity provide, and the honorary citizenship programme, Mr. Speaker, was seen within that context. There were two specific issues which were of concern to the international community, the first of these being the ability of small States like our own to have an effective due diligent system given the wide group of countries that honorary citizens might have come from, and that was a matter of concern not only to international community but to us here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and indeed to other islands in the Caribbean, and we had commence and exercise, Mr. Speaker, in terms of examining the system, of due diligence with a view to seeing to what extent we could improve that system and thus safeguard to some degree against some of the concerns of international community.

The other concern, Mr. Speaker, had to do with safety of transmittal of passports to distant countries where we do not have diplomatic representation, these were the two fundamental issues that were of concern.

Mr. Speaker, small States like our own often find ourselves in a bit of a quandary, we are seen as powerless in many instances by those who are more developed, and very often, Mr. Speaker, things that they practice they do not wish us to practice for whatever reasons they may have, which is in their interests. It is the same sort of thinking, Mr. Speaker, that brings us under constant pressure with respect to the Offshore Sector and we as a small nation from time to time, Mr. Speaker, have to take a position. The Prime Minister has made reference to the fact the difficulties with Dominica and what implications that had for Dominica in relation to immigration to Canada. Mr. Speaker, I understand those concerns, but the very countries that are saying that we should not have these programmes are the ones that have them and they have them because they feel that they are big and powerful, and they can do it.

Mr. Speaker, it is my belief that over time we could develop mechanism to have programmes of this sort, I am very concerned Mr. Speaker, that over time as the economy shifts, that we are going to have greater and greater difficulty as a government in all our islands in meeting our financing needs, and meeting the various

needs of the citizens of our countries, and sometimes, Mr. Speaker, we have to draw a line. Mr. Speaker, let me draw a parallel. At the present time, the Prime Minister and other Ministers, Prime Ministers of the OECS countries are planning to go to Libya. Libya is regarded in some sources in the international community as a rogue State. A State with which we should not have any dealings. There are those who believe that the climate is changing, because some of the European countries, Britain included are in fact softening their stance in relation to Libya, but Mr. Speaker, the United States has not really softened their stance. I am to conclude, Mr. Speaker, that because the US has not softened their stance, I can say that visa for Vincentians going to the United States could become a problem if we make a visit to Libya. So here again is another example of that quandary that we find ourselves in, that because we are small we are limited by those who are more powerful in terms of the kinds of relations we should have internationally. So in one instance, in this instance in this Bill the Prime Minister is saying listen, you are going to have some trouble with this thing in the international community, it may affect visas to Canada. The other one, the visit to Libya also raises the same possibility but a different position is taken. There is no difference Mr. Speaker, in terms of the impact that the international community would have as far as this matter is concerned. And I want to make that very clear, because it puts into clear prospective, Mr. Speaker, the problems that small countries like our own have when it comes to matters of this sort. So are we prepared, Mr. Speaker, at this time to risk the possibility that the United States would bring some pressure on us, in terms of visas. These are the kinds of issues that arise from matters of this sort, and we can choose to be consistent, or we can choose not to be consistent, but we are taking two different roads on a matter that is essentially the same, that is what the Government is proposing.

Mr. Speaker, I don't want to be misunderstood, I understand fully the difficulty that is being faced, but what we are doing is a different thing in each case, although the circumstances and the rationale for going one way in one instance is not accepted in the other way. And it not accepted in one which could be even more harmful, Mr. Speaker.

You see when we look back at what the OECD is proposing what we do it goes to the heart of whatever sovereignty we have in terms of our fiscal arrangements. We all are aware, Mr. Speaker, that part of the problem there is that they are concerned that they are losing investors coming to our shores, loosing their revenue, and then they say okay you must have a regime that is not similar to ours, but we all know that can't work, Mr. Speaker, so where do we draw the line and how do we draw the line? It is a very difficult issue, Mr. Speaker, to deal with and Mr. Speaker, if we are not working in concert wit other countries on these matters then we have no chance Mr. Speaker of getting our own way in matters of this sort.

I am still of the view, Mr. Speaker, that it would have been better to modify the programme, take some time and do it because I believe in the end we can find the mechanism handles and deal with the question of due diligence. Mr. Speaker, perhaps the task that we sometimes face in matters of this sort is too difficult, perhaps Mr. Speaker, we are not taking sufficient time to explore with us in a similar situation what other alternative we could pursue. Mr. Speaker, I understand the concerns raised by the Prime Minister, I understand them all too well, but I also know, Mr. Speaker, that the time is coming with the fiscal deterioration that is taking place throughout this region and time is coming when alternative revenue sources which are not taxed on our nationals would become more and more important. In the circumstances, Mr. Speaker, I am not able to support this measure.

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

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, this is a matter from the inception, since Dominica first introduced it we felt, Mr. Speaker to continue that, -- in my own words that we were selling our birthright, I was going to use stronger language, but I decided not to. There is a parent law that sets out very clearly from what the Constitution says how you obtain citizenship, and in that law it states, and this is Chapter 80 of the revised edition, that you must have at least five years if you want to become a citizen, this Act, when it was brought in the amendment to the parent Act, had no time limit, once you were able to put up a certain amount of money, or invest certain amount of money you can become a citizen, I know people are going to say this is done in the United States, if you invest so much in the United States, but they have the machinery to control this, we don't have it. Once you obtain citizenship, I would have no problem with honorary citizenship, if the passport could be stamped honorary citizenship and it is of a different colour and a different number but the problem is with that it is going to defeat the purpose for which you set up this honorary citizenship because the whole idea is that you should not be able to be determined by your passport or whatever, that you are not a real citizen and I am using the term 'real' in inverted commas of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, so therefore, you could not do anything in the passport to show that this person is an honorary citizen, and the only persons who would know this would be the Government and the Minister who deals with citizenship.

There was an attempt, Mr. Speaker, to put in certain constraints, but discussing it with learned legal persons, I was told that these constraints that are here were unconstitutional and could be challenged in Court, and it was felt that if you go to Court you would win, because once you have given the right of citizenship you are entitled to the right as any other citizen to make the thing sound or look palatable there were certain as I said put into the Act, 21 of 1996 that, let me read it.

“A persons registered as a citizen under this subsection shall subject to subsection 2 and enjoy all the rights of a citizen except the right to vote in an election, the right to stand as a candidate for election, the right to be appointed as a Senator, a right to acquire directly or indirectly an interest in land in St. Vincent and the Grenadines without first obtaining an alien land holding license to purchase land under the Alien Land Holding Licence Act Cap. 2135.

Well you can't tell me I am a citizen and I can't hold land. You can't tell me I am a citizen and I can't vote. Then I am a second-class citizen and our constitution does not make provisions for second-class citizens, we don't have two types of citizenship, we have one and my further concern maybe my greatest concern was that you can manipulate the electoral system in such a way that you can win the elections, because in marginal seats, all you have to do is to pick out who you want to give citizenships to, have them ensconce or registered in marginal constituencies, and once they had the required time they can vote, and we have seen it happen here as well, not under the citizenship thing here, so that the system could be manipulated, you cannot deny a citizen the right to an identification card, I see nothing here about an I.D. card, and I remember making that point, so I am a citizen of St. Vincent, I have a Vincentian passport, no special number, no special identification mark, I have been living here for over a year and in the constituency for six months period and I go to register, the registering officer doesn't know anything, he is not immigration, so he registers and the electoral office states, once you are registered you are entitled to vote. And these are the complaints that we had, but nothing was done to address this and coupled with that the fact that the Canadians and the Americans were thinking of --, the Canadians more so of implying that Vincentians citizens would have to apply for Visas. It was going to make it more difficult, also Mr. Speaker, they might not tell you this but the Americans they have a certain quota of Visas that they give out every year, so for every stranger that has honorary citizenship, who applies his affecting an indigenous Vincentian, is affecting his possibility of obtaining a visa.

These are some of the areas, we know that you have to find funds some where, you have to find money, nobody is denying this but you cannot, not under the way this was contrive could agree that we must agree to this honorary citizenship for the reasons that I stated before. I don't think the question of Libya is the same thing. Okay I would agree with the Honourable Leader of the Opposition that the Americans might frown on it and they might take measures to penalize you but you see the question of citizenship and visa is a personal thing. It is not that you are going to visit Libya or you are going to visit Cuba or you are going to visit Iran, it is an entirely different thing, so that although I am, I know that we need revenue, I always say that you cannot tax a nation into prosperity and that we have to find other ways and means of obtaining revenue, I am not sure that what we are going to get out of this in taking a leaf out of Dominica's book from what happened in Dominica and some of the other areas in the Caribbean, I

didn't think that we should jeopardize the rights of our own citizens because you know what this meant Mr. Speaker, from the time this came into being every Vincentian was going to be suspected, everyone because they would not be able to know who is a real Vincentian and as I say I am using the term 'real' in inverted commas or who were persons who were bogus Vincentians and it is for this reason we have decided that we are not going to support it. But nothing was done and I don't know what else could have been done to ensure that the public would know who are honorary citizens, we would know who are honorary citizens and so that the systems could not be manipulated.

There was another thing, we hardly have lands to give our own indigenous people here, these are people who are applying for citizenship, these are rich people, they have the money. We have seen what is happening now in Kingstown with the value of lands. That would have been in my opinion multiplied ten times over and so in the end you would find that Vincentians might not be able to own a piece of land eventually in your own country purely, because the price and the cost of that land would have been so high that we would not have been able to avoid it.

And so Mr. Speaker, I think this is a reasonable amendment, we would take out what is here, a revocation, to repeal it and I give it my wholehearted support, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members in winding up the debate on the second reading of this bill, I think it is necessary for me to take into my summation, some of the issues raised by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and respond.

First of all the fundamental objection to the question of honorary citizenship is one of principle. A consequence of having the honorary citizenship on the basis of the Dominican experience, shows a threat of the requirement of a visa to go into Canada where that is not now the case. The consequence of a particular measure is an entirely different matter than the fundamental principles upon which you take your particular decision. And the principle which I articulated is that citizenship is fundamental to a relationship between citizen and citizen and the State and these relationships go to the heart of democratic governance. The Honourable Minister for national security expanded on this and quite correctly in my view pointed out that an honorary citizenship within the terms of the Constitution is not something that can be accommodated there and in deed is subversive of the constitution itself, it is unconstitutional because you cannot have two class of citizenship. The Constitution does not contemplate that so you move on the basis of principle.

The reason why Canada would act in the manner in which they said they would act because they saw a lot of undesirable individuals from the Far East coming into Canada. Now that is a reason why you should bear it in the mind not to go the way of honorary citizenship, but if that were the only objection it may not be sufficient, because the objection which we raised is a fundamental one of principle of the nature of the connection between citizen and citizen, and citizen and the State. There are certain obligations which flow from the Act, of acquiring a citizenship or being born with it, getting it by descent or through marriage. When I as a citizen by birth, when I relate to someone who has acquired citizenship after five years or seven years, we are on the same footing, and therefore we know the obligations which we have to each other, and the obligations which we have to the State with an honorary citizenship, a genuine bonafide citizen does not know the nature of the obligations that you have with one another and what is the obligation of that honorary citizenship to the State, because clearly the only obligation would be if you have enough money to pay for it, and once an honorary citizen gets the passport, pays the money, he or she is not concerned with St. Vincent and the Grenadines again but that affects how we would relate to that persons when we see that person have a Vincentian passport, but that person knowing the he has bought citizenship has no real obligation to any other citizen in this country or to the State. When you do that you turn on its head all the principles of governance that has existed to time immemorial, even if you deny that honorary citizen the right to vote, because issues of voting are not the only sets of relationship which citizens have to one another. I make that point to show the suggestion by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition that proposed visit by a number of OECS countries to Libya including St. Vincent and the Grenadines towards the end of this month is of an entirely different nature. No, but you see the consequence, I am coming to that, the consequences are not the same, I move first of all from the issue of principle and to show the objection in principle to honorary citizenship.

There can be no objection in principle to sovereign States having relationships with one another and in the current world the consequences are not the same for the simple reason, neither Britain nor the United States, neither of them, no European country has indicated to any of the OECS countries were planning who are planning to go to Libya that they do not want such a visit. Indeed when Grenada and Dominica last year established diplomatic relations with Libya neither the Europeans or the Americans objected either privately or publicly. Indeed the previous NDP Government was part a regional OECS decision to establish diplomatic relations with Tripoli, Libya and it is on that basis that both Dominica and Grenada establish diplomatic relations, the ULP Government has not established relations with Libya, and it is clear and was made clear that a condition of the visit to Libya is not the establishment of diplomatic relations; and I can say to you that I have had conversations with persons close to several European Governments and they are hoping that this particular trip by the OECS countries could bear some fruit.

The United Nations no longer has any sanctions against Libya. Practically all the European countries have diplomatic relations with Libya, practically all of them. Yes I will give way.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Much obliged. Mr. Speaker, I understand you know all the argument being raised. I want to read just a couple sentences issued by US Government dated the 13<sup>th</sup> of June, 2001, entitled Libya Consula Information Sheet, Warning, issued June 6<sup>th</sup>, 2000.

United States department of State warns US citizens against travel to or residence in Libya; there has been evidence of hostility to the United States in some segments of the population and some elements of the Libyan Government, there is no US Embassy in Libya, therefore US Government is unable to provide any assurances of the safety of travel to Libya by US citizens. US Government interests are represented by the Government of Belgium which is a protecting power and can only provide a limited emergency services to US citizens.

United Nations sanctions, just as the Prime Minister said a while ago, against Libya were suspended, 'suspended' following the surrender of the two suspects of the Lockerbie bombing, 'suspended' note you, US sanctions however remain in place. All financial and commercial transactions with Libya by US citizens are prohibited unless licensed by the US. Treasury departments, US passports are not valid for travel to in or through Libya, unless a special validation is obtained before hand from the United State Department of State. Those Americans who decide to travel to Libya despite the travel warning should exercise a high level of caution.

Mr. Speaker, that is a position of the United States just over a month ago.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the US Government's position, that they have the sanctions against Libya. I am aware of that. The United Nations has lifted the sanctions against Libya. European countries, including Britain, reestablished diplomatic relations with Libya. In fact, the plane on which it is planned for the delegation from the OECS to go to Libya is a British Airways aircraft, because flights go from London Heathrow to Tripoli, Libya every single day. And there are commercial transactions. Persons who travel to Libya who are not US citizens have no sanctions brought against them, individuals as indeed was the case until recently in relation to Cuba.

When Douglas Slater attended university in Cuba the sanctions against Cuba by the US included Douglas Slater not being eligible for a US visa to Cuba, that is not the case as I understand it, even in relation to Libya. The position in relation to Cuba of course has altered somewhat by the US government, though they still have sanctions against Cuba, the same kinds of US consula notice given in relation to Libya is what

the US Government does routinely in relation to Cuba. It does not follow therefore, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, that the US position on Cuba should determine the position of the Caribbean on Cuba. I just want to make the point that we here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and in the Caribbean, share a similar position with our friend the United States of America on almost every single important foreign policy issue internationally. Almost everyone, but there would be issues upon which we will diverge, indeed Britain and the United States share almost identical position on most of the issues on the international arena, but yet the position of Britain is different to that of the United States of America on Libya, and so similarly France's position is similar to that of the United Kingdom and dissimilar to that of the United States, and the same thing with Italy and so on, and so forth; and Belgium the very protecting country in Libya for US citizens.

As I was making the point when I gave way to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, my contact with persons associated with European Governments is that they have no objection at all to this OECS visit to Libya, and from my conversation with at least one high ranking person connected with US Government that when Dominica and Grenada established diplomatic relations they had no problem, where the problem would come is if you seeking to establish political or military relations, but those are entirely out of the question, these are relations between the relations which we are talking about are economic and technical corporations/relations and I want to say this. I held discussions with the President of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce in St. Vincent and the Grenadines about someone from the Chamber going on the trip, because you are dealing with an economic issue, because you are seeking to enlarge your economic space. So I make the point that what we are dealing here with now is entirely different to that of the honorary citizenship. US authorities have commented adversely about honorary citizenship, the British have done the same, persons associated with FATF have done the same, with the Caribbean anti money laundering group and I can go through the list, but those matters about the consequence which practical Statesmen must take account of, that is not the objection of the honorary citizenship principle, the objection has to do with the nature of the relationship between citizen and citizen and citizen and the State, and that's why I think it is important, and I believe when these debates take place, and it is good when they are being broadcast live, that the public understands the logic of a position within a particular environment.

I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that we have to look for ways and means to get revenue by not taxing the citizens, because the citizens by and large pay too much taxes already, direct income tax and indirect taxes, and it is for this reason that we sought for example to call on foreign companies, external companies to register in St. Vincent and the Grenadines to pay the US \$3,000.00 required by the Company Act if they own property in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. So we are on the same wavelength with that, so we have to look for tax measures which are correct in principle, and which do not have the adverse consequences, and that is why we have

taken the decision, we have taken and of course we are fulfilling the mandate of the people to do away with honorary citizenship.

Clearly the Government and the Opposition have a divergent position on this Bill, but what is interesting to note, the NDP Government had the measure passed in 1996 and they have gotten a lot of blows for it from the international community, but they have gotten no benefit, because not one single honorary citizenship was sold as far as I am aware, because of the concerns which the international community expressed. Concerns about due diligence, and about the safety of the transmittal of passports to countries where we do not have any diplomatic representation, particularly in the Far East. So they got the burden of economic honorary citizenship, but got no benefit, well to me that is a dumb policy. In the case of our visit to Tripoli, it is a group of countries, I understand that Antigua Barbuda maybe having second thoughts, but I spoke to Prime Minister Charles today, he called me and he said that we still going on the trip, and we are discussing our flight. Prime Minister Dr. Mitchell called expressing the same view and he had called and I was here in Parliament and since it is carnival down in Grenada, he told me to call him at home. When I got over there at the lunch break and I called him and he still on the way to going. Last week Dr. Douglas of St. Kitts Nevis informed Prime Minister Charles in Dominica that everything is in order and he is still aboard, because it was a decision taken collectively at the OECS. You cannot take decisions collectively and then bow to the pressure of an editorial writer in some newspaper in Trinidad or what per chance may happen.

We are friends with the US, and if the US has a problem they will call and tell us, and we will talk about it, but they have indicated no such difficulty, and I am saying this, they have indicated none to me, they have indicated none to Charles, they have indicated none to Dr. Douglas and they have indicated none to Grenada save and except when the Dr. Mitchell was in Washington as I understand it, he was asked if there was some secret agenda, he said this is a very open and – because what they are concerned about clearly is if you may have something in mind other than economic and technical co-operation. And that is straightforward. And serious leaders must have the nerve and the clear sense to act in matters that are within the interest of the country. We are a mature democracy in these parts, with over 50 years of democratic life since Universal Suffrage. We are not about to be changed by Mohammad Gadaflies Green Book. Indeed his government is looking for respectability, post Lockerbie which interestingly at the trial, his government was absolved of being involved in Lockerbie, that is clear from the record. We as mature democracies in the Western Hemisphere can act as a bridge to assist Libya in re-entering in a more wide spread way the committee of nations for the building of peaceful relations, just as we have solved the issue in our own countries of race relations we can solve the issue, or contribute to the solving of the issue for the generation of world peace.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that the public who is listening would have benefited from this debate. I appreciate the concern raised by the Leader of the Opposition in relation to the Libya visit but I am heartened that on an important matter of foreign policy he has not taken a position of opposition, particularly since his own party had been part of a collective decision to establish diplomatic relations with Tripoli, with Libya, so he cannot reasonably oppose what we are doing. So I am heartened by his expression of concern, but equally I am satisfied that he has not expressed any opposition. Because on foreign policy matters we have to, as far as possible to have in St. Vincent and the Grenadines a responsible by partisan approach to foreign policy, and that is why the Leader of the Opposition would indicate to you, and I can say it in the Parliament, I requested that he visit the office of the Prime Minister for both of us to talk about foreign policy issues including the visit to Libya, including our regional and foreign policy issues, and I gave to him the communiqué from the OECS summit, from the CARICOM Summit, I gave information on bananas because I am satisfied that while we may war within the ambit of competitive democracy internally, we must as far as possible when we are going to the outside world have as much of a common position as possible, based on certain clear principle, just as we have evolve a common position on say Taiwan and so on and so forth. And that is the way this government intends to function, consultation, --

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I am obliged, Mr. Speaker, -- on a wide range of matters relating to foreign policy with the Opposition and to do so in relation to the OECS and CARICOM as a whole. The debate has only extended to the Libyan trip only because of the way in which it was framed originally in the contribution by the Leader of the Opposition and I am grateful that he has so framed it to afford me the opportunity to speak in this particular manner.

I want, Mr. Speaker, as I wind up the debate to move that the House resolve itself into a committee of the whole House to consider this Bill clause by clause.

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

*House went into Committee.*

*House resumed.*

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

### 3. INTERPRETATION AND GENERAL PROVISIONS (AMENDMENT) BILL 2001

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

Provisions Act Chapter 10 of the Revised Edition of the Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines 1990.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

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

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I beg to move the second reading of a Bill for an Act to amend the Interpretation and General Provisions Act.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, this is a very straight forward bill, and the objects and reasons actually point out we are seeking to amend the Interpretation and General Provisions Act really to accommodate the new terminology to be followed following the introduction of the New Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court Civil Procedure Rules 2000.

These new civil procedure rules Mr. Speaker, for the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court came into effect on the 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2000. The over riding objectives of these rules is to enable the court to deal with cases, justly. In doing so the Rules specifically deal with what is called case management, which would allow for a more comprehensive process of negotiations between the parties, more so this is a mechanism whereby the court co-ordinate processes and resources so that cases progress in a timely fashion to the filing to the disposition regardless of the type of disposition. The point here, Mr. Speaker, is that under the old Supreme Court rules there was little opportunity as there is in say, the Canadian jurisdiction or the American jurisdiction or the rules as they were amended in the United Kingdom to have a management of the case. At a particular stage you will have the lawyers being called together by someone called the Master, and I will address that question shortly and basically saying what is the state of play, can't we settle this case, can't we resolve it,

so you get through quicker and it could be cheaper on clients and in many cases once there is such a mechanism, it could be resolve before trial.

This particular process, Mr. Speaker, the new civil procedure rules, these rules seek to increase efficiency and access to justice in accountable court system which relies on public trust and confidence, and holds clear and very dear equality, fairness and integrity. In the light of this the ULP Government has just approve in the Supplementary Estimates the software license fees for the Jem software of US\$47,500.00 equivalent to EC\$126,800.25 in order to facilitate this process. Government has also approved the renting of a building nearby to the Registry in order to accommodate, just across the road to accommodate some members of the Staff of the Registry Department for the purpose of facilitating and computerization of the new rules. Also to give proper effect to the aims and objectives of case management, the Office of the Master of the Supreme Court was created in several jurisdiction including St. Vincent and the Grenadines, under these new rules the Master shall exercise the authority and jurisdiction of a Judge of the High Court sitting in Chambers, and any other authority and jurisdiction as may from time to time be assigned by the rules of the Court. The new Rules, Mr. Speaker, have different terminology for instance; instead of having someone called a plaintiff he is now known as a claimant. Instead of having what is called a writ of summons endorsed with a statement of claim, these are different formulations that in the old rules. So what we are doing in the Interpretation and General Provision Act is really to change the terminology to fit in that general Act, the terminology as is now in the new rules. That's all it is about. And we have moved very speedily since we have taken office to make sure in addition to having the new rules for us to have the resources put aside to implement these rules and the mechanisms put in place to ensure that justice moves more swiftly in the High Court in the Civil jurisdiction, because as you know there are cases that would take five, six, seven years sometimes even longer than that, but the new rules and the case management arrangements and the new provisions would speed up all this without in any way affecting justice.

Now, for those persons in the general public and for Members of Parliament, and the lawyers certainly the rules are available from the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court at a cost of \$353.00 Eastern Caribbean so that those, I suspect the member for the Northern Grenadines would want to board up on that, because presumably he would want to be called to the bar here to practice his profession. This is what this is all about, Mr. Speaker, it is a very simple amendment, and this should have been done shortly after the rules came into being from January, well the end of last year but certainly this should have come into being by January, it didn't happen, we got to do it, and here we are.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker, I just have a very brief comments on this, as the Prime Minister noted that this basically is an uncontroversial

legislation which is intended to essentially incorporate the definitions that are in the Civil procedure rules which would be used in the courts here, and as the Prime Minister explained the purpose behind the rules, I don't think anyone can have any objections to procedures that would speed up the resolutions of disputes in the Courts especially through case management, and possibly by other alternative means of resolution. The only question I have and this is one for clarification is the definition, and I don't know if I have the same copy of the interpretation Act that is used that is being amended. The definition of Master in clause 2, there is an old definition of Master in the Interpretation Act and it refers, the version I read to a Master of a ship. No? This is just a question I have, if you assure me then that there is no reference to that in the current version of the Interpretation Act, because the question I have is whether this is going to be incorporated as a new definition, and how it is going to be distinguished from that, so perhaps you could explain to me, Mr. Prime Minister.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Yes, as I understand it this, the category here Master of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court, however it may have any interpretation or meaning relating to a ship that will follow, we are dealing here with this particular amendment concerning the Master of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court. I have been advised that two Masters have been appointed by the Chief Justice for the OECS, and they go around and that's as I understand it.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Well I guess the question was if there is a definition of Master in the Interpretation Act, this new definition where would it be, would it follow, or would it be part of that definition?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** No, all we would do when we come to the Committee stage we can simply say for the avoidance of doubt Master in relation to the High Court means. Okay.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Thank you. There is a small typo as well in writ of summons the last term for definition. It says writ of summons indorsed, in should be endorsed, on page 2. Mr. Speaker, then with the comments I have made and the submissions made by the Honourable Prime Minister, there is nothing in this Bill to oppose, and therefore we are in support of it. And hope that it has a speedy passage.

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, there being no further debate it is my duty just simply to wind up on the second reading I have really nothing more to add. It is a tidying up piece of legislation and to put things in place. Accordingly I move that the House resolve itself into a committee of the whole House to consider the Bill clause by clause.

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

*House went into Committee.*

*House resumed.*

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

**4. ESTATE AND SUCCESSION DUTIES (AMENDMENT) BILL 2001**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move the first reading of a bill for an Act to amend the Estate and Succession Duties Act.

This Bill seeks to amend the Estate and Succession duties Act by providing for the cessation of the collection of – I am sorry Mr. Speaker, we had done the first reading on the last occasion.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the second reading of a Bill for an Act to amend the Estate and Succession Duties Act.

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

*Question put and agreed.*

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, this is another measure in which the ULP Government is fulfilling yet another promise to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in its '100 Days Programme' and in its manifesto. The purpose of this Bill really is to amend the Estate and Succession Duties Act, by providing for the cessation of the collection of interest on Death Dues with effect from August 5<sup>th</sup> 1993.

Mr. Speaker, there was the anomalous situation in which Estate Duties were being collected even when you have had, by the previous Government, changes in the regime for the Collection of Estate and Succession Duties, and it has been felt that these persons who have to pay Estate and Succession Duties that the interest within before 1993 and a lot of it has to do with persons with fairly small Estates that we will make a provision to assist them in getting the interest on the Death Dues not collected, and basically the provision is that no interest shall be paid or levied upon any Estate Duty that was due before August 5<sup>th</sup> 1993 and which has to date not yet been paid and schedule is amended in the similar manner. Because what you had happening that

from 1993, persons had been given relief from death dues, but before that time there was no relief whatsoever and the interest was burdensome to many persons and the interest came up in many cases to more than what the death dues were and the situation is just really to clear the deaths so that people can go and organize themselves and get the title to the properties to any little piece of land which would have been bequeathed to them either by will or which devolve to them on the basis of their intestacy. This is what all this is about. It is a simple provision and I am quite sure that you should have no difficulty with this evening from the Opposition or from any other member from this side.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, well at least it is admitted that the NDP did something; but seriously Mr. Speaker, I need clarification. Mr. Speaker, I need clarification on a couple of issues. There is a principle that is involved here Mr. Speaker, in that there would be a number of people who would have paid their death duties and any interest in respect of those death duties, and on the basis of this presentation made by the Prime Minister, we seem to be rewarding those who did not pay by now saying that we want to waive the interest. The Prime Minister made an interesting statement which would help me a great deal, Mr. Speaker, in the resolution of this matter in terms of our position. He said that we are dealing with small estates, I don't know what means, I don't have any idea of what sorts of monies we are talking about, I think that is germane, we need to know what we are talking about before we say that we give our support to this measure, because I am very concerned that somebody might come and say "well I paid my death dues, I paid my interest and now you are forgiving those who did not."

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Perhaps if I may explain. The persons who are actually benefiting are those, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition within the period January 1993 to August the 5<sup>th</sup> 1993 because after August 5<sup>th</sup> 1993, you will not have been paying any and those which have gone just before January 1993 so there was a lacuna, there was an anomaly, therefore those few months persons were being called upon to pay.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** I am not following you.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** As I understand it, prior to January 1993 there has been a relief. After August the 5<sup>th</sup> 1993 there has been a relief. So the period January to August the 5<sup>th</sup> 1993 that the persons who would be benefiting from this particular measure.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, I missing a step. Are we saying that this applies only in respect of persons who were required to pay death dues between January and August 1993? I am asking whether this measure applies only to persons

who would have been required to pay death dues which arose in between the period January and August 1993, does that include arrears prior to that time?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** My understanding, the advise that I received from the lawyers, is that prior to January 1993 they would pay their death dues, but the way in which the Act has been amended by the previous Attorney General that it allowed a period between January 1993 and August 5<sup>th</sup> 1993 for the payment of death dues. So there was an amendment, so that is basically to clarify the position between January 1993 to August the 5<sup>th</sup> 1993.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Maybe the hour is late. Mr. Speaker, let us just look at the amendment that this proposed, Section 2 says, Section 24 of the principle Act is amended by renumbering and so forth. And the Subsection 2 would read no interest shall be paid or levied upon any estate that was due before August 5<sup>th</sup> 1993 and which to date has not yet been paid. That has nothing to do with January.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** It relates to, as I understand it, it relates to an original piece of law which would have seized it on August 5<sup>th</sup>.

If the Leader of the Oppositions would wish to get the legal persons to get Act 25 of 1993 to show and we could have here indicate the issue to you, the strict narrow legal terms. It is just one particular area.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** If you look at the amendment for 3 this says to me that notwithstanding the provisions of the schedule, no interest shall be paid or levied on any succession duty that was due before August 5<sup>th</sup> 1993. But that doesn't say anything between January and August.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** It would have been due for the period prior to August and January, before that it would not have been due.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** We are talking about interest you know. So it had to be in respect of death duties that started in January, before January? So? I don't follow the point.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** What we can do Mr. Speaker, we can take a suspension for ten minutes so that the original piece of legislation could be shown to the Leader of the Opposition.

**SUSPENSION OF SITTING 8:30 p.m.  
RESUMPTION OF SITTING 9:00 p.m.**

*(To try to rectify a problem  
present in the Bill.)*

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members during the break we have had a discussion on the issue which I raised, and there is an amendment that is to be proposed by the mover which would allow for the avoidance of doubt, he has the particular wording which I assume we will hear in a few moments.

Mr. Speaker, from the discussions we just held we are in fact speaking of period between January 1<sup>st</sup> and August 5<sup>th</sup> 1993, in which death duty was 50% and interest was paid on that 50%, and it is that group of persons or estates that would be affected by the proposed amendment.

Mr. Speaker, it is the duty of the Government to make policy in relation to these matters. The Prime Minister in his opening statements indicated that there were a number of small estates involved in this matter and while we do not give a quantum for the amounts outstanding in respect of those estates, I assume that the figure is not significant. However, Mr. Speaker, I want to raise, and I assume the Prime Minister will reply, I want to raise what is in effect an issue of policy, and the issue that I wish to raise, Mr. Speaker, is that there will be small estates of persons who die prior to January 1<sup>st</sup> 1993 maybe as far back as 1990 who would have to pay full estate duty and interest on that full estate duty, once we change that in respect of persons or estate that only attracted a 50% duty between January 1<sup>st</sup> 1993, and August 5<sup>th</sup> 1993, the Government could find itself in a situation once this information is published, whether in small estates which are still having to pay up to August 1993 although the deaths would have been taken place well before January 1<sup>st</sup> 1993. This is a matter of policy that the Government has to deal with. I put myself in the position of somebody, let us assume there is some person who died in December 1989 and not being able to make the payments on the death duty nor the interest, these have accrued but that person will get no relief, they would have to pay everything up to and including August 5<sup>th</sup> 1993. and here what you are doing is waiving it in respect of those persons who are only paying on 50% but who the estate would have been in that position simply between January 1<sup>st</sup> and August 5<sup>th</sup> 1993, and there is a question of equity here which I think the government would have to address, because I am quite sure that some people would see this as not fair. Everybody is free of the interest after August 5<sup>th</sup> 1993, but prior to that time there will be sums which have accrued and death duties that have not been paid which date back well before January 1<sup>st</sup> 1993. And Mr. Speaker, I think the Government is duty bound to look at that and therefore my first question about how much is outstanding is basically how many people are involved or how many estates are involved remains, and we may find that the sum turn out to be much larger if one has to deal with the period prior to January the 1<sup>st</sup> 1993. And quite frankly I believe that the Government should examine this matter further. Much obliged Mr. Speaker.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members in the light of the comments of the Opposition and we are a – the position is being narrowed,

and what was at stake were two important amendments which were done by the NDP government where certain reliefs were given, and we are seeking to correct an anomaly. The Leader of the Opposition is raising an additional question as to whether we should not go back to even before January 1993 and address certain issues that may be there, which his predecessor government didn't address, what I would suggest therefore is in this particular amendment to put, we can do two things, we either put in a section in addition to what is the wording we have there say this should come into effect on proclamation, and then give the opportunity to look at every aspect of it in the light in which we are suggesting, so that we pass it don't bring it into effect, look at everything together or on the other hand, we shelf this and do the complete arrangement as the suggestion is being made, because I am prepared to do that, so that we can have a unity across the board on that particular question, because I think on this issue we share a common position, that is to say, to have it diminution of interest and death duties for as many persons across the board that is fair and reasonable. I think that is a fundamental issue upon which we all agreed. The point is this because the original changes that were made to the Estate and Succession Duties by the previous government, there were worthwhile measures but there was an anomaly created, and we are seeking to resolve the anomaly and the question is this whether we should seek to resolve an anomaly within a narrow band of period January 1<sup>st</sup> 1993 to August 5<sup>th</sup> 1993 or we should do it even before that period. So in those circumstances I will be prepared with the agreement of the Leader of the Opposition in either way I have suggested it, either we pass this but with an amendment to the bill saying it comes into effect on Proclamation and when we decide we have it proclaim, and all the anomalies are sorted out, or whether we should simply withdraw this and bring a bill covering also some of the issues you have raised, because what we have been left with here, frankly as you would appreciate we have inherited a patch work which we are trying to see if we could sort out. And if you are in agreement with that I am prepared to withdraw this and not just sort out this particular piece of patch work but to go even before and see what even further anomalies that might be. How does that sound?

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, I believe that equity requires that we have a further examination of the issue as it relates to persons or estates prior to January 1<sup>st</sup> 1993, because I accept the principle of which the Prime Minister enunciated at the beginning that effectively he was dealing with small estates and in the circumstances, Mr. Speaker, in my view it is not going to be an easy exercise to determine a cut off date. Though there must be one. Because which ever date you put somebody is going to raise and objection. But I believe it is more important to widen the net of those persons or estate who may benefit, especially to the extent that some of them may have been small and completely overburden by the accrued interest, and therefore I would support the withdrawal while this exercise is conducted. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, and I would want to say this, that since we have agreed on the common principle involved, since we want to resolve the patch work and ensure equity across the board I am prepared to have, if the Leader of Opposition name someone who can work with our own technical persons in the Government even before the bill gets here, in as much as we have had a debate on the issues to resolve all the issues which are involve in this matter.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** When you have taken your policy decision.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** The policy decision has been taken.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** I am talking about policy in terms of the cut off, when you have taken that policy decision.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Well, any date which we take for a cut off is going to create difficulties for some persons. Because you see the precious Government had decided that the cut off is August 5<sup>th</sup> 1993 and we were seeking to resolve some anomalies between January 1<sup>st</sup> 1993 and August 5<sup>th</sup> to be fair to persons in that band. So that we can choose another cut off date and we can widen it and that is what I am suggesting. In as much as we have this debate and agreements because what we are trying to do –

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Prime Minister you have a competent and legal staff.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** No, no, no, that is not the issue.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** -- Having given them the policy directions they will draft the required and then we will discuss it.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** No, no, that is not the issue. All -- I was talking procedurally. I was offering a further olive branch in the light of the discussions which we have been having for you to be engaged. You are afraid of together now.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** After it has been drafted if you want the legal advise then you come to the House it is okay.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** You are afraid of together now on this?

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** No, this is not together now. I am saying you are in government –

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I formally move in the light of our discussions, I formally move that this particular bill be withdrawn to accommodate all the anomalies and to set a new cut off date in relation to the policy which both the Government and the Opposition is agreed upon.

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

*Question put and agreed to.  
Bill withdrawn.*

## **5. FAMILY COURT (AMENDMENT) BILL 2001**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I beg to move the second reading of a bill for an Act to amend the Family Court Act.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, this is a very brief bill, this bill seeks to amend the Family Court Act No. 45 of 1992 in order to remove the post of Registrar and substitute therefore the post of a Legal Clerk, making the post non legal. The Estimates for 2001 provided the position of Legal Clerk in the Family Court and we now wish to make an appointment to this post substantively. The Family Court Act No. 53 of 1992 makes provision for a Registrar and not a Legal Clerk, accordingly the Family Court Act is being amended to replace Registrar with Legal Clerk to give essential effects to the Estimates which we had passed in December last year and had adopted. That is basically what this Bill is about.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Again as the Honourable Prime Minister has mentioned this is pretty straightforward and it is something that the NDP administration had provided for. The only concern would be that the position to be filled of Legal Clerk that all efforts be made to ensure that a person of the highest competence is obtained to fill that position, not because now there is no requirement now for a legally trained person, that doesn't mean that there would be less emphasis or diligence being placed on filling the position with the most competent person. If a legally trained person is available to fulfill the position, then that person would be the most suitable then obviously that's the person who should be chosen to fill the position. With that proviso that this amendment is one that the Opposition can support, as the Prime Minister says it gives effect essentially to

provisions that had been made in the Estimates of December of 2000. Much obliged Mr. Speaker.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, in just winding up I want to say of course, my friend from the Northern Grenadines would always seek to make the point that it was the NDP's policy to appoint a Legal Clerk, the point about it is this they had three months and didn't address the question, they hadn't address the question, I know you say it was election, but I agree with you, you were concentrating on spending out all the money from the special fund in the Office of the Prime Minister to get your 40 votes majority. I am using some very innovative ways of dealing with some debts. Very innovative.

Mr. Speaker, the concern of the Honourable Member of the Northern Grenadines, would be allayed very simply by the statement of a simple fact that we do have very competent non-legal clerks doing a lot of very serious legal oriented work. There are paralegals who are trained in the system and this Government has an on going system of training, internally and for paralegals. Already there the post in the High Court of Deputy Registrar-Non Professional, that is to say somebody who is not a lawyer. There is the situation here in the Office of the Clerk of the House of Assembly, in many other jurisdiction the Office of the Clerk is a legally trained person, Clerk of the House, yet we have a Clerk who is doing the work very well. We have a Deputy Clerk who is not legally trained but who is doing her work very well, where there is legal issues arising. And I just wish that my friend from the Northern Grenadines would have a little bit more faith in non-legally trained persons. Maybe it is his own legal bias that he feels that because he is a lawyer that only lawyers can have a sufficiency of training. I would be disappointed really if that was his position. But the prejudice came out. And I just wanted to make a correction.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker, maybe I could clarify then.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Yes, I would like you to clarify. I gave you an opportunity. I think the way you do you ask me if I may give way. That's way you do it, through the Speaker.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** I am grateful. I am clarifying for the benefit of the Honourable Prime Minister, because I think my statement was clear to probably most of the other members of the House. I simply said that we have to ensure, because there is no longer the legal requirement that the most competent person available would be filling the position. I would assume that this is a position that would be applied to any position in the Courts or the Public Service, and since we were essentially agreeing to the removal of the requirement of a legally trained person, I want to make it clear, to emphasize that the issue of insuring that the most competent persons available to fill the position is one that is paramount in the Government's mind,

I am not suggesting that only a lawyer can do it, if that were the case obviously we wouldn't have been supporting the legislation.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Again I may say this, we have an excellent, the more you speak, the more you get yourself into trouble. Because there is an independent authority under the Constitution known as the Public Service Commission. The Public Service Commission currently consist of five persons, the Chairman who is a distinguish lawyer and an economist, Public Servant, teacher, hitherto now a lawyer, Cecil Blazer Williams who would represent the Public Service Union and the Teachers Union in different capacities. Then there is a former accountant general, who is on the Public Service Commission, Miss Evelyn Jackson, a woman of impeccable integrity and quality of judgment, and then there is Mr. Charles James who has been an administrator in the Banana Growers Association a member of the board elected, many, many years, formally a member of this House, appointed as a Senator and then two other old overs from the NDP years, I would be very surprised if the Public Service Commissions as currently constituted would select other than the best person. So that I hope you don't mean to suggest that the Public Service Commission of this high quality, particularly those three persons I have named, plus you must have some confidence in the two who were appointed through the instrumentality of the Leader of the Opposition. That they would do nothing but select the best and I think that suggestion which may indicate otherwise is one which we would not wish to embrace. This is why I say every time you talk in these matters you seem to raise more questions than anything else.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Only in your mind.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** No. In the minds of right thinking persons. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I beg to move that this House resolves itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider this Bill clause by clause.

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

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

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

## ADJOURNMENT

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I have looked on the countenance of many,.....

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Don't make that excuse. If you want to continue, continue.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I tell you the Honourable Leader of the Opposition is so thin skinned. I was going to say that I have looked upon the countenance of several members of the House. He presumed I was going to say I looked upon the countenance of the Leader of the Opposition;, but the fact is this, I saw he had packed up all his papers in his bag, so I wanted essentially to in the spirit of together now to go along with him, he needs an early night, and I would like to move the adjournment, Mr. Speaker, for tomorrow morning at 10:00 a.m. Tomorrow we will have a shortened day because the Charge d' Affairs of the Republic of China on Taiwan is having a very important function to celebrate tomorrow the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of relations between our respective countries, and I believe tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, if you would permit me in the nature, of the business and I would ask if consideration could be given that, if I could be permitted tomorrow make a statement, a ministerial statement on the relationship, but to allow the Leader of the Opposition at that time also equally to make a brief statement. We could make brief statements at the commencement of the sitting tomorrow, and other members may wish to do so very briefly, certainly the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and then I would like us to deal with a few of the important matters remaining on the agenda including Mr. Speaker, I had spoken to the Leader of the Opposition and the Financial Intelligence Unit Bill and Proceeds of Crime and Money Laundering Bill if on the second reading what we can do tomorrow is simply to appoint Select Committees and when the report comes from the Select Committees we can then do a fulsome debate on the report as if indeed it was a full scale second reading of the bill. So that, [interjection] No it is a way in which, we have accommodated you when you were in the Opposition with that, no, no, we have, no, we have accommodated you. I know you are a disciple of together now, and that you would accommodate this proceeding.

I move accordingly that we suspend/adjourn until tomorrow whichever verb the Speaker finds appropriate to 10:00 a.m. tomorrow morning.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House adjourned accordingly at 9:30 p.m.*