

**No. 8**

**WEDNESDAY**

**First Session**

**17<sup>th</sup> October, 2001**

**Seventh Parliament**

**SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

**THE**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**ADVANCE COPY**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

**CONTENTS**

**Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> October, 2001**

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Prayers   | 7  |
| Motion  | 7  |
| The Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Citizenship (Amendment)<br>(Validation) Bill, 2001<br>(First, second and third readings) | 7  |
| Public Holidays (Amendment) Bill, 2001<br>(First, second and third readings)  | 11 |
| Arbitration (New York Convention Awards and Agreements)<br>Bill 2001<br>(Second and third readings)                           | 38 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Convention on Oil Pollution Damage Bill, 2001<br>(Second and third readings)                                   | 42 |
| National Flag Bill, 2001<br>(First, second and third readings)   | 46 |
| Maritime Security Bill, 2001<br>(First reading)  | 64 |
| Protection of Aircraft and Airports Bill, 2001<br>(First reading)  | 65 |
| Brothers of the Christian Schools Incorporation (Repeal)<br>Bill, 2001<br>(Second reading)                     | 65 |
| Fountain Gospel Hall (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)<br>Incorporation Bill, 2001<br>(Second reading)        | 66 |
| The Christian Church of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Bill, 2001<br>(Second reading)                        | 66 |
| Kingstown Baptist Church of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Bill, 2001<br>(Second reading)                    | 66 |
| The Light of Truth Church of God Bill, 2001<br>(Second reading)  | 66 |
| Living Waters Ministries (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)<br>Incorporation Bill, 2001<br>(First reading)     | 66 |
| Wells of Living Water Church (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)<br>Incorporation Bill, 2001<br>(First reading) | 66 |
| Apostolic Deliverance Church (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)<br>Incorporation Bill, 2001<br>(First reading) | 66 |
| Bethany Baptist Church (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)<br>Incorporation Bill, 2001<br>(First reading)       | 66 |

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Halibethian Church of the Epiphany (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines)<br>Incorporation Bill, 2001<br>(First reading) | 66 |
| Adjournment  | 68 |

**THE**

**THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE EIGHT 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.**

**THIRTEEN SITTING**

**17<sup>TH</sup> October, 2001**

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

The Honourable House of Assembly met at 10.06 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

Minister of National Security, the Public Service  
and Airport Development

Honourable Vincent Beache

Member for South Windward

|   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| Minister of Education, Youth and Sports<br>Honourable Michael Browne  | Member for West St. George           |
| Minister of Social Development, Co-operatives,<br>The Family, Gender and Ecclesiastical Affairs<br>Honourable Girlyn Miguel | Member for Marriaqua                 |
| Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries<br>Honourable Selmon Walters   | Member for South Central<br>Windward |
| Minister of Health and the Environment<br>Honourable Dr. Douglas Slater   | Member for South Leeward             |
| Minister of Telecommunications, Science<br>Technology and Industry<br>Honourable Dr. Jerrol Thompson                        | Member for North Leeward             |
| Minister of Tourism and Culture<br>Honourable Rene Baptist  | Member for West Kingstown            |
| Minister of State in the Ministry<br>of Education, Youth and Sports<br>Honourable Clayton Burgin                            | Member for East St. George           |
| Minister of State in the Ministry<br>of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries<br>Honourable Montgomery Daniel                    | Member for North Windward            |
| Minister of State in the Ministry<br>of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Trade<br>Honourable Conrad Sayers                     | Member for Central Kingstown         |
| Minister of Transport, Works and Housing<br>Honourable Julian Francis   | Government Senator                   |

#### **OTHER MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE**

|                                  |  |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Honourable Arnhim Eustace        | Member for East Kingstown/<br>Leader of the Opposition |
| Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday | Member for Northern Grenadines                         |

Honourable Terrance Ollivierre

Member for Southern Grenadines

Honourable Juliet George

Government Senator

Honourable Andrea Young

Government Senator/Deputy Speaker

Honourable Gerard Shallow

Opposition Senator

Honourable Major St. Claire Leacock

Opposition Senator

**ABSENT**

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

Honourable Louis Straker

Member for Central Leeward

Honourable Edwin Snagg

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

# **SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

## **HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**WEDNESDAY 17<sup>th</sup> OCTOBER, 2001**

### **PRAYERS**

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

### **MOTION**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I move under Standing Order 12 (5) that the proceedings of this day's sitting be excepted from the provisions of the Standing Order Hours' of Sitting.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

### **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

#### **SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES CITIZENSHIP (AMENDMENT) (VALIDATION) BILL 2001**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move the first reading of a Bill for Act to amend the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Citizenship Act Cap. 80 to validate the collection of certain acquisition, registration, and renunciation of Citizenship fees.

The Objects and reasons of this Bill is that it seeks to correct legislation purporting to increase the fees for acquisition and renunciation of citizenship fees, since the purporting increase was done by subsidiary legislation, amending an Act where the Act makes no provision for that process.

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** 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 Standing Order 48 (2) that this Bill be taken through all its stages at today's sitting.

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** 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 the Bill for an Act to Amend the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Citizenship Ship Act Cap. 80.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

*Bill read a second time.*

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

**THE SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES CITIZENSHIP (AMENDMENT) (VALIDATION) BILL 2001.**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, as I stated when I moved the first reading of the Bill, this bill is to correct certain legislative errors made by the previous government, and one made by us, in that we had followed the practice of the previous government in relation to the increase of certain fees under the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Citizenship Act. We have done so by subsidiary legislation, but that was discovered to be in error, so what we have had to do is to correct the legislative mistake from the previous occasion and on the current one.

Mr. Speaker, the office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel has set out the basic facts in the preamble to the Bill: that Cabinet had authorized the increasing acquisition and renunciation of citizenship fees in 1990, from \$250.00 to \$400.00 from the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, 1990. By virtue of the Statutory Rules and Order No. 26 of 1992, there was a purported increase in the acquisition and renunciation of Citizenship Fees to \$1,000.00 and a new category, namely Registration of citizenship Fees was added with the same fee of \$1,000.00. The draft legislation to increase the fees from \$250.00 to \$400.00 was duly signed by the appropriate authorities, but through an administrative oversight was not gazetted, and that law did not come into effect, and both pieces of legislation Statutory Rules and Order purporting to amend an Act and therefore of no effect. So it becomes expedient that the increased fees in both situations be validated.

Similarly the fees for acquisition and renunciation of citizenship was purported to further increase by Residence Fees Amendment regulations 2001, to \$1500.00 which in effect purported to amend an Act and therefore is of no effect. So it become expedient to validate that particular provision. Those are the instructions and advice that I have received from the Chief Parliamentary Counsel. So we now have to essentially validate what was invalid; and that is the long and short of this particular piece of legislation. I do not think I need to say anything more about it, Mr. Speaker.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House have no problem with the amendments that are being proposed and with the Act in general, because as the Prime Minister says, it is essentially intended to make legal the collection of fees that have already been collected under the previous administration and the present administration, and I would dare say have already been spent.

The ordinary practice of course is for the principal legislation to make provisions for details of Acts legislations to make the details to put them in subsidiary legislation which are usually referred as regulations. So that the changes that are required to be made speedily and fairly regularly, could be done by Cabinet without having to come to the House and having the full debate on those changes. And they tend to be minor changes which refer to the quantum of fees that are to be paid for certain things and times when certain things have to be done and so on, and that is the normal practice and it is one that I dare say should be adhered to. If the previous legislation intended to provide for the amendment of principal legislation, that is the Act, by subsidiary legislation, that is by regulations or Standing Orders, that is something obviously that we should not be encouraging and should oppose, because it circumvents Parliament. So the principle in fact that has been protected by this Bill itself, is one that is worthy of defence and one that this side of the House would support as well, because as I have said, subsidiary legislations that essentially only go to Cabinet should not be made to amend an Act of Parliament.

So, Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House, we understand the need to validate the collection of fees that has been done, and we also recognize the importance of protecting the principle, that Acts that have been passed in Parliament, if they are to be amended should be amended in Parliament and not by Cabinet through regulations. So we on this side of the House have no problems with the Bill as proposed.

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the point which was made by the Member for the Northern Grenadines is well taken and it is a point which we endorse fully and it is in keeping with the manner in which we on this side of the House do our business.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, before I crave you indulgence to move that the House goes into Committee state, is to congratulate the Office of the Attorney General and the Office of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel which is within that Office, because errors of this kind you notice have been on the Books since 1990; and it has taken the vigilance of the A.G's Department and the Chief Parliamentary Counsel Office to have brought it to the attention of the Executive. And we are very, very grateful for this, and I think that, the general public and I should make this point, now that people are hearing us on radio, that we need to have the institutional capacity in every single department, very much so, the Attorney General's Chambers since we are a Government of laws and not of men. Sometimes when we are spending money on the Office of the Attorney General you get the complaint, particularly from those who should know better, but who pretend as though they are untutored in these matters, and perhaps they are untutored, why you do not take the money and build culverts. Well money is there also for culverts but unless you have a strong Attorney General's Chambers, Legal Department, you are on the slide to barbarism, because the lawless out there, would have their excellent counsel, and we have to make sure that we have the capacity. And I must say in this regard Mr. Speaker, that when we took office there was no Director of Public Prosecution, there was a Chief Parliamentary Counsel who had gone past the age of retirement and who was essentially, month to month. A Solicitor General who had gone past the age of retirement, and was also month to month and a staff extraordinarily low in morale. And within a short period of time, this Government, through the work of the Attorney General has recruited a Director of Public Prosecution who has been recruited by the Judicial and Legal Service Commission, appointed. He, I understand, is doing extremely well in the criminal assizes and he is doing his work very diligently. We secured the appointment of a very experienced barrister in her prime to be the Solicitor General. We have recruited a Chief Parliamentary Counsel, also in her prime and we have supportive staff, like Mrs. Sealy-Browne whom we have commented upon most favourably in this House already, prior to the arrival of the Chief Parliamentary Counsel, and who is giving excellent support to the Chief Parliamentary Counsel. And then of course, heading those chambers is the Attorney General who has done a remarkable amount of quality work in order to put the governance of this country on a very sound footing. Having said that Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House resolves 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.

***Question put and agreed to.***

***House went into committee.***

***House resumed.***

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

## **PUBLIC HOLIDAYS (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2001**

**HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the introduction and first reading of a Bill for an Act to amend the Public Holidays Act Cap. 206.

The objects of this Bill seeks to amend the Public Holidays Act, Cap. 206 by repealing:

- (a) the first Monday in August as a public holiday (August Holiday) and substituting the 1<sup>st</sup> August;
- (b) the first Monday in May as Labour Day and substituting the 1<sup>st</sup> of May.
- (c) the 22<sup>nd</sup> January as Discovery and National Heroes Day and substituting the 14<sup>th</sup> March as National Heroes Day.

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

### ***Question put and agreed to.***

**HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the bill be taken through all its stages in accordance with the provisions of Order 48 (1) of the rules of this House at this days' sitting.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, I think that this bill is of sufficient importance that we should have the benefit of a select committee, and some consultation.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I think that perhaps we can do the debate on the second reading and then appoint the select committee so, we can say, some ideas can be canvassed. I know we do it both ways. But I have no objection to the suggestion made by the Leader of the Opposition.

We had in fact done some consultation, in fact a lot of consultation, but I like us to do it and do it fairly swiftly for the simply reason Mr. Speaker, that we need to begin to promote these days in a series of activities which we have in mind. For instance we need to have to begin our activities for March 14<sup>th</sup>, planning now, and for May 1<sup>st</sup> and for August the First next year. And for the business community to know also that those would be holidays and that they can go in the calendars. It is very important for us to have them in the calendars and they are now preparing the calendars and this is why – we have done a lot, -- I do not know whether the Leader of the Opposition would feel that if we try and complete it and to come back to the Parliament before the end of the month, because I would really like, before November commences, so that we can have

it in the calendars, that's all as leader of the House I like to suggest. I welcome further discussion, there has been a lot by us, lot of consultations, but if the Leader of the Opposition feels that he requires another opportunity for further consultation, so long as we could get it concluded before the end of this month but we can proceed with the second reading.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yes, we can. I think under 48 (1) we can go ahead with the second reading and then appoint a select committee.

**HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE:** Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker. I am obliged for the intervention of the Leader of the House for Government business.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the Bill for an Act to amend the Public Holidays Act Cap. 206 be read a second time.

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

***Question put and agreed to.***

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

**HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE:** Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker. Twenty years ago wide ranging debate began in the NGO community about declaring a day National Heroes Day. This debate was spearheaded at the time by the National Youth Council and they were very active in looking at matters relating to our local history. I recall, Mr. Lennox Bowman who is today the manager of the leading credit union in this country and the second largest in the OECS, was the leading light in the National Youth Council and they began the debate in the public domain 20 years ago, about National Heroes Day and what should be the criteria to be used for National Heroes Day. What criteria should be used for declaring persons, individuals as National Heroes.

I recall reading in a paper that used to be published called 'Justice' the debate on the necessity for glorifying the 22<sup>nd</sup> January as Discovery Day. A leading political pundit has written several articles over the years on retaining Discovery Day, January 22<sup>nd</sup> naming it Discovery Day when Christopher Columbus did not discover St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I recalled several columns written in the Vincentian Newspaper about Christopher Columbus and why should we be having and celebrating imperialist historical dates in our local history, and every time the season comes around every year you get these articles in the newspapers. Like I was saying, I will put my memory as far back as 1980. So that these matters relating to the date and days of public holidays which are the substance of this bill, the subject of this bill have been in the public domain at least 20 years.

I also recall the extramural department having lectures on the meaning of emancipation, meaning of the historical date of August 1<sup>st</sup> 1834 and 1838. And there were always public lectures of one kind or the other led by historians of note in this country about the significance of the First of August. And depending upon what political weather, or wind is blowing at the time, so would be the favour or flavour that would be blowing in the air.

The Unity Labour Party prime to take office, within the councils and in domain have always discussed these issues widely. In the Youth Arm, in the Women's Arm, they have passed resolutions at their national conventions so it is not a new issue. Why are we attempting therefore at this time, as an administration to streamline and organize these three-quote and unquote 'public holiday'.

I remember quite vividly the business community saying that there were too many public holidays in St. Vincent. I remember them wanting to know if we will have the 22<sup>nd</sup> January and still the 14<sup>th</sup> of March because they have written. That is the beauty of black and white it is not wished away, about having these days, about whether or not we are losing too much productive time by having so many public holidays. I remember listening to the debate in this House seated across here as well, about, is it going to be the first Monday in March or the first weekend in March. It is for these reasons and others that Mr. Speaker, that this administration has brought this bill to this House. I believe that the historians in our midst quite understand and have given voice and have written about August 1<sup>st</sup>. It is a day in our history, Mr. Speaker, that we should not forget, perhaps it is one bit of value in being penetrated by US satellite television in that we have had the privilege of looking at the one super power in the world how they observe their holidays, why they consider them holidays, how they mark those days in their history, why you have President's Day, why you have Columbus Day, why you have Martin Luther King Day, so that in general Mr. Speaker, the public in this country would have had the benefit of listening to another country debate these historical aspects of their endeavours, the society and their morals. Because, August 1<sup>st</sup> when you read the old newspapers, I spent three months, day after day, in the vault of the Registry Department, reading all the old newspapers in 1976. The Times, and wondering how they could write such large newspapers in those days, Mr. Speaker, to acquaint myself with the history of yester year in this country. I then learnt from older people, people who were born in 1888, 1889 and 1890 if they could remember anything about the 1<sup>st</sup> of August. And some were old enough and young enough to remember. It was a day when they learnt freedom had come. We are rather a unique society, Mr. Speaker, we were all brought here and met few Caribs and Calinargo people here. And the various estates that people worked on and how they worked. How some were brought in from Nevis to work in St. Vincent to look at the plantation system and when I had the opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to search deeds in the Registry and look back at the various Crown Grants and how those Crown Grants originated and in reading that you learn a little bit more about history and what

happened on 1834; it is important, Mr. Speaker, that as a people we begin to set our own markers in our local and indigenous history and not wait for a PhD candidate from the University of Manchester to tell us that we are historically correct to mark the First day of August as a public holiday.

Perhaps, there is a little magic in the word public holiday because traditionally we have chosen to use public holidays as a day to go on the beach; a day for frolic and fun and not often enough as a day for reflection and thought and trying to recall what took place on a particular date in history. I tried to imagine when I read the old newspapers and I went through the old deeds in the Registry, and I was hoping Mr. Speaker the day will soon come when we have a new National Public Library that will house the National Archives and we can take some of the old deeds and the old newspapers from downstairs and have some of them restored because they are falling apart, so that we can have them on permanent display, so our young people get a better sense of our history.

I am hoping Mr. Speaker, that by doing this now we are laying the foundation so that the First of August 2002 we will begin to really and truly understand what could have possibly have happened in 1834.

Mrs. Keizer and a few other noted historians have been able to recover diaries of magistrates, and I have been speaking to her about some work in the National Trust and trying to get more of these diaries. Diaries of various priests, because in the Anglican Church there are tablets on the wall that tell you that this particular priest was the Speaker of the House, stipend magistrates, they used to be three and four different portfolios, Mr. Speaker, in those days, but we could recover some of these historical documents and learn more because this year I read that one highly placed official said the blacks, the day passed quietly in St. Vincent there was no disruption and no need to call the constabulary out to keep the peace.

One day I happened to be in Antigua and staying at Heritage Hotel and I woke up, it was in August and everybody in Antigua was dressed with their slave plaid head tie, white blouses and these long shirks, and I asked them why they dress like that, they say oh, for Emancipation. People serving as Clerks, in the stores and I wondered when the day will come when we too would recall our history in such vivid fashion and perhaps we need these symbols because we are a people who have been deprived of symbols. We have been deprived of a substantial part of our history by coming across the ocean.

Mr. Speaker, my Ministry is now in the process of accessing a project established by UNESCO, called the 'Slave Route Project'. And the researcher in the Ministry of Culture Mr. Michael Peters has been given the directive, since my return from Cultural Ministers of CARICOM meeting last month in the Bahamas, to do some research on

accessing the information in relation to the slave route project. I know that in Bermuda, they have begun doing some work on the slave route project because on the Ivory Coast, they have started a project where black Americans go over to the Ivory Coast of Africa and visit the cells where people were held to see the chains and some people have been so moved by it that they understand their history a little better.

Mr. Speaker, a people without a history, they are like a ship without a rudder going nowhere. This administration, Mr. Speaker, is attempting to start to set the ship of State on a new course. The course for our young people and those that are not so young to be able to grapple with their history so we do not so easily copy the norms of the first world. And one of the things, Mr. Speaker, that bothers me as I think about the date of 1834 is whenever I go to the United States, the Chinese do not lose a sense of their history, and they are immigrants living in the United States, they still remember what year it is in the Chinese calendar, what is the symbol, is it the rat, is it the dragon, is it the snake, the year of the snake, the year of the pig. The Japanese they do not lose their sense of history. Where is ours, where is our marker in the sand. Mr. Speaker, this is the beginning of the marker in the sand of time for us, that is why, we have Mr. Speaker, taken the step on our own to make sure that August 1<sup>st</sup> is a public holiday. And that is about one symbol of how we try to retrieve our history.

Already NGOs have approached me on the erection of plaques and monument relating not only to August 1<sup>st</sup> but also to our Garifuna history. And I have taken the step of sourcing legislative precedent in the region and outside of the region on national monuments, because they are important. It makes no sense Mr. Speaker, that when we go to the international forums and we sign conventions on world heritage sites and preservation of history and we just signing blank pieces of paper, they must translate and mean something to us in our history. So we will use August 1<sup>st</sup>, we will lead the country in using August to retrieve the history and let us understand our history a little better. That is why in this season we are celebrating Independence that we are attempting for the generations present with us to understand the true meaning of Independence.

Mr. Speaker, Labour Day, I remember because my mother was a very political person. Very political person, she never hid her political preference or opinion. Honourable Senator Francis says is, because he has had occasion to lock horns with her on debate and has lost. Labour Day the First day of May. The first time I became acquainted with these aspects of the international history surrounding labour was when I began my third year at the faculty of law at the University of the West Indies in 1973 and did a document on labour law and labour relations in St. Vincent. Two volumes which I had the privilege of having Mrs. Cecily Saunders who is today the Director of Audit, she was my stenographer and typist, and this volume is in the library of the university and as well as the UWI centre, and is still used today by secondary school children, tracing the history of labour and labour relations in St. Vincent. And in doing

my research I saw this date, and I decided let me read the references in the fine print and the footnotes so I could be better acquainted and expand on the knowledge and the information that I had acquired at that time, of the importance of Labour Day.

I recall sitting in this House and hearing debate, it would not matter which day anyway all the people want is a day off to go on the beach, so if you have it first Monday in May, or First of May it makes no difference. You see, Mr. Speaker, I always took an active interest of what is being said in this House, I am like a mouse I have a lot of collection of paper in my House, my mother has threatened to throw them out, I tell here no, keep them, they are very useful. Things that people wrote in the 'Flambeau'. In 1971 I spent three months at the public library under the tutelage of Mrs. Herbert putting together all the 'Flambeau' magazines, by the new intellectual youth of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. They make interesting reading Mr. Speaker and wish the young people will go to the Documentation Centre what the intellectual elite of the 1970's post George Washington University and so on and so forth. Very interesting reading, Mr. Speaker, so that when we go to select committee I would wish, since it is the desire of the House, that we all acquaint ourselves with those writings of the intellectual elite of St. Vincent in the 1970's, very interesting. People could not wear jacket and so on, we used to write those things, you know Mr. Speaker. Oh, how we have changed.

I recall that Labour Day for my grandmother Meterlaine Taylor, that Labour Day was a big day, I still have her card, her membership card from the Working Men's Association where she used to pay her dues. I still have the songbook of the Working Men's Association. It always amazes me when I look at the advertisements for the druggists, they never used to call them pharmacy in those days, they used to call them druggists; 'the people's flag is deepest red.' 'Vote for the time is coming, for the day, vote for Labour.' I have that material. Like I say, Mr. Speaker, perhaps I am fortunate. Why, Mr. Speaker, should there be the postponement of the inevitable.

When I go to other Caribbean countries on that day it is a big day, it is a red letter day and sometimes we sit in our homes and we all turn on to CNN no matter what they tell you and you see them celebrating Labour Day and you see how Labour Day and you see how Labour Day is celebrated in Germany which is a hot bed in that time, and in Britain.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important that we do not hide from the people the truth of these matters, it is very important that you open and educate the people in these debates, that is the purpose of having these debates in the House broadcast live. Of the significance of the gains of labour. The trade unions themselves Mr. Speaker, have told us in no uncertain terms that the First of May it would be the wish and the desire that this administration has the political will and the political courage to return Labour Day to the First of May.

Mr. Speaker, I used to be a member of the Commercial and Technical Allied Workers' Union. And one thing about trade unions is that they love to educate their membership. They had newsletters going out to say why Labour Day, First of May should be celebrated, what were the gains of Labour, what were the struggles to have workers rights and the continuing struggles to still have more workers right enshrined. Again I say there is this dangerous habit to go and sign conventions and we are not quite sure of the implications of the conventions that we signed. Here we are, a new administration, and we have the good fortune in the Prime Minister's Office, the Parliamentary Secretary, Senator Edwin Snagg, who has extensive training at the Cypriani Labour College of Trinidad and Tobago. And I am sorry that he is not here to join in the debate, passionate speaker that he is. To outline in even more vivid detail than I ever could about the importance of the First of May. And why the colour red is so important to workers. Why the flag red is waved. But, Mr. Speaker, we are a labour party, and we believe in the working class and the working people. And recently we have been reviewing the ILO Conventions and we must be true to ourselves and know ourselves very well. And not blow hot and cold, least the people will spew us out of their mouths. And that is why when you read our manifesto; and you read our documents and you read the contact with civil society that you will understand the emotion that Labour Day, the emotional attachment of Labour Day being the First of May.

Mr. Speaker, it is something that one has to educate oneself about and I am encouraging the student in the secondary school to read at sometime, come to the Registry and read the old newspapers, particularly the newspapers after the '1935 riots so that they can get a firmer grounding and understanding of the movement of labour in this country. We want to join the international community Mr. Speaker, in celebrating Labour Day as the First of May.

I do not think that there should be any extensive debate Mr. Speaker, on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January. It is a Saint Day, as we have St. Michael's Day, All Saints Day, St. Vincent's Day. Literature is now so easily available, hardly have to use, walking into a library in some places because you can access this information from many libraries in the world which are on the internet. And I am encouraging the young people to read some more. It is amazing Mr. Speaker, many of us have gone to Trinidad and we know, we see Columbus statue there and there is the square that called Columbus Square and just a few days ago in the United States they celebrated Columbus Day. They have their place in history too, Mr. Speaker. But what is important for us in the declaring National Heroes Day, the 14<sup>th</sup> of March is that what we have already said particularly over the last two years that we have as political organism Mr. Speaker, on this side celebrated the 14<sup>th</sup> of March. In another field where I have the privilege to be in a leadership position for two years we have celebrated the month of March as National History and Heritage Month, we have been trying to awaken the consciousness of our people in

looking at the six figures who have been promoted by the people as the ones we perhaps should declare as National Heroes.

Mr. Speaker, since I have assumed office I have sourced legislative presidents out of Barbados on National Heroes and I was fortunate about two months ago to obtain a copy of a publication by the National Cultural Foundation of Barbados of a book called the National Heroes of Barbados. When we are in select committee I will bring that book because I believe it will give us some learning and perhaps some enthusiasm for National Heroes Day in St. Vincent to be the 14<sup>th</sup> of March, finally; not as a politically expedient ploy but as a matter of restoration and giving the people's will. Because it is widely acclaimed in this country, Mr. Speaker, that Ebenezer Theodore Joshua, Joseph Chatoyer those are the two motivating forces behind the 14<sup>th</sup> of March and Mr. Speaker, I believe that the NGOs will be quite comfortable with the proposition and submission of this bill in the House at last. Thank God at last we will get National Heroes Day formally written into the statutes of this country as the 14<sup>th</sup> of March.

Mr. Speaker I commend this Bill to the House and I sincerely hope that the public will indeed make some more attempts to educate not only the other members of the public who are not educated on the issues of August 1<sup>st</sup>, May 1<sup>st</sup> and March 14<sup>th</sup> but perhaps it will act as a revision course for us in history. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, I have listened intently to the presentation of the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Culture with respect to the Bill that is before this Honourable House. It is clear Mr. Speaker, that she has very deep feeling and attachment to the objects of this Bill and there is much truth in what she has said in her presentation. I do not intent to spend a long time on this issue, I just want to make a few points.

Mr. Speaker, it is true that a number of our holidays have been set to be on a Monday and our people have grown accustomed in many cases including two of these cases before this Honourable House, Labour Day, and August Monday have grown accustomed to having the long weekend holiday. And I agree Mr. Speaker, that because of that it is possible that a lot of the significance associated with those two particular holidays, that is Labour Day and Emancipation Day may have been lost over the years. The question I asked Mr. Speaker is whether if we have properly organised events on those particular days whether one could not recover the significance. And I recognized Mr. Speaker, that there would be different schools of thought on this particular matter. On the other side of the fence, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of persons in our society, including many in the business community have a concern with regard to having holidays falling in the middle of the week or close to the end of the week because they perceive, a significant drop in productivity on the subsequent day,

and we also have to take that into consideration, especially in the kind of economic and other environments that we now face in the world and in deed our own country, St. Vincent and the Grenadines. When I requested this morning, Mr. Speaker, that we go to a select committee I want to have the benefit Mr. Speaker, of whatever memoranda are available on this issue from various sectors in our society. I have been told that in the Minister's presentation, I understand that a number of persons and organizations have already indicated what there position is in this matter. And I believe it is important that I as Leader of the Opposition and my party and the other members of the Opposition be familiar with those memoranda before that decision is made. And that is the purpose Mr. Speaker, of seeking to have this matter go to a select committee, because I recognized Mr. Speaker, that their are in fact arguments that can be made on both sides and as I indicated a number of the points made by the Minister are valid but there are others who may see it differently and I think in a select committee we would get the type of balance that is required and we had come in the due course of time to the correct decision. So I do not want anyone to assume because I request that this matter be deal at a select committee that I am making any particular judgment at this time. I believe it behooves all of us to sit as a select committee of this Parliament and review the information that is before us, and I can see nothing wrong with that Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am a realist. I know that the majority is on the other side of the House, and whatever we say if the majority decides that is the way it will go, that is what will happen in this House. But I just want to point out Mr. Speaker that we also have an obligation to bring to the fore our own views on these matters. They may not be taken but certainly I think that our right to do so is recognized in this Parliament. So I do not want to create the impression, Mr. Speaker, and I want to repeat this, I do not want to create the impression that I have only gone or asked for a select committee for a purely political purpose. I recognized that there is argument on both side of this matter.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that it is fair to say that the decision to have National Heroes Day declared a holiday this year was a decision I took as Prime Minister and I took that decision for particular reasons after listening to the various comments from various organisations throughout this country and all I am saying Mr. Speaker, that in the course of the select committee we ourselves will come to a decision as to what position we take on this matter. A position informed by the comments that we received not only from members of this House, Mr. Speaker, but also from the general public. I think the Prime Minister sometime ago indicated that they have had a number of memoranda and views already which I believe will be brought to bear on the select committee. I simply wish on behalf of this side of the House to say we would wish to see this so that we can make the appropriate decisions. We need to be informed Mr. Speaker, at all times as to what members of the public think on these matters. We have to strike, Mr. Speaker, sometimes a balance between what we may feel and what we can do. And I

want to emphasize that. What we feel and what we can do and what are the implications of any decisions that we make in this Parliament being the highest body in this land.

Mr. Speaker, I recall many years ago, I think it was sometime in 1972 or 1973 that the holiday, the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January was removed by the Government of the time and there was a big huge and cry and the Government subsequently had to come back and reinstate January 22<sup>nd</sup>. All I am saying, Mr. Speaker, it will do all of us good to benefit from the discussion in the select committee and any memoranda that may be proposed from various stakeholders in our country. In the circumstances Mr. Speaker, I have very little to add to that. I await now, Mr. Speaker the deliberations of the select committee. Much obliged. Mr. Speaker.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to state unequivocally the position of the Government on this matter. We do not have to wait on a select committee to tell us what is our position. Our position is unambiguously clear and our position was canvassed in the election and they formed part of our election manifesto, that we, when we got into Office, we will remove the August Holiday, first Monday in August to Emancipation Day First of August; indeed there is an error in the Bill, it should be read Emancipation Day, rather than August Holiday, it was simply reproduced by the drafts persons in that way, and that is not due to any fault of theirs but clearly incorrect representation from the agencies that would have communicated to the drafts persons. So that this is not a mere holiday, it is a day of tremendous significance to our Caribbean civilization and I will return to that Mr. Speaker.

And we made that point abundantly clear in our election campaign. We said also that Labour Day which has been put as the first Monday in May we will return the day of Labour solidarity to its historic significance, the First of May. We also made it very plain that the notion of tying National Heroes Day to Discovery Day on the 22<sup>nd</sup> January that that day will go and we will have National Heroes Day on March 14<sup>th</sup>. We campaigned on those, the people voted for us and that is our position. We are not awaiting the position of the Chamber of Industry and Commerce, we are not awaiting the position of an NGO, we are not awaiting the position of the labour movement; we are leaders, we have an unmistakable position on this issue. This is not a technical question, this is a matter that goes to the heart of reclaiming our history and the further ennoblement of our Caribbean Civilization.

Those who are frequently in protest against a day in the middle of the week being a holiday see nothing wrong with having January the 22<sup>nd</sup> as a holiday falling on any day of the week. I will not in the year 2001 allow a colonial mind set to derail us from moving January 22<sup>nd</sup> and putting March 14<sup>th</sup> as National Heroes Day. What I am prepared to do in the select committee is to listen to all the views and where there are

legitimate concerns in respect of a possible fall of productivity for a holiday that falls in the middle of the week, I am not saying that that is proven. That is a hypothesis and that hypothesis has to establish more than just a tentative relationship between two sets of facts or phenomena. It has to show, demonstrate in real terms, a causal link and I am not satisfied that there is any such causal link. Because if those business persons so proclaimed, and I hear about these business persons, I do not know if they are real or mythical. Because business persons are more concerned about the bottom line and if they were concerned about productivity in relation to a holiday falling in the middle of the week they would have long ago said that January 22<sup>nd</sup> holiday should be on the third Monday in January, or the third Tuesday or whatever was the original day presumably in 1498 when Columbus is alleged to have passed cross these paths. But I got none of that, so this Government will not emphasize not be deterred in its position by a hypothetical possibility that it may, conceivably, in the long run, result in a fall in productivity. I do not believe it. But those concerns we can address as leaders but it is important that we make our position absolutely clear, so that there is no doubt in anybody's mind that we are going to a select committee to change our position on this matter. We are going to a select committee to continue the discussion which we have been engaged in for years. So we are addressing matters of concern but not a change of position.

Mr. Speaker, throughout the Caribbean the day August 1<sup>st</sup> is being restored. In fact, there is a movement throughout the region. In Jamaica August 1<sup>st</sup> is a holiday, and August the 6<sup>th</sup> is a holiday. Because Independence Day in Jamaica is August 6<sup>th</sup>. And which ever day it falls on. In Trinidad August 1<sup>st</sup> is a holiday and August 31<sup>st</sup> is a holiday, that is their Independence Day. In Barbados August the First is Emancipation Day. Barbados little England reputedly the most conservative of these islands. Of course I do not believe that, the day August 1<sup>st</sup> is pregnant with such historic meaning that we should not at all countenance any diminution of that significance by any thesis which has no, absolutely no substance from my own perspective. The vast majority of the people in this country is of African decent and those whom we call mixed, the blood of Africa runs in their veins.

The fact that we celebrate Emancipation Day is no division in our society between people of African decent and those of other races, because no other people in the Caribbean have suffered what the African people have suffered, none. My fore parents who came as Indentured Servants were bonds men and bonds women for a period of two years. It is written sometimes as semi slavery but that could not nearly capture what was slavery. Those who are of Indian decent came in the 1860's, also as Indentured Servants and those of Portuguese decent, those of Indian decent and those other cultures and who have come from different lands, they can celebrate joyously and commemorate Emancipation Day because on the First of August, not the first Monday, on the First of August because people of all cultures can commemorate and celebrate the freedom of others from other lands and cultures, because un-freedom in

one human being diminishes the freedom of the other person with whom that individual is in a relationship in a society.

Moreover African forms a crucial bases of our Caribbean civilization, as I have said repeatedly we are the songs of the Caribs, the Arawaks and the Amerindians. We are the rhythm of Africa, we are the cords of Asia, we are the melody of Europe and the we are the homegrown lyrics of the Caribbean. Makes us distinct and distinctive as a Civilization, but with an African tributary which is most fundamental. We have solved in our society the problem which the British and the Americans, more advanced society than ours cannot solve. The integration of a society with people drawn from different places and different lands. And critical to that integration has been the role of the African peoples who have come here as slaves and that horrendous act of slavery which was brought formally to an end on the First of August 1834 and then finally after the four year apprenticeship period on the First of August 1838 should be celebrated without any water in our mouth. That is the position of this Government and we have given that assurance to international bodies in addition to the people in this country. If I may say, Mr. Speaker, Honourable members the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines has represented at the conference on racism which dealt with the issue about reparation of slavery at UN Conference in Durban South Africa recently. We had given the authorization to the representation of Barbados, in fact I delivered the instrument in person to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Barbados because I was supposed to have gone on the way to the Tripoli visit to go South but because we had made arrangements for some important meetings in London and Chinese Premier's visit had come forward a little I had to return otherwise I would have been in Durban.

Imagine the spectacle of a man whose fore parents came originally from Madeira, 280 kilometres off the North West Coast of Africa, representing a predominantly black country, voted into power by a massive mandate speaking for African peoples and for humanity more than for African peoples, they just substantiate the point that we have solved an issue which many advance countries were not able to solve. And I told Tony Blair that; British Prime Minister. I told President Bush that. And they nodded in approval and commented upon it approvingly. So to ask a Government which has campaigned on this issue and which has galvanized people on this issue and touched their heart and souls and beings that we must keep August Holiday first Monday, well we will listen to the ways in which we can promote the day, how we can reduce the extent of any possible and even remote fall in productivity, because if that is the case after every holiday there is a fall in productivity, August Monday there is a fall of productivity on the Tuesday. I really do not grasp the argument. I heard it repeated. I did not intent to speak on this Mr. Speaker, but I have to affirm what is the position of the Government.

Now we come to Labour Day, first Monday in May. The NDP administration had emasculated Labour Day. They have put the first Monday in May and transform it into

Fisherman's Day. The Honourable Minister for National Security when he was Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries in the Cato Administration, he introduced Fisherman's Day, they had it on a separate day. Fishermen are not the only labourers or workers. We will still have Fishermen's Day and we will discuss in the committee whether we will retain Fishermen's Day also on Labour Day, the First of May or whether we will put Fishermen's Day on another day. I believe Fishermen's Day used to be on Whit Monday? Easter Monday. Because Easter Monday is not a Christian holiday, you know, Good Friday is a Christian holiday and not even for the Seventh Day Adventists. Easter Sunday the day of Resurrection that is the holiday, that is the Christian holiday; we have added on Easter Monday as a holiday and Fishermen's Day used to be on Easter Monday.

Do you know why we have Labour Day, the First of May? In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in Chicago, yes. In the bastion in Western Capitalism, the dramatic day in the 1890's the workers went on strike and they mowed down by the forces of the State and the world all over was so incensed by what happened that from henceforth they say the First of May must be the day when we must remember what happened the massacre in Chicago. The solidarity between working people the world over, everybody wants to roll over and play dead to the forces of globalization, can we not in small ways reclaim our history and sustain our soul and our well-being? We will have Labour Day the First of May because the people voted us to do that among other things and to do otherwise would be to spit in the faces of the workers who voted for us in that regard. This is a question of democracy also.

Mr. Speaker, the public sector workers have just agreed to a wage freeze in these difficult times. The private sector workers have agreed to a restraint and the employers have agreed to a corresponding price restraint. The details, the contours to be worked out and fashioned at the Tripartite Committee on the Economy. The workers have now since this administration comes to power, they are been thought more and more about the nobility of labour and the requisite of discipline and hard work and productivity. Down to this morning I was at such a seminar, before I came here to the House; do you want to tell me that we must turn askance to the workers, away from them, yes, you will make your sacrifices in relation to the economy but we will not do anything to touch your soul and your being and your spirituality and your sense of solidarity because that is what has brought the working people thus far, and will carry them further. This Government is a government of all the people in St. Vincent and the Grenadines but it is unashamedly a government of the working people, and we do not apologize for that. Now, those who do not like statements like that can oppose me and oppose what I am saying, that is fine but on that you cannot change me. And you cannot change this Government. That is what makes us different.

Mr. Speaker we will be joining civilized countries all over the world in restoring Labour Day to the First of May, not the First Monday, and we have to work out a special

programme for Labour Day. If it means that all of us have to do special programmes on that day and do labour on the streets on an environmental project, from Prime Minister right down, so be it. Let us make it meaningful and connect with the people, not to have it as another day to fill up Little Tokyo and drink rum and misbehave and police lock you up. No! On these matters we have no timidity. I agree to the select committee but for us to hear the concerns if there are any; but more particularly for us to be conjoined together now with the entire civic society and the Opposition to put things in place to make these days very meaningful in their celebration and their commemoration.

I come now to the replacement of January 22<sup>nd</sup> which has been called Discovery and National Heroes Day. Two entirely different things. One of the first persons in St. Vincent who had established that Columbus was no where here on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January is the late great Eddie Griffith. One of the first ones. And I know where ever he is today. And I believe he is in heaven with the angels because he was a good and godly man, he is smiling with an array of angels and looking down upon us and saying, yes, we had to give cheer to Comrade Ralph and the Unity Labour Party Government. Right now as we talking, he watching us, and would be ashamed of those who are favouring timidity.

We are having National Heroes Day on March 14<sup>th</sup>. Fundamentally because Chatoyer, the great Calinargo Chief in defence of the fatherland met his death. He taught us by his example extra ordinary virtues of sacrifice, of defence of sovereignty, of the indigenous people as possessing a civilization worth defending. He fell in battle against the colonialist. In Chatoyer's life and death are encapsulated values and modes of conduct which continue to be an inspiration right today to thousands of young people and others across this land including the Prime Minister. I get inspiration too, from Chatoyer. I am one of Chatoyer's "pickny."

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members further by coincidence the late great Ebenezer Joshua died on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March. And significant dates are connected to the life of Hugh Mulzac and George Mac Instosh who are also persons who are put forward for possible candidacy for the status of National Hero and so too, we have under consideration Elma François and the late great Robert Milton Cato. Those are the six names which have emerged. Some people are saying that you should go with Chatoyer first. I have no problem with that, Government has no problem with that, but we want to address this matter in a systematic way, and the select committee can help us in putting mechanism in place to further the discussion on national heroes and to further the discussion on the honour system, because they are all part and parcel of the same matrix. If I may say, Mr. Speaker, parenthetically, the NDP Government did not do any consultation with the medals which cost – well that is the first phase which I reported, there is a second bill of a similar amount nearly half a million dollars in medals and within two month period the metal on the medals, as we say on the road,

“they turn.” If I were to give my wife a piece of jewellery which turn so quickly she will kick me out of the house because she would say I do not appreciate her. Much less to have those as symbols of a nation, state symbols of a nation? And nobody was consulted on them. None. But we will consult and those matters too will be discussed at the select committee because I will have a complete report on that matter for the select committee, complete report. I will invite the select committee to go to the Governor’s General House and see them; so do not listen to what I am saying see them with your own two eyes. I will invite the press too. So I am glad for the select committee, I am most pleased. Most pleased.

Mr. Speaker, there are across the land and across the seas and across the continents a number of technicians and accountants, and persons with a mentality which reduces everything to the minute, and to dollars and cents; and they escape always what is fundamental in the development of people, their history, their souls, their beings.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members every time I read the poetry of our Caribbean writers, I am deeply touched by their sense of history and the beauty of our Caribbean and these holidays are not just symbolic, they are part of the essence of that civilization of our history and the beauty of our people’s. Danny Williams in a poem called “We Are the Cenotaphs’ writes very movingly on the question of history and time. “We are all time, only the future is ours to desecrate, the present is the past, the past is our fathers mischief.’ Notice, only the future is ours to desecrate, I will not be part of the desecration of the future, by not laying claim to my history and that of our Caribbean people, I will, I must because they are the guiding lights to assist me in not desecrating the future. Amidst all the turmoil and insecurity and uncertainty in this world, they constitute a rudder, which will hold me and hold our people steadfast.

Mr. Speaker, the beauty of our people and our civilization and all this involves, summed up in a remarkable poem by a Barbadian, Hilton Vaughn, was born in the Dominican Republic of Barbadian parents, became a lawyer, a judge, he was a historian, he was a Minister of Government, a poet. And in a poem called ‘Revelation’ written about 1940, noticed the year at the time when we had commenced the redefinition of ourselves as a people as we are seeking to do in these holidays, symbolically and in essence. The people of the Caribbean, in the late 1930’s had protested against colonialism. In St. Vincent in 1935, involved George Mc Instosh. In Trinidad in 1937, in St. Kitts in 1935, in Jamaica in 1935 and in 1938 and at that time across the Caribbean there was a veritable resonance, George Campbell the poet of the Social Revolution in Jamaica was writing incisive poems of the role of women. Edna Manley, wife of Jamaica’s National Hero, Norman Washington Manley; and father of Michael Manley was sculpturing a magnificent work called ‘Negro Aroused’. Young Derrick Walcott who was in St. Lucia beginning to pen his poetry, same thing with George Lamming and C.L.R. James then in London had written, ‘Mintialy’ and had published the ‘The Black Jacobin’ a study of Toussaint L’Overture and the Haitian

Revolution. It is in that context of the reclamation of our history and the extolling of ourselves as a people and pride in us and about the beauty of our civilization and its nobility and he used, Hilton Vaughn, used as a synonym a woman, and spoke of her beauty and paralleling that to our own beauty. He was speaking of a Caribbean woman as a synonym for the beauty of our civilization,

‘turn sideways now and let them see, what loveliness escapees the schools, and turn again and smile and be the perfect answer to those fools who always prate of Greece and Rome the face that launch a thousand ships and such like things, but keep tight lips for burn it’s beauty nearer home. Turn in the sun my love, my love. I swear I prize thy dusty limbs above my life, what laughing eyes, what gleaming hair, what palm like grace.’

That is our Caribbean, the beauty of it, but there are people who want us to prate of Greece and Rome and keep January the 22<sup>nd</sup>, well not this Government.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say we will not put tight lips ‘to burn its beauty nearer home’ we will open our mouths and proclaim the magnificence of our civilization and that these holidays are a critical part of it. This is about passion; it is about compassion. It is about love of country, reclamation of history, and putting a real step in our Vincentian people as we march forward amidst all civilizations including those in the Caribbean to further ennoble what is beautiful and dignified in us. A select committee will address other questions as I have outlined, but our position is absolutely clear, I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker, like the Honourable Prime Minister I did not intend to say anything about this bill, however I wish to make a few comments to re-emphasize and make it clear that what the Honourable Leader of the Opposition said in his remarks, and that is, that this bill is of sufficient significance that it should be discussed in a select committee where views of others can be had and a decision can be taken after those consultation. Everything that the Honourable Prime Minister said and the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Culture confirmed what the Honorable Leader of the Opposition said, that is, that this is a Bill of serious significance. I agree with the Honourable Prime Minister that January 22<sup>nd</sup> should be replaced by National Heroes Day, March 14<sup>th</sup>, this is what the Honourable Leader of the Opposition did when he was the Prime Minister. We have no complaints with that, it is something that the NDP administration in the past supported and will continue to support.

Mr. Speaker, I really welcome the discussion and the presentation from Government side of the House on the importance and the significance of our national history, of Emancipation Day, of Labour Day and all the other significant milestones some of which have not been recognized by national holidays. What we wish to support however, is that we cannot simply treat productivity issues as if they rank, second or third in a scheme of things. All we are saying is that let us have the matter discussed, and as the Prime Minister says if there is no hard evidence with respect to any negative productivity issues then we are all for it. I am in total agreement with the Prime Minister on that issue. Those who raise objection to the fixed date have an obligation to provide the evidence on which they base the objection. We are saying, give them the chance to provide that evidence. Do not have a close mind on the issue. We know what the Government's position is on the fixed date. It was stated as the Prime Minister said in the manifesto and in the election campaign. That is abundantly clear. What the Honourable Leader of the Opposition asked for, I think is extremely reasonable, and he has no judgment of the issue. He is not going into the select committee deliberations with a close mind on the issue. He is simply saying let us use the Parliamentary process to have a fulsome debate on the issue and have others who may wish to make contributions to this debate do so. If there is substantial and persuasive evidence that there will be significant productivity losses, I expect that in keeping with what the Honourable Prime Minister said, in his remarks that he would take that evidence into account and make a final decision based on that information and on the commitment that the Government has to the fixed dates. That is what he said in his remarks. And that is all we are saying should be done. That is the normal parliamentary process. And the reason why I think it is not a negligible issue, Mr. Speaker, is that consider this scenario and it is one that anybody, I am sure would consider readily. If August 1<sup>st</sup> falls on a Thursday what happens to work on a Friday? Let us not pretend. If August 1<sup>st</sup> falls on a Thursday, the implication is that on Friday many people may take the long weekend off. That is something that we would need to have a discussion on and to have the evidence on it. If there is none, I agree with the Prime Minister then there is no argument for saying that the fixed date should not be adopted, and it is one that we can support, but we are saying let us hear what people have to say about that. I would remind this Honourable House as well, that the mere fact that you have a fixed date does not mean that the day itself will have significance, it is a starting point. Boxing Day for example is a fixed date, how many of us know the significance of Boxing Day. Good Friday cannot be a fixed date because it is a Friday but it is one that has a lot of significance. So the important aspect of this is public education and that is one that I found was heartening in the discussion or the presentation that I heard from the other side. That what is important, is that the public understands that these are important days, they are important events; they are important historically significant milestones in our development, which we should take proper cognizance of. We can do this only with the proper public education on the issue. The Honourable Minister of Tourism and Culture and indeed the Honourable Prime Minister spoke about our history but what I think should be done, we should

recognize this importance by making a commitment to produce in the near future a comprehensive modern history of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, that is a great big whole in our national development. This is something that anyone can refer to and we can have a quick comprehensive, well researched, modern history of our country, and this is something that I think the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Culture has an opportunity to respond to in her concluding remarks.

Mr. Speaker, I want to re-emphasize that we should not take the position that we have two competing interests, one being the recognition of our history and our cultural heritage and the promotion of those, and on the other hand we have treating productivity issues, and economic development issues as if they are counter balances, or weights against it. Both of them are positive things and both of them we have to be equally concerned about. Yesterday this was abundantly clear in the deliberations of this House. Speaker, after speaker on the other side of the House arose and said we are restructuring the banana industry because the market place dictates it, we cannot avoid it, this is something that we have to take cognizance of, we have to be serious about it. The market place will have its revenge if we do not take the necessary precautions. We are experiencing this with the banana industry. The Minister of National Security made it abundantly clear in his presentation. The Honourable Prime Minister said it. Down to the size of the banana we have to provide those things, because that's what the market place demands. What I am saying is that productivity issues are not issues that are ranked on a scale behind other issues. We have to treat all the important issues that confront us with equal importance. Balance them, take the information, get the evidence then make our decision in an informed way. Do not keep a closed mind on the issue. If there is incontrovertible evidence about negative productivity, resulting from the fixed dates for these two national holidays, I expect that the Government would take that information into account and reconsider its position. I believe I can say, that that sentiment, that position was inherent in what the Honourable Prime Minister said. He said he will not be impressed with negligible evidence or anything that was, -- I cannot remember his exact word but I think it meant speculative, what I am saying we must take a matter seriously and allow those who may be better informed about that issue to present that evidence to the House and then make our decision.

Mr. Speaker, everyone in this country knows that earlier this year the Honourable Opposition Leader declared March 14<sup>th</sup> as National Heroes Day, so this is something that this side of the House supports. You know, the Government is not inventing Labour Day, and it is not inventing Emancipation Day. These days have been recognized and celebrated all they are saying is that they believe that a fixed date would give more significance to it. Let us keep it in perspective. It is not that this side of the House feels that those days and events are not important. They are tremendously important and for myself as someone who has been a student of history, it is something that I would really like to see get more prominence and I am heartened

by the words of the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Culture and the Honourable Prime Minister that there will be. But do not for any moment think that putting it on a fixed day that that will achieve its purpose. That purpose can only come by a consistent commitment on the part of the Government to promote it, to put the resources in place to do it and I would suggest that we start by as soon as possible obtaining the funds to commission a modern and comprehensive history of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and that we do all those other things with NGO's, stakeholders, the business community, the members on the opposition side, the schools, the church. All the institutions in civic society who should be made partners in promoting our national heritage and in recognizing the significance of milestones in our history.

So, Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to see the concern raised by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and the Honourable Members on this side of the House, distorted in flowery language, when in fact what the Honourable Leader of the Opposition stated very clearly is that, let us use the normal parliamentary process to have a fulsome debate on this issue and then proceed from there. There is no closed door. No closed mind. And I take the Prime Minister's position to be similar even whilst stating the commitment that his party and government gave during the election campaign.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to state in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, that the members on this side of the House will do all they can in their power to ensure that the matter is given the serious attention it deserves when it comes to a select committee. And that when the deliberations are concluded that the report will be treated seriously and that the government will not approach it with a close mind. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HONOURABLE CONRAD SAYERS:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to give my support the bill to amend the Public Holiday Act, 206. I found this move a very positive one by the Unity Labour Party Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and I believe Mr. Speaker, that this initiative is one that has the backing of thousands of conscious Vincentians in this country. Indeed many have debated the issues in each case. The question of the 22<sup>nd</sup> of January being recognized and observed over the years as Discovery Day. Many have proved historically that Christopher Columbus who was reputed to have quote, unquote "discovered St. Vincent on the 22<sup>nd</sup>" was still in Europe.

Mr. Speaker, every significant event in every nation that is worthy of being observed should be done with a fixed date. To do otherwise would be to down play the importance and the historical significance of the event, and therefore Mr. Speaker, I am very concerned that while our Prime Minister was very careful to point out that we on this side of the House have nothing to lose by taking a bill to the select committee, I am concerned that all these could result in stalling tactics and so affect our plans to have

this Bill come into Act and into law and hence be reckoned by our business people and by the Government as a whole as significant days in the history of this country from 2002. I therefore wish that should we proceed to the select committee that the matter be expedited and hence it would be no loss to the plans and programme of this government for taking the country forward.

The Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines raised the question of productivity and economic issues as possible fallouts for having a fixed date such as March 14<sup>th</sup> August 1<sup>st</sup> and May 1<sup>st</sup> but Mr. Speaker, we have fixed dates, January 22<sup>nd</sup> is a fixed date we have never heard any serious questions and proof of productivity issues and economic fallouts. We have fixed dates of Independence Day, October 27<sup>th</sup> there has not been any hue and cry about productivity issues, we have fixed dates of December the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> and once these are accepted people fall into line, and so Mr. Speaker, the proposed changes are not just changes that came out of the whims and fancy of this ULP Administration, they are changes with very serious historical significance and it is said that if we do not know where we come from we cannot determine where we are going. As a people we must respect our culture and our history. We must observe the rich heritage of this nation and hence throw our weight behind it both as a government and as a people, so that we as a people could have a national historic pride and identity.

And so Mr. Speaker I want to give my fullest support both to the passage to this Bill and since we have seen that going to the select committee could bring a lot of benefits both to the political status of this Government and also to the enrichment of the knowledge and the information people could get, it would be interesting to see and know more about those medals that are purchased and are left there to deteriorate. So Mr. Speaker, first of all March 14<sup>th</sup> you have heard over the years of Sir Hawkins, Drake and Raleigh and all nations that are within, that have achieved full civilization, have their national heroes, people whose role in life has contributed so significantly to the nation's success, enlightenment and advancement that they have declared them national heroes and the children are made to learn about them, they are not gone or forgotten. Many children do not know of the late great Robert Milton Cato the father of this nation. Many do not know about the great trade unionist and political activities George A. Mc Intosh a man of Central Kingstown, Paul's Avenue and many people do not know of people like Chatoyer, so it gives us an opportunity when we declare March 14<sup>th</sup> National Heroes Day as we have promised. And we like to keep our promises because should we have ourselves entangled in any legal ramblings we would have to come with an excuse next year, we cannot do it until the following year. Or that we did it and it was so hurriedly done that we are not able to properly publicize it and have it recognized by this nation and people of our countries. So when we do that, Mr. Speaker, we are proposing that we embark on a proper educational programme to educate the nation of the significance of the persons who are identified as national heroes, the roles they played in history to lift this nation and to help us advance our

own civilization and hence making a day of respect of reflection of the enhancement of national pride in this country.

I remember I think it was in 1985 after I assumed leadership of the Public Service Union for the first time that the late trade unionist, outstanding trade unionist Robbie Samuel came to us at an executive meeting and he said the Prime Minister is asking that we change the date of the First of May to the first Monday in May for Labour Day and the other trade unions have no problem with it. That Burns Bonadie and his CTAW union already agreed and that some of the other labour stalwarts have already and I said to myself as a person young in 1985 in the business of trade unionism, if these men could see no problem with it then why should I put up a big hue and a cry, only to find out that they were playing the union one against the other so they can get an easy passage to this move, from that day Mr. Speaker, I regretted that we allowed this change to pass so quickly and so easily and I am happy for this opportunity to support the reinstatement of the First of May as Labour Day in this country, because labour forms the basis of productivity and productivity constitutes the basis of wealth of any nation and we, many people in this country seem to be afraid of the workers. The workers are not given the kind of respect and appreciation that they deserve but workers should be people that we respect, Mr. Speaker, people that we appreciate, people that we motivate to go on and continue to contribute greatly to the development economic and otherwise of this country and so to reinstate the First of May as Labour Day we would be paying tribute to the Chicago workers, many of whom sacrificed their lives on that fateful date in Chicago which incidentally brought a lot of benefits, the forty hour a week work to workers, the abandonment of child labour, the improvement of working conditions. These are some of the benefits that came out, that the world benefitted from and the sacrifice of those Chicago workers and so when we observe the First of May as Labour Day we are remembering the great sacrifice that these people made for all of us as workers. And none of us must reach to the stage where we think we have graduated from the category and the status of a worker. So Labour Day, workers day and the colour red is a workers colour. And when we say the colour of labour, labour means work and it is a workers colour and it is something for which we all must be proud.

So as I wind up Mr. Speaker, I want to say again that I throw my full support. We look at Emancipation Day not just first Monday of August but August 1<sup>st</sup> because that day is significant in the lives of our fore-parents, people who have slaved, taken through the middle passage here from Africa, slaved on the plantations, brought a lot of wealth to other countries, loss of history, our culture, our heritage as a people, our national pride, our identity, still struggling as a people to find our identity, when we consider that August 1<sup>st</sup> is the day of emancipation and we can teach our children what emancipation means and the significance that there was once a time when you could not put your hand out at the end of the month and expect a salary you would get a whip over your back instead, because you were a slave and someone could buy you

and sell you to the highest bidder. It is significant enough for us to give it a fixed date and to try to give it great significance as it deserves in this country and so, Mr. Speaker, I wish this bill safe and quick passage through this House, because I am confident that we have numbers and thousands of persons in the NGOs and throughout this nation conscious and positive people who like to see these bills come into reality for the further advancement of our own civilization. I am much obliged, Mr. Speaker, thank you, very much.

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

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** I know Mr. Speaker, when you do not see me rise very often you do not look for me often enough. I am very much obliged that you did recognize me Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise not to join those persons who are steeped in history on these dates, I rise to give support to this Bill and in fact had the Prime Minister not consulted shortly after the Leader of the Opposition proposed this matter to be going to a select committee I would have risen sometime ago and debate for it to be concluded today, in Parliament. Because Mr. Speaker, there has been significant debate on this bill, on these matters, not on this bill but on these matters throughout the years. The Honourable Minister of Tourism and Culture said 20 years. The fundamental part of this debate, Mr. Speaker, is not if these things should be a holiday, is that they should be given their significance. They should be put on their date, and not on a Monday. I am surprised that the Leader of the Opposition is asking us to postpone the coming into being of these matters. Mr. Speaker, there is sufficient precedence in the holiday schedule to show us that productivity does not necessarily fall off because a public holiday falls on a weekday. There is Independence Day that we have been celebrating since 1979 which falls on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October, does not matter what day it falls on we celebrate it on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October; Christmas and Boxing Day, we do not wait on a Monday to declare that Christ was born on December 25<sup>th</sup> and the same Discovery Day that we are changing, Mr. Speaker, it has continuously fallen on 22<sup>nd</sup> of January, not on a Monday. So the debate here is not whether these dates should be holidays. The debate is and the decision of the House should be to give these dates correct label, give them their significance, and put them on their date that they belong.

Mr. Speaker, Emancipation Day you cannot wait until the first Monday to celebrate it, it loses its significance. Labour Day the same thing, and the Prime Minister has expounded on this and I do not need to repeat these matters. But what I find most amusing in these debate Mr. Speaker, coming from the Leader of the Opposition and the Parliamentary representative for the Northern Grenadines is that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, while Prime Minister, approved March 14<sup>th</sup> as National Heroes Day. It was repeated on that side of the House. Are we therefore only going to celebrate March 14<sup>th</sup> on those years when it falls on a Monday, Mr. Speaker? Is that

what we are hearing from the Leader of the Opposition? So that we have to wait seven years if we are going to be celebrating March 14<sup>th</sup> on a Monday. You cannot be arguing on one side and not securing yourself on the other side. And I am asking the Leader of the Opposition;-- what I am arguing? If you are saying to me that you have approved March 14<sup>th</sup> as National Heroes Day, but yet you are coming to tell me now don't change August Monday to August First, continue: so you are giving me August Monday as the holiday but National Heroes Day you are giving me on March 14<sup>th</sup>; so what you are saying do not put it on a Monday. So you have to verify. Verify if you want.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, I am well aware of the tendency to try and distort what I say in this House. At no time, Mr. Speaker, during my submission did I say that I was in disagreement with the Bill. I simply pointed to the fact that I thought it significant enough that we must go to a select committee. In fact in my presentation in response to the Honourable Minister of Culture I indicated that there was much good in what she said. At no point did I say I was not in support and I pointed to the fact, that ...

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** On a Point of Order. On a Point of Order. The Point of Order Mr. Speaker is this, when a Member gives way the Member should clarify the issue and not take the opportunity to make a speech because he has been put on the defensive and he has seen union representatives come into the House now that he is getting timid, so he wants to back track from what he said originally. So I just Mr. Speaker, when a member gives way, he deals with the issue, on which he wants to clarify.

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

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** But Mr. Speaker, I am clarifying the issue. With all due respect Mr. Speaker, I am clarifying the issue. In relation to March the 14<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Speaker, I said that as Prime Minister for year 2001 I declared March 14<sup>th</sup> a holiday, because at the time Mr. Speaker, there was not sufficient time to deal with January 22<sup>nd</sup> it came after that. So if it is now coming in a Bill before this Honourable House I did not say I was not going to support it. I just want to make that clear. They are trying a little bit of politics here.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** All right, thank you very much. Honourable Minister.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** So, Mr. Speaker, I am understanding the Leader of the Opposition to say that he only declared it for 2001. The only reason being that March 28<sup>th</sup> was Election Day. So he is only declaring it for the election year, but the year after the election is not a public holiday any more. This is what the Leader of the Opposition is saying to us. And if you were declaring it on March 14<sup>th</sup>, was March 14<sup>th</sup>

2001 a Monday? I did not check the calendar but I guarantee you Mr. Speaker if you check the calendar it will not be a Monday. Exactly. So that we are arguing here on both sides of our mouth. It was a Wednesday they tell me. March 14<sup>th</sup>, we celebrated National Heroes Day on that day, 2001, in fact we celebrated it and declared a public holiday, the only thing we did not have the powers of the Parliament to put it into law. But the Unity Labour Party in 1999 declared National Heroes Day on March 14<sup>th</sup>. We put on one of the most magnificent celebrations in this country for National Heroes Day on March 14<sup>th</sup> 1999, at Unity Square. We had six runners with torches representing the six national heroes that we proposed to be considered, persons that we were proposing to be considered as National Heroes. Do not come and tell me you declared March 14<sup>th</sup> Public holiday but only for 2001, and it was on a Wednesday and now you are opposing us putting it on a Wednesday, Thursday or Friday. So Mr. Speaker, I make the point and I make the point significantly and full clarity Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition is saying to us that he declared March 15 2001 National Heroes Day, so it seems to me, -- I am debating now not him -- that we will be celebrating National Heroes Day every seven years if we follow the Leader of the Opposition because only every seven years would March 14<sup>th</sup> will fall on a Monday. So we have to decide where we are arguing Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you see I am going to be very short, you know, but, these points have to be made; because I sit down and listen to a lot of rhetoric and I am tempted to speak but because I am forceful on certain matters I give people a chance to speak, but when I sit down I listen to the Leader of the Opposition telling us that we must go to a select committee because he wants to hear the views of the people. He wants to hear what people are saying on this, Mr. Speaker, this matter has been debated for years in this Parliament. In this House, if you pull the Hansard of this House Mr. Speaker, you will find a fulsome debate on these matters already. We were then in Opposition and we proposed these matters while we were in Opposition, like the integrity legislation, that was also not passed in this House under the NDP administration. They refused when they were in Government to make these matters law. We are now wishing to make it law. And whatever we can learn additionally to put into the bills by going to the select committee Mr. Speaker, I am proposing to the Leader of the House, the Honourable Prime Minister that we put a strict deadline on the meeting of this select committee because this thing must be completed by the end of October. We cannot go into November with this thing unsettled, even though we have to come back to Parliament just for an hour to pass this bill before the 31<sup>st</sup> of October, 2001. I cannot see it being done otherwise. I cannot tolerate this continuous putting off of this matter.

But I am pleased to hear that the Leader of the Opposition Mr. Speaker, has finally learnt that there should be consultation with the people. Pleased to hear that. The 19<sup>th</sup> of April, the Leader of the Opposition remembers it very well, in the year 2000, I think it is very fresh in our minds, well at least fresh in mine because I love it; 19<sup>th</sup> of April, 2000, Mr. Speaker, in this very House the then Leader of the Opposition came here

and asked the then Prime Minister Rt. Honourable Sir James Mitchell please look outside the window and see what the people out there are saying to you. He said that is nine days talk. It has been six months now since the Unity Labour Party has been in Government and it has been a year and five months since the 19<sup>th</sup> of April. I am very pleased to see that the Leader of the Opposition has learned, and I trust that he will continue to carry this in his operations from now on; that he would have learnt a very significant lesson on April, 19<sup>th</sup> 2000.

Mr. Speaker, this Party now in Government has been involved with the people over the years and we are knowledgeable about the way the people think on these matters. That is the basic difference between why they are over there and we are over here, because we have listened to the people over the years and by listening to the people we were able to displace them in this Honourable House. We will continue to be guided by the wishes of the people, and the recent matters and here I want to publicly congratulate the Prime Minister when within recent times there was some uproar on the appointment of former Senator Bonadie and again the political leader of this party the Honourable Prime Minister and this party in Government listened to the voice of the people and the Prime Minister made a decision. This is the hallmark of this Government and it will be what we will be guided by in the future, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as said unfortunately, we were not able to do this in 1999, in 2000, and in 2001 particularly the National Heroes Day, I want to see the dates that we have here bear their significance. Mr. Speaker, I wish this bill safe passage through this House. Thank you, very much.

**HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE:** Mr. Speaker, that was a very lively debate, but I got a few surprises because in my former professional life, Mr. Speaker, I always try to make time to come and sit in the House of Assembly and listen to the debates. Just last year, over the years as I said I am a collector so I have all these little speeches and things that people say, and things that people do. I was a little amazed by the question of the productivity issues. Because on the First of August, I stood on the grounds of the Carnegie Library and I made the announcement that Cabinet had taken the policy decision for August 1<sup>st</sup> and again to reiterate about May 1<sup>st</sup> because we went to Fishermen's Day celebrations, the Prime Minister and other members, were there when he indicated May 1<sup>st</sup> would be the date returned, and we did not hear a mumbling voice, no one was opposing. I saw, I am subject to correction, but I try to read the newspapers, I did not see anyone opposing the dates on the ground of loss of productive time. I have not received to date any memoranda suggesting to me that productive time would be lost. That announcement was made by me in my ministerial capacity. I have not heard from any trade union about the lost of productive time. The announcement was made in May when the Honourable Prime Minister made it at Little Tokyo, I made the announcement the First of August this year, I did not hear, I have not seen. But we like to listen to all voices as the Leader of Government business in

the House have indicated we will go to the select committee. But I remembered when this first came to the House; the question of National Heroes, there was no question of going to any select committee. Here is the statute book, so is 'Animal Farm' has good reading, Mr. Speaker, 'all men are equal but some men more equal than others.' Very instructive, philosophical teaching for those of us in leadership position. We must remember that.

Mr. Speaker, we have legislation coming to this House and on an API programme when we launched our Gurifuna retrieval project I had with me the chairman of the National Trust, well respected leader, Mr. Cecil Ryan, and I handed to him, the first draft of the Order of National Hero, and I asked him in his capacity as a leader of the NGO community to distribute copies of this first draft and I took it as my personal responsibility and send copies to the New Democratic Party and as well to the Unity Labour Party for them to debate, for them to start the debate in public about those proposals for the Order of National Heroes because I want to get on with the people's business. That was the mandate given to us on March 28<sup>th</sup>. Passing strange Mr. Speaker, these issues about Emancipation Day, Labour Day, and National Heroes Day was not an issue during elections for any other political party, pretenders included, it was not an issue, but those were grounded issues for a labour party. I endorsed the view that I have heard candidates in this debate about a book on modern history; the Prime Minister knows my passion about this issue of having a modern history written of St. Vincent and the Grenadines written because many people still rely on the book by Ebenezer Dougan for the history of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, we also have coming to this House at some time, a bill for National Honours and National Awards because it was scandal to find out that the taxpayers had to fork out nearly quarter million, but I did not hear a mumbling word in this Honourable House. I wonder how many productive hours that would amount to when you divide the hours in dollars and cents for jewellery that done "turn."

Mr. Speaker, I have always been an active member and others here on this side, active members of NGOs and for two years running some NGOs took the unafraid decision to celebrate National History and Heritage months, I have not heard any endorsements by any other political party, pretenders included, about National History and Heritage month. There are several persons in this room who know that we held quizzes in the month of March on history, and it is one of the programmes for Independence which I have asked the teaching community to be involved in this month of October a quiz on local history, local geography, because I discovered some children did not know Mc Connie Yammie Supermarket because a lot of them who are in town now would not know anybody name Mc Connie Yammie.

Mr. Speaker, another NGO which is the church that I attend, St. Georges' Cathedral, in their newsletter has spoken about the issue of national heroes. So if you go to church on a Sunday you would get your leaflet and you are encouraged to pass the leaflet on

to others and on four weeks in a month you have approximately 2000 people going to church at 7:00 a.m. not including those at 5:00 and they have also in the newsletter spoken about productivity and public holidays, so let us not take for granted that the NGO community is not listening and they are not paying attention, they are listening and they are paying attention.

Mr. Speaker, frankly I was a little surprised, but let us get the memorandum coming in with the scientific data collected over the last ten years to indicate the lost of productive time when January 22<sup>nd</sup> falls on any other day but on a Monday; because I do not want to waste the people's time in this House in a debate that will go ranging all over Soufriere down Grand Bonhomme, but let us target this debate and keep it within its bounds.

Mr. Speaker, the fixed date is not something that we are creating, we never claim to be creating fixed dates. Many of us here are students of history and have published before we walked up on the East Wing of this House of Assembly, so we understand about fixed dates, and this is not the time for us to seek any sort of glory on creating anything, Mr. Speaker, all we are doing is like other civilized countries of the world.

Mr. Speaker, it is my wish and my hope that we conclude this matter in this month because already diaries have to be ordered and my credit union, if I say so myself Mr. Speaker, we order hundreds of these we have 14,000 members, it is the largest one in this country and the second largest in the OECS and the other bodies, NGOs, business houses and so on that print their own diaries, and the call has gone out since last month as well. My Ministry is looking at some data about stamp issues and I have already proposed to the Prime Minister one particular stamp issue to mark an anniversary next year and so that March 14<sup>th</sup> it will be the desire to have a stamp issue to mark National Heroes Day, as well as Emancipation Day and Labour Day; and these things take time for the desire, et cetera, so I do not want to waste any time, Mr. Speaker. I am not saying that listening as the "Desiderata" say to all voices even the vexatious, the dull and the ignorant because they too have their story; but I would like us to get on with the work. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I now move that this Bill be sent to a select committee, Mr. Speaker, and I proposed.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I second the motion. Normally a formal movement, since we have had the, .. On this side of the House we are suggesting that we have seven members on the select committee, five from the Government and two from the Opposition, reflecting more or less the respective strengths in the House. From the Government side, Prime Minister as Chairman, the Minister of Tourism and Culture, the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports, the Parliamentary Secretary in Ministry of Labour and Grenadines Affairs, the Honourable Edwin Snagg, and Senator Andrea Young; those are the five persons.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, on the Opposition benches, myself as Leader of the Opposition and the Honourable Terrance Ollivierre.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, that being the complement of the select committee it's 1 O'clock almost I beg to move that the House do stand suspended for the luncheon period until 3 O'clock, that is two hours. I gave the extra 5 minutes for persons who may wish to have a more delicious dessert.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** House stand adjourned until 3 o'clock.

SUSPENSION 12:48 p.m. (Lunch)  
RESUMPTION 3:10 p.m.

#### **ARBITRATION (NEW YORK CONVENTION AWARDS AND AGREEMENTS) BILL 2001**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members the first reading of this Bill was on the 15<sup>th</sup> of August. I now beg to move the second reading of a Bill for an Act to give effect to the Convention on Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Arbitral Awards concluded in New York on the 10<sup>th</sup> of June 1958.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members this bill is intended to give effect to an important United Nations Convention on international commercial arbitration; that is to say the convention on the recognition and the enforcement of foreign arbitral awards 1958, which St. Vincent and the Grenadines joined by depositing its accession with the Secretary General of the United Nations in September 2000. Over 125 States worldwide are now parties to this Convention including Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica and Trinidad and Tobago from the Commonwealth Caribbean. Under this Convention Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members parties undertake to recognize and enforce arbitral awards made in the territory of one another in accordance with the rules of procedure applicable in their territories for domestic arbitral awards, but subject to the conditions laid down in this convention. The parties undertake to recognize arbitration agreements entered into in

writing by parties to a contract and their Courts must order stay of legal proceedings where a valid validation agreement exists and referred the parties to arbitration.

By joining this convention St. Vincent and the Grenadines has now the benefit of having a reciprocal agreement with all its 125 member States and among these including the US, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, Japan and others with whom St. Vincent and the Grenadines has commercial dealings. So by joining this we have the benefit of reciprocal agreement with all the 125 member States by having arbitration agreements made here in St. Vincent, accepted as valid in those countries and thereby avoid expensive court proceedings for parties to such disputes in foreign countries. Also arbitral awards made in St. Vincent and the Grenadines would now be recognized and enforced abroad in any of those 125 States parties under the uniformed conditions laid down in the convention.

We have our Arbitration Act, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members Chapter 13 of the Revised Edition of the Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines 1990. And this domestic arbitration Act is there to regulate commercial arbitration in this country, only part 5 of that Act applies to foreign awards, but the provisions of that part 5 were designed to apply only to awards made in pursuance of arbitration agreements to which the Geneva protocol on arbitration clauses 1923 and the Geneva convention on the execution of foreign arbitral awards 1927 applied. Those two international treaty instruments which the United Kingdom extended to our territory before independence are now largely obsolete after the present UN convention of 1958 had come into operation with wide acceptance worldwide. So the present bill when enacted will implement provisions of the UN Convention on the recognition and enforcement of foreign awards, 1958 in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The Arbitration Act, our domestic Act Chapter 13 will still stand and continue to govern domestic arbitration and domestic arbitral awards in St. Vincent and the Grenadines; but section 8(1) of this bill makes it clear that after this new Act comes into force the provisions of this new Act, and not part 5 of the Arbitration Act Cap. 13 would apply to the enforcement of arbitral awards made in the territory of a State party to the 1958 convention. So that is very important to note, that part 5 of our domestic law, in so far as it relates to 125 members in the current New York Convention, the one of 1958, those are the provisions which would apply. Vis-a-vis States which are not parties to the 1958, convention. But parties to the Geneva protocol of 1923 and Geneva Convention of 1927 part 5 of the Arbitration Act may continue to apply that is why part 5 Cap. 13 has not been repealed. What we are doing here, Mr. Speaker, is to strengthen the legal and institutional capacity of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in its integration in world commercial transactions, and to make it easier for arbitration awards in those countries made here to be enforced there and vice versa.

Now, this measure is a continuation of the attempt by the effort by the Government, the preceding government here in St. Vincent to make way for the similar integration of our economy and to strengthen its capacity legally. The previous government as I have said, in September last year, had deposited its accession with the UN Secretary General and we are now bringing into domestic law that which St. Vincent and the Grenadines has acceded to in September last year. I therefore do not see any controversy arising from this or any long debate, because we are just doing something which is just right and proper to do, to bring into our domestic legislation.

To lawyers who may be listening, I repeat, part 5 of the current Arbitration Act, it is not repealed, because those countries which were party to the 1923 protocol and the 1927 agreement may still avail themselves of that provision, whereas this Act may make the 125 member countries to this New York convention no longer use part 5 of our Arbitration Act but now would use the provisions under this Bill which bring into force the arbitration convention of New York 1958.

I just want to say this, Mr. Speaker, there is a move afoot generally to move to none court processes. In deed there are international institutions devoted to this matter of encouraging states to do more commercial arbitrations, it is quicker, invariably cheaper rather than go through the court system and many people agree to submit themselves to arbitration. A lot of building contracts for instance tend to have arbitration clauses rather than to go to Court system, and a particular jurisprudence has grown up on that, and all that we are trying to do is continue in our own way to put St. Vincent and the Grenadines in a position where it would not lose in commercial transactions where contracts are made here with particular arbitral clauses and which can be enforced in other countries party to the New York Convention and vice versa, and I think that is all that is necessary to be said, Mr. Speaker.

I know sometimes some of these things sound very esoteric but again I indicate to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines all these are measures which we have to take more and more to strengthen our own legal and institutional capacity as the business world becomes more and more sophisticated, and I think our people, more and more, they have to understand this. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker, at the outset I would say that the members on this side of the House understand that the purpose of the bill before the House is to give effect to the initiative of the previous government to incorporate or to have St. Vincent and the Grenadines benefit from this long standing convention on the recognition and the enforcement of foreign arbitral awards. As the Honourable Prime Minister noted the note that came attached with the bill indicates that there were over 125 countries in the world who are parties to this process. Mr. Speaker, those members of the legal profession would know, and people who do international business, the difficulties of enforcing Courts' judgments one country to another and

actually determining what Court has jurisdiction and things of that nature. The uncertainty would be even greater in awards or agreements which are of a non court nature; so this legislation is an attempt to harmonize the enforcement of awards that have been given and it is an attempt by the countries that are party, it seems to me, to make it easier, more reliable than that the parties who are bound by those awards have the means to enforce them. It is a process that is more and more becoming part of the international landscape, its if you like, an early precursor to the much popular term of globalization. More and more these things are going to be governing or affecting the lives of people the world over.

Mr. Speaker, what we are saying eventually is that it makes sense for us, for the Government to give effect to the previous government initiative and to work speedily to bring this convention into domestic law. Indeed there are certain clauses in the bill that very closely mirror what is in the convention, which is clause 6(2) is pretty much the same of what is said in Article 5 of the Convention as to when the objections that someone can make with respect to the enforcement of an award. Article 7 of the Convention itself also indicates that this really adds to the legal remedies available to persons who are party to the arbitral awards and it does not take away anything, because you will see that Article 7 that it says that it does not deprive any interested party of any right he may have to avail himself of an arbitral award in the manner and to the extent allowed by the law or the treaties of the country where such an award is sought or to be relied on.

Mr. Speaker, the only concern I have, and maybe it is one that can be easily addressed by the Honourable Prime Minister, and it is a nervousness I have essential about retroactive application of legislation, and clause 9 seems to do that, and I do not know who will be affected by it and what the implications are for any previous agreements that have already been in existence and a word by way of explanation would be useful from the Government. This Bill, it deals with international matters, so I think it would be useful if clause 7, where it refers here to Legal Affairs Department, I assume this is the Legal Affairs Department of St. Vincent and the Grenadines? I wonder if we can make this more specific.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I was indicating to the Honourable Attorney General the proper formulation should be the Attorney General, rather than the Legal Affairs Department because there is a constitutional office of the Attorney General which is the one to be dealt with in this respect. And there is no problem in adding St. Vincent and the Grenadines, but if you put in the interpretation of any statute once the Attorney General is mentioned there we cannot here legislate for an Attorney General somewhere else.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Well thank you, that would take care of the problem. There is also a very small typographical error in Clause 6 sub 5, 'county'

should be 'country'. Sub 5 it says 'the authority of the county in which, which I assume should be meant country. Mr. Speaker, those are my comments on this legislation.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Is there any further debate?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I am very much obliged for the support of this bill by the Opposition; for the comments made by the Member for the Northern Grenadines. I just want to say the provision in clause 9 is not problematic in any event in a civil matter because all it is doing is that any agreements or awards which were made before the date of this announcement, any agreements or any arbitral awards that the act would apply to them simply means that the enforcement procedures and mechanisms can go on, it does not prejudice anybody's rights and certainly it is not retroactive legislation as is normally spoken of in the case of say, in criminal matters, then we are getting into dangerous territories.

Mr. Speaker with those comments I beg to move that this House resolves itself into a committee of the whole House to go through the bill clause by clause.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House went into Committee.*

*House resumed.*

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

## **CONVENTION ON OIL POLLUTION DAMAGE BILL 2001**

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the second reading of a bill for the implementation of the 1992 International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage and the 1992 International Convention on the Establishment of an International Fund for Oil Pollution Damage.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

*Question put and agreed to.*

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

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, this is a bill that is another convention. As you know, the Caribbean is an area where a lot of ships pass through, not too long ago and I think the discussion is still going on, transporting atomic waste through our waters and the damage if anything that could do if you have an accident. All of us know, that more and more there are bigger and bigger ships that are being built to

transport oil, crude oil and heavy fuel oils. We know about the disaster that happened in Alaska and cost of cleaning up that oil spill, it went into the billions. We had had time and time again other ships for whatever reason discharging oil not willingly but because of accident, into the waters, into the sea, creating quite a lot of havoc for our marine life. And in areas where tourism plays an important part, the beaches can get foul and that affects very seriously the economic ability of those countries. It was not until in the 1960's or 1970's when there was a lot of oil spills in the English Channel that I think Britain and France decided that something must be done. There was convention before where you could have had compensation but the compensation for damage was limited, in that in any one incident the amount that you could have claim was no more than \$20 million US. This was worked out on the currency, or on a format of gold francs but it amounted to \$20 million and so it was decided that the civil liability convention something should be done about it and that there needs to be more funds available to compensate those countries who would suffer from oil spills, damages from oil pollutions. And so, in 1971 an international fund was established. Not the IMF as we know it, the International Fund to meet excess claims in cases where there were oil pollutions. Where oil was spilt in the sea and there was pollution.

Now, this can now go from \$20 million US to \$42 million US thereabout, so there was somewhat a little bit of relief, so to speak, in that it went from \$20 million to \$42 million. But still, it was felt that with these mega tankers carrying over a million tons of crude oil that if one of these tankers should break away, or break open in the North Sea or other areas that even though they are outside of your economic zone, with the tidal action and so on, you can still be affected; that the waves or the tides can bring the pollution towards your shores. Hence those conventions were further improved, in that there were lots of protocols over the years and very many protocols being implemented. Agreements were reached where you can increase further the levels that can be obtained, in the cases of oil pollutions. The latest of these was the 1992 protocol, Mr. Speaker, and this then was increased up to 59.7 million units of account. That is the IMS special drawing rights which is the equivalent of \$85 million US, for any one incident. And further that was what you could recover from the ship owner. In the past, before these came out it was only the ship owners who had to pay. Persons who own the ship had to pay for the damage caused, the compensation but what happens as is so often done, the ship owner could deposit his \$20 million, it didn't matter whether his assets were \$20 billion, and once he had done that, then his responsibility for that one incident was finished. So regardless of what his other assets were you could not claim him on those assets. It now protocol, as I said before, increased this from the \$42 million US, as I was telling you about \$85 million US that can be recovered from the owner of the ship. But further it was stated, that in itself was still insufficient and therefore you can now in this special fund this, international money fund for oil pollution that was further increased to a sum of \$135 million units of accounts which is about \$192 million US. So what it means now is that under these two funds you can now

claim, you have rights to claim from the total of these two funds which is \$192 million plus the \$85 million.

Now we had not acceded to these new protocols, and it is that which we are now trying to do, to pass in this Honourable House and when this is passed, if it is passed that we can then sign the agreement, because it would have been ratified in the House here. As you would know, Mr. Speaker, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, our economic zone is very large because of the way our islands are conferred, now I am no brain in this I am told that we might have something about in the order of 11,000 square miles or something like, but you can see, some people might ask how can you have 11,000 square miles when St. Vincent and the Grenadines is only 150 square miles. Well, this is the economic zone which stretches 200 miles from your shore lines, hence we have to be careful, in that our economic zone 200 miles out that we have a lot of territory out there, it is a pity that we do not have that kind of territory in land, but it is still there, and we have to be careful that if anything, and we have oil pollution out there that we are within our rights to claim from these funds.

Mr. Speaker, it is simply this that what, we want is to accede to the convention and the protocols that came in. Let me just say that the convention applies exclusively for pollution because in the territory of a contracting nation and if we are not part of this convention then we are not a contracting State and do not have – I expect we can still go to Court maybe and have a long drawn out battle but then we do not have the right as other contracting States towards the measures that I have just set out, where we can be compensated for whatever is taken.

So, in short Mr. Speaker, this is what it is. I know the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines wants to catch his boat, and so on and he wants to debate this bill, and therefore I think I would end here so that he can have an opportunity to make the contribution. As you know Bequia, the Grenadines there are people who are versed in marine activities, and I am sure that he would be able to bring more light into this matter. Thank you.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Any further debate on this bill?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to the Honourable Minister of National Security. It was not my intention to cut off his presentation however; and certainly when he hears what I have to say he might think otherwise of it.

Mr. Speaker, again this bill, it seems to me, the intention is a laudable one and it brings St. Vincent and the Grenadines into an international convention which is of long standing and one which it seems to me would be beneficial to the country. There are for example provisions within well, first of all, I would like for those people who are

listening to hear the purpose of the fund convention, that is the convention which provides for additional compensation that was not provided for in the original convention and that is Article 2 which says that, -- I think I have the wrong part actually, just a second, -- it says here that the international fund for compensation for pollution damage, this is article 2 of the International Convention on the establishment of an international fund for compensation for oil pollution damage, that is schedule 2, it says "an international fund for compensation for pollution damage to be named the International Oil Pollution Compensation Fund 1992, and hereinafter referred to as "the Fund" is hereby established with the following aims, and that is to provide compensation for pollution damage to the extent that the protection afforded in the 1992 liability convention is inadequate.

Mr. Speaker, as the Honourable Minister of National Security pointed out that this basically is additional insurance for us here in St. Vincent and the obligations under this Act are also things we have to turn our minds to, because there are obligations on St. Vincent and the Grenadines such as in Article 7(4) of the Fund Convention, that is the same document I was reading from which says "that each contracting State shall ensure that the fund shall have the right to intervene as a party to any legal proceedings instituted in accordance with Article 9 of the 1992 Liability Convention before a competent Court. That is Article 7 of the 1992 convention on civil liability and oil pollution. So in adopting these international conventions, we intend to benefit, that is the intention but we should also acknowledge and recognize that there are obligations as well and one that we should be prepared to meet. There is Article 15 as well, of the second schedule. You will see there that there are obligations "on the contracting State to ensure that any person who receive contributing oil within its territory in such quantities and who is liable to contribute to the Fund essentially makes the contributions."

So, Mr. Speaker, I remember growing up in Bequia as you go to Northern Beaches, the eastern beaches, Spring, and Park where they would always be plums of oil from where ships passing in our vicinity either throw things over board when they are cleaning their tanks and so on and at that time we just accept it as just simply something that watches up on our beaches, never knowing where it came from or how we can protect ourselves from it. This bill does not seek to do that but it at least recognizes that, well I should not say at least because it does even more than that, it recognizes that where there are major spills within the territorial waters of St. Vincent and the Grenadines that we have some means for redress and compensation. From my quick perusal of the conventions, I see as well, that there are provisions for assistance within them in the event that there is a spill with the provision of personnel and material to assist St. Vincent and the Grenadines in managing the clean up I think that would be something beneficial and its therefore the obligation and the position of the members on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, to support this legislation. Those are my submissions.

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

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines for his contribution. It is quite true that there is a contribution to the international fund but the reason why I did not mention it Mr. Speaker, is that you do not contribute to that fund until or unless you import more than 150,000 tons of oil, and I do not know when we might reach that. It will take a long time before we reach that and therefore, in all instances as of now and the next 10, 20 years that would be a non issue because it would not, unless they amend this to reduce it, it would not be a matter of concern to us because we would not hope to import anything of 150,000 tons of crude oil, except it is like the facility they had in St. Lucia where maybe you are using it as a transshipment point and so on but at that time then I think we would look at it.

Mr. Speaker, I thank once more the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, I would now ask that the that House resolves itself into a committee of the whole House to consider the Bill clause by clause.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

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

*Bill reported, read a third time and passed with few amendments.*

## **NATIONAL FLAG BILL 2001**

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move a bill for an Act to establish the National flag Act 2001 be read a first time.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

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

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move under Standing Order 48(2) that this Bill be taken through all its stages at this sitting.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

*Question put and agreed to.*

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the bill be read a second time.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

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

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

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, in the back of the bill there are some objects and reasons, but in effect since independence we have been speaking about respect for institutions, respect for articles like the flag, respect when the national anthem is being sung or played, because we have been loosely going about without doing anything about these things. I remember in 1984 when the Labour Party lost Government, I remember a former Minister of Government, was very angry that the colours of the flag, not the flag but the colours of the flag were being used as buttons pins and drapes et cetera and other persons have even used those colours into making garments. At the time the honourable gentleman, the Honourable Minister then said he was going to do something about it. We did not see anything wrong with the colours as such and I still do not see anything wrong with using the colours; colours are colours. I can see something wrong with using the flag, which is a symbol and emblem of what St. Vincent is.

The flag is a very important article in any nation's development, Mr. Speaker, it is what the nation is identified by. You look at the flag and you see the three diamonds and you see how the colours are arranged and so on, because you would find different countries maybe using the same colours but they are configured differently. In our flag for instance the blue and green are of equal width whilst the gold is supposed to be twice the width of anyone of the blue and green. In other words the width of both the blue and the green combined. What this bill sets out to do Mr. Speaker, is to enforce and to educate the people including school children about significance of the flag. How it is hoisted, how it is lowered. For instance the flag is supposed to be hoisted briskly, fast, and when you are lowering it, it should be lowered with dignity and should come down very slowly. All this is spelt out to a certain extent in the bill, Mr. Speaker.

The Bill makes the distinction between emblem and the national flag. In the case of the Governor General he is entitled to have his own Governor General's emblem, which is flown anytime, he is in residence. We would see if the Governor General is in his car when he is travelling, the flag or the emblem would be flying, the Governor General's standard, but if he is not in that vehicle then the standard is shrouded or if it is the national flag it is shrouded so that you would see the Governor's vehicle, and if you do not see those standards or the national flag flying you would know that the Governor

General is not there. I do not know if that is a good thing or a bad thing because if you want to assassinate the Governor General you can only wait to see the flag is on and you know he is in the car, in this day of security now we really -- I am not saying this that anybody should go and try to do this. I am only saying I am not sure. But once the Governor General is in residence his standard is supposed to be flown even at nights. It is supposed to be flown. When he leaves his residence in the day then his standards is supposed to be lowered and the National flag is supposed to be hoisted in its place.

The bill makes provision, Mr. Speaker, so that flags, and this is going to cost a little bit of money from the ex checker that all schools, and Government schools and Government assisted schools should fly, flag during the time that they are in attendance. The National flag is not flown at nights; except on special occasions where they can be flood lit.

Mr. Speaker, it also sets out the prominence of the National flag, that if you flying the National flag amongst other flags then it should always have preeminence and it should always be higher than those other flags; and other areas there Mr. Speaker that would be of concern to teachers and other persons. Other areas to say that if you are going to display the flag how it should be displayed, it should not be draped over anything, you might put it as a back drop the back of you, but it gives you how that should be done. Another thing that it states as well is that the flag should never touch the ground and should never be in contact with other things. You can use the flag for State funerals and again the bill sets out how this should be done, how the flag is draped over the coffin and so on and when it is taken off before the coffin is lowered et cetera, et cetera.

So in short, Mr. Speaker, it is a piece of legislation to highlight and to educate about the significance of the flag; that it is not something that is just taken lightly, it is something that we should treasure, it is something, you know not only of interest to Vincentians but ships for instance, when we register ships, offshore system I am talking about, and even in shore, when we register ships here they are supposed to carry our flag and this Act states where those flags are supposed to displayed. Our coastguard and so on, is supposed to show the flag, fly the flag, and tells you where that flag is suppose to be worn or flown, whether it is in the stern or in the bow. So that Mr. Speaker, I think once this bill is passed and we start to educate, maybe start in the school and so on, and starting to educate the public of the importance and the significance of the flag. That will be on the right way to try to get people to understand the meaning of it and why it is so important that we should show respect to the flag, because as a country we have to develop and build up our own conventions, build up our own, culture, and if we are not going to be proud of what we've got then Mr. Speaker, we are not going to get anywhere. This in short Mr. Speaker, is what the bill

is about, and I am sure that none of us in this Honourable House would have any objection towards the passage of this Bill.

Sorry Mr. Speaker, in the schedule there is a correction here, I had it marked here, Schedule 1 on page 9 where we have on number three 'Discovery Day', should be Heroes Day' and we should delete 'so long' from the word 'so' to recognize 'so long as the day is officially recognized.' With these few words Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that this Bill would have an easy passage. Thank you Mr. Speaker.

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

**HONOURABLE GERARD SHALLOW:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I rise to add my little contribution to this piece of legislation brought before this Honourable House at this moment. And the Act may be cited as the National flag Act 2001. Mr. Speaker, when it comes to issues that are nationalistic in nature it must be treated with a level of seriousness and the flag of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is no exception. It is vitally important that Vincentians far and wide pay respect to our national symbols, not only the flag Mr. Speaker, but we do, as the Honourable Member of National Security stated, encounter problems when our national anthem is being played. Unfortunately while we wish that everyone subscribed to the rules that govern our behaviour when these things are done there is no penalty of those who refuse to comply or to obey. But Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that the National flag should be treated with outmost respect.

It is also vitally important, Mr. Speaker, that we embark on an education campaign to inform our citizens as to what their requirements should be when the National Anthem is being played and when our National flag is being hoisted or lowered. And I will chose at this point to charge the Ministry of Education to initiate through the auspices of the Curriculums Development unit to create a unit fleshed with the information as to exactly what should be done when these procedures and activities are held so that it will increase their knowledge base and heighten their levels of consciousness, not only for the national flag but that should also be done to heighten their levels of awareness as to the days chosen for public holidays, because I think some these days which are of very significant to our country should be in school and that would ease some of the problems when these children grow up, we would not have to harp and feel bad about their reaction when it is time for them to take heed.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, I want to compliment the Honourable Minister of National Security for seeing the wisdom in heightening or in bringing to Parliament this bit of information, something I consider very, very important and I hope that Vincentians both far and wide would heed and would increase their levels of respect to national symbols and that we may be able to achieve that level that is actually required of us as citizens and as patriotic people. Let us hope, Mr. Speaker, that this bill receives a safe

passage through this Honourable House and that the effects of it would be enjoyed all citizens of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you would have noticed from the legislative programme of this administration that we have set out deliberately to bring a new sense of nationhood and patriotism to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. By having legislation on the book itself does not mean it will make the country more patriotic, and its people more nationalistic in their outlook, but it is a tool which indicates to the larger international community that you take the issues relating to nationalism in a serious fashion and that you have set about to address them. This was some of the new laws that we thought ought to be on the statute books. After all in the next two weeks we would be 22 years old as an independent nation. And this legislation, it is my view, and I am quite willing through the Ministry of Tourism, through our communication unit, to give any assistance to the Ministry of Education, through the social studies programme, to assist in propagating the provisions of this statute.

You would notice, Mr. Speaker, I recall 1984 when the colours were used during a political campaign, there was such a hue and cry in this country, but I was yet alive to see the national colours used in another political campaign. One of the things that struck me in the preparation of this bill, was in another country I found a precedent dealing with the national colours, and that is still under discussion at this time. As to whether or not we are sufficiently mature and sophisticated as a nation to go forward at this time, because we realize that our legislative agenda is quite packed and there is a lot of new laws that would be on the books and it takes a while for people to get accustomed to having a certain level of laws in the country, so we would take them a step at a time, like the Order for the National Heroes and the National Honours and Awards Act.

Mr. Speaker, there are certain provisions of this bill that I would like to comment upon in this debate and it deals with flying of the national flag at Government buildings. There are some buildings in the State that you do not know they are Government buildings, they are so dilapidated, you cannot believe that those are Government buildings, the staff at the Department of Culture when they took me through the office on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April, I was amazed I did not know, I had heard conditions were bad, but I did not understand that they were that crude. Mr. Speaker, we have to do certain things within a certain time frame, I know perhaps that we like to do things in another time, you know, the mañana effect, but you would notice Mr. Speaker, that time is catching up with us whether we like it or not, nobody is waiting for St. Vincent to get on board, you can cry until you are blue in the face how small you are, how poor you are what is the level of literacy I do not think that anyone is listening at the end of the line.

They are no longer interested in that, therefore we have to carve out our own historical path and this is one of them.

The provisions of clause 8 of this bill Mr. Speaker, speaks about flying the flag on each school day at each school in the country, because school buildings are looking quite good. And I received a call from a gentleman in the Ministry of Social Development as to whether or not this year we are going to have best school and best village competition, and I told him no because all the schools had just been recently repaired, recently had toilets done over, some having additional rooms added so we give the schools one year and see how well they would keep them. So when we are doing the inspection of the yards and the fences, inside and outside, the school gates, the school doors, the toilets, the staff room, the lunch room, that in truth and in fact there will be some other criteria, additional criteria to judge the better school. It will also be having this national flag flown at the school. It means that some children would get the honour of being the monitor to raise the flag in the morning and to lower it and a class from which that student would come will have the honour of being the flag class for a particular month or a particular term of the year. This will help our children to learn about these symbols of nationhood because you cannot teach old dogs new tricks, so we would go for the smaller ones and inculcate these values about the national flag. Symbols of patriotism and independence. Of course it does bother me that you always most of the times, 99% of the time you have to say stand for the playing of the national anthem, and to see people walking around whenever the national anthem is being played. And some people who I think know better, but it has become a habit because again, Mr. Speaker, I say for the second time here today we misused certain levels of authority, assumed or given, implied or expressed, by reducing things of decency to the lowest level in this country. We no longer know how to address people, large number of people, there is a wind of disrespect, ill wind, smelly wind, foul smelling wind of disrespect for people holding high office in this State.

Mr. Speaker, I was in The Bahamas on Friday the 12<sup>th</sup> and it used to be their Discovery Day, it was their National Heroes Day you should feel the fervour of the people. I looked at the way they addressed their Prime Minister whenever they spoke about him, the people working in the hotels, the hotel engages about 5,000 people, so you most likely on any two days do not see the same person serving you twice at the same restaurant. I spoke with the defence officers, the young constables, and you asked them many questions the way other diplomats would ask questions of our taxi drivers or our young constables, but how things are in The Bahamas are they still better, and the way they speak about their country with so much love, I felt jealous. The way they approach their Prime Minister, well I say my Prime Minister would not have that much people in uniform walking around him. They say 'oh, really?' He goes down town by himself when he chooses to. I looked at the way they addressed the other Ministers of Government and Heads of Government who were there and that is not just among the elite and the elected members, I like to observe things and to pay close attention, but

here in this country people are being indulged in all sorts of naughtiness to degrade Cabinet members and members of this Honourable House, therefore what sort of honour should the smaller children apply when what they hear is like 'm-i-l-o milo'. Children are quick and easy learners you know, Mr. Speaker, and therefore parents now have to reinforce certain values in their children, at home.

When I look at clause 9 the Prime Minister speaks of the House of Assembly, Members of Cabinet and all persons in charge of the permanent overseas mission of the State make. Beside their own distinctive flag, they possess any fly the national flag on the official private cars. Imagine when the Prime Minister bought the smallest in the line of Mercedes Benz that was the national issue. We are not the smallest Caribbean island but we have the smallest Prime Minister car. I mean that is frivolous sometimes the frivolous issues help you to deal with the more vexatious ones. Would people recognize if a member of Cabinet would feel so exalted to fly a flag on their car if they are members of cabinet? I see the way duties are executed in this place, the sloppiness because that was a culture, sloppiness. They would answer the telephone 'yea', 'uh huh'. It takes time for that to be inculcated you know, rather than saying 'good morning, may I help you?' And give the name of the office and say who is speaking. And speak English. Speak it properly, but oh we have allowed over a period of time those of us who should know better and should be role models and examples of good conduct and decorum. This is about decorum too, you know Mr. Speaker, this is about national decorum. And when you are leader you have to lead from in front, not hide behind. Shadow figures.

Paying respect to the National flag, Clause 11.

"When the National flag is being raised or lowered or while it is carried in parade or review, all persons should pay respect to it by standing."

This ought to be a test, and I believe by putting this bill in the House and bring these matters to national attention by way of live broadcast of Parliamentary debate that perhaps now that they that have ears will hear that it is important to pay respect to the National flag.

"All persons should pay respect to it by standing to attention and facing it, persons in civil dress should remove their hats and all persons in uniform should salute."

I pay close attention Mr. Speaker. All standards 11(3) ensigns and emblems of institutional or voluntary organisations. You would only be paid respect by members of institutions or organisations according to individual customs of the institution or voluntary organisation. Clause 4 is rather instructive particularly in these times where we saw after a nation was under barbaric attack citizens have come out with the flag

painted on their faces, t-shirts, on their vehicles. When I went to St. Croix to represent the Prime Minister at a function held by the St. Vincent and the Grenadines St. Croix association, and passing the houses and noticing the flags and even in the homes of Vincentian nationals there is the flag of the United States and it is on their vehicles was it only a question of their grieve and deep sorrow that has brought out that level of patriotism or have before on that fateful day in history seen examples of that patriotism. Is that something we ought to emulate in this country? Again, Mr. Speaker, I say it is not only having a law on the statue books that makes something respectable, but it is a practice that we attached to it and it is our belief that goes along with it that gives the law its conviction. “

Any citizen or resident of the State may fly the National flag on a suitable staff at his residence, provided that none of the rules for the use and display of the national flag are contravened.”

You know, Mr. Speaker, sometimes because we do not know these things, we make mistakes but I am hoping that now this statute is before the House, I am hoping that now, live broadcast on radio of Parliamentary debates, and the fact that these bills were going to come to this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, that persons, nationals, citizens would take a deeper interest in how they use the national flag.

The Bill makes further provisions, Mr. Speaker, of how it should be lowered. I remember when the studios at SVG television erected their flagpole and the flag was flying, every evening the gentleman in charge of grips, that was his responsibility to ensure he lowered the flag. And it was for him, because of his age I would say, such an honour to go out and lower that flag, up on the hill at Dorsetshire Hill. I hope that in the next few days is displayed in the national colours and flags go up as we celebrate, that more people would be encouraged to pay respect and give due honour to our National flag and would remember how to hoist it and how to lower it.

Mr. Speaker, I once had the honour of carrying the National flag at an international forum and as St. Vincent is 'S' you had to wait your turn at the side of the stage you look at all the countries going by with flags and it was such a colourful ceremony but nothing is more touching to me, I believe that when you are in an international forum and you have to carry you nation's flag. I cannot describe to you Mr. Speaker, that moment of pride, that passion that burning your bosom when you are walking in front of about two or three thousand people indoors, and you are holding the national flag, you feel my country has arrived. That is how I felt. We in this international forum we have found our place, and I am proud to be a Vincentian, that I would like to hold this flag and wave it so that everyone would see.

And the following year I went to a similar conference and I had a little desk flag. The year after that I saw other people arrive with their little desk flag. So you not only will

see St. Vincent and the Grenadines you would also see the flag of the nation. I am proud of my country; and I am proud of my flag, never mind the political acrobatics that we have arrived at a different flag from the date of independence to the one we celebrate today, let bygones be bygones, Mr. Speaker. And let us move forward to the future with confidence, with pride and let us build a nation, Mr. Speaker, put pillars in place like this statue for the national flag so that the foundation and the pillars upon this nation stand would be firm and recognized throughout the world and more so loved by our people. Mr. Speaker, I sincerely hope that the social studies teachers would avail themselves. There is a copy of this bill even without the formality of having it go through the Ministry of Education but I am quite sure that the Honourable Minister of Education and the Honourable Minister of State would do their duty in this respect and I would do mine as well, because such befalls one when you take on that responsibility to lead. I am quite sure that every child next year should be able to make the national flag. The Kingstown Anglican School because I am a friend of that school since it is my church school, every Independence time they always invite me to a little ceremony in the church, and you should hear the little voices in unison when they recite the national pledge. It is a moment when tears come to your eyes Mr. Speaker, and you wonder do they really understand the words of that national pledge and what it means. And because they are children of age 5 to age 15 they always want, and the headteacher, would you say a few words Miss Baptiste, and you look at their little faces and you wonder what you are saying from year to year if it makes any difference and after the service singing of patriotic songs written by Mr. Western Lewis, by Pat Prescott, "The Right Hand of God, this is the time, this is the season, Mr. Speaker, the time is right for this bill to be passed in this House. Honourable Members I employ you to give this bill your fullest support and let us get on with nation building, hand in hand. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Honourable Members, it is with a sense of great joy and deep devotion that I stand to give support to an act to establish National Flag Act 2001.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members as the debate was going on my mind went back and I remember, I remember when we became independent that I was there as a part of the crowd that witnessed us trying to stand on our own two feet in the form of Independence, 27<sup>th</sup> October, 1979. The first time we heard 'St. Vincent Land so Beautiful' and all uniformed organisations, the police, and everyone stood at attention. It was of great significance. For many of us who belonged to the Girl Guides and the Boys Scots associations but as the years went by Mr. Speaker, it is sad to say that the meaning of our flag was not properly grasped. I speak now as coming from the education sector, I would have heard at national gatherings sometimes at our Calypso competitions that even sometimes when Ministers of Government would have to ask people to stand at attention as our anthem was being played. I can remember it is a long time ago before we became an independent nation there was a fluterman name

Eddie Browne. Eddie Browne used to be blowing flute throughout this country and there was someone in public office who was not from our country but Eddie Browne looked at that dignitary coming off the jetty and Eddie Browne knew the people in his country and began to play 'God saves our Gracious Queen.' I can tell you Mr. Speaker, that that dignitary stood straight in the sun until Eddie would have played all those stanzas and the chorus as well; but for our Vincentian society did we understand why he did it. He was patriotic. He was nationalistic. We in our 22<sup>nd</sup> year of Independence we need to teach our nation how to be more nationalistic and one of the things we do not take to heart and give enough respect is our national flag.

I remembered that one time I was doing some inspection on a compound on which I worked. And a watchman had one of our national flags making a bed, he was sleeping on it in the toilet of one of our schools. Mr. Speaker, I remembered at Independence time trying to teach our children by giving watchwords, dignity, discipline, achievement. We need to know where the respect should go. And sad to say that respect is lacking but there is hope and in terms of our national flag, our schools have begun, and I am proud to say so, that our schools know, how to make the flag, know the colours of the flag, and what the diamonds in the middle mean and we have been trying to get our children to make the flag your own. From day to day, we said the pledge, 'Land of my birth I pledge to you, my loyalty and devotion, in all I think or do or say.' We need to be more nationalistic. Our national flag when it is raised in some schools, also sad to say that religion is bringing in something here. I remembered being reported to the Ministry of Education because there were some persons who because of their religion they would tell you what they would or would not do. But it is not only that but to do it in the presence of our children, it cannot work and here and now Mr. Speaker, I think that it is a great challenge for our Ministry of Education. Our children learn what they live, and I believe that it is in the school that what is laid out here in this bill that has to become an Act that we would try our very best to see what we can teach our children. We know that the religionists they are on another sphere, but we will have to know how we deal with this, because we have to know what our country says. We have to respect our country, we have to respect our symbols of independence and remain as nationalistic as we should be.

Mr. Speaker, this is something that is timely and I very proud of the way that our government is handling the business of our country. No longer can we sit back and accept standards that are not right. We must be very prudential, in the way that we do our work. Mr. Speaker, with all this gladness in my heart I had to rise here to make a few brief comments. I would not be very much longer except to wish this bill an easy passage though this Honourable House.

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to this Bill and to speak very much in the same vain of members of the other side and particular the Honourable Minister for Social Development who just took her seat. I

say first, Mr. Speaker that in this Honourable House there is a particular joy which presents itself to us from time to time, on those issues that should serve most to unite us and do very little to divide us. And I recognize the discussion and the passage of this is one such occasion. As I look across the other side I recognize, and I think I am correct in the Honourable Minister of National Security there as someone who would have had military service many years ago, and so discussions such as the national flag brings a sense of emotion to him I would believe; and he could quite readily relate to the subject. Honourable Minister of Social Development I think she still serve with the Red Cross would have the same sentiments. And my good Honourable friend the Minister of Transport and Works taking his usual siesta also served in the Cadet Force, and would enjoy similar feelings at this time. I am aware that my own Leader of the Opposition served in the Cadet Force and there must be a sense of pride and satisfaction in this discussion.

I too can reflect with some nostalgia to where I was on that occasion when this country gained its Independence, as the officer in charged then of the Cadet Force and welcoming the various foreign troupes on parade and seeing our National Flag lifted at the Victoria Park and so I agree with the Honourable Members on the other side who identified that the question of the bill for this passing of the National Flag is one which we should view in the context of what national symbols mean to us in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and I do agree, Mr. Speaker, that it is a responsibility that all of us in this Honourable House and within whatever theaters of influence we have should bring to bear. Our statesmanship, our experience, our own personal sense of responsibility to guide this young nation in the process of nation building. I see this National Flag Act in the same way, Mr. Speaker, that we as a small island State are indeed fortunate that for very many years we have seen the wisdom of recognizing prayers in school for example and the contribution that this gives to the whole authority and general good order but as a previous speaker, I think it is the Honourable Minister of Tourism alluded to, the mere passage of a bill, Mr. Speaker, does not by itself ensure the culture of respect that all of us are agreed is necessary in developing a healthy nation State.

And so while I stand in support, Mr. Speaker, of this very important bill, a bill of national pride and symbolism, sometimes it is just as important for us in this to consider how we best translate our actions. How we walk the talk as they say, and we on this side of the House would like to suggest that in furtherance of this National Flag Act that within the means possible and the competing claims of the government and what ever we can do, to support those worthy institutions in the state, the Cubs, the Scouts, the Guides, the Brownies, the Pathfinders, the Red Cross, all these disciplined bodies in our schools, and clubs and associations, who must give them little monies, to give meaning to their activity. It is true that in their own ways they have tried to encourage thrift and subs, to build themselves, but I can attest to the fact how much it builds character and personality, and organisation and country, when our young boys and girls can travel abroad and carry the national flag. And raise the national flag, and

stand at attention, and salute and understand that there is order and hierarchy in all we do.

Mr. Speaker, I do not recall, going through this bill, recognizing any provisions for penalties. In deed I do not know if it lies elsewhere or whether it is necessary, I bow or I give way to guidance. But I would like to know that all of us in a very small way do whatever we can to respect our national flag. In a few places in this Bill, Mr. Speaker, some of the references are perhaps ceremonial but nonetheless well intentioned. Ceremonial in the sense Mr. Speaker, that we do not have a standing Army, and it is not the tradition here that the police force or even our special services unit would carry a flag party on parade and so we are very much unaccustomed to seeing colour parties or flag parties as identified in those societies where there are standing armies. But I am not aware that there are any particular provision that excludes the police force from heightening this sense of nation respect and symbolism by all who are included on parades, perhaps amidst special services unit their own flag party that parades the national flag and exalts it as a symbol for respect. People died on battlefield for the national flag and perhaps the police force are well placed to lend a practical voice in translation to what we are trying here this evening to do. In my near 35 years of exposure to the military, or paramilitary, Mr. Speaker, I have seen many occasions on important events, funerals in particular when it is not clear as to how the national flag is folded and delivered by the police force, or the military organisation present to wife or the dependent of the deceased. This I am aware of is a particular very important drill, I know it is not an intentional oversight. Perhaps Clause 19(1) may want to capture this, because ever so often in particular on occasion of state funerals it is an important event in closing that respect for deceased. Clause 19 (1), 19 (2) speak about national flags at funerals but it does not speak to the particular question that I am raising, Honourable Prime Minister, of how the flag is delivered from the officer in charge of the burial ceremony to the, ... is it there, have you seen it? If you have then again I give way to you, and I crave your indulgence to bring it to my attention.

Not significant point but important clearly in the ceremonial context that we must do all that we must do right. That is the simply point I am making. I know it may be a little far fetched in a small society, as I have said where we do not have a standing army. But I recall as a young man many years ago when our police force would have special parades, ceremonial parades when they would do their fancy drills, and attract large number of people at the Park, do their trouping, et cetera and perhaps ever so often as a feature to add to our culture and maybe the tourism setting the front of this assembly or the back, I do not know which is it but for safety let me say the back street, between the Courthouse and the Central Market, maybe a good place to put on an occasional drill for the tourists, for locals, and others who want to come by and see our toupees display their acumen and so perhaps as a minute tourists attraction. I say it simply as something for thought to sharpen their skills but certainly to indicate that anything that could be done, Mr. Speaker, that promotes national symbolism, national respect that

we on this side of the House will be glad to support. I must confess, Mr. Speaker, that I was a little surprised that we had not before now, tightened what is referred to as flag etiquette. If this is the occasion on which it is being done, Mr. Speaker, I am happy on this side to be a part of that process.

Before I take my seat, Mr. Speaker, I raise perhaps to the Government to their protocol officers to investigate whether it is also the correct practice with respect to the national anthem that we sing only the first part. I am not so sure that is the proper procedure as well and that we should in fact sing the complete anthem on all occasions and I believe that I am correct in the observation that I am raising this evening, I see people whose opinion I value, my longstanding friend, member, Minister of Social Development knowing in acquiescence, an old Red Cross member, Minister of Tourism probably still, Rene Baptiste and former Private in the Cadet Force, Minister of Transport, Julian Francis now awake, knowing in acquiescence. [Interjection] I rather suspect so, and I can assure you that there are a lot of other things that he does when he is reflecting. Well we save, that Mr. Speaker, for another time.

Mr. Speaker, in this lighthearted moment I am glad that on this side we can identify with this bill and wish it a speedy passage through this Honourable House, much obliged.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, this is a most important piece of legislation before us today. This legislation, this measure contributes immensely to the healing of the nation. We know that the national flag in this country that has a tortuous history. The Independence flag which was flown at midnight 26<sup>th</sup> into the 27<sup>th</sup> October, 1979 is not the flag of today. We know that in 1984 the NDP administration under Sir James Mitchell set up a flag committee, Bassy Alexander I believe was the chairman, their design was rejected, the then Head of Government set about essential selecting a design which was done by someone, a Vincentian somewhere in Europe. Our flag which we now have was handed to us with very little consultation. Important point to make, yet for the first time in this country, it is now put beyond dispute that the flag of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a flag which comprises of three vertical strips of blue, gold and green and that the blue is at the hoist, the gold is at the centre and the green on the fly of the flag. And the blue and green strips are equal width, the gold or the centre strip is twice the width of either the blue or the green strip. On the centre of the gold or middle strip are three diamonds of the shade green on the fly of the flag. The three diamonds are in a 'V' formation and reflect the plural nature of the many islands of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, these gems defined St. Vincent and the Grenadines as the Gem of the Antilles. That is from Schedule two of the bill.

During the election campaign it was noised abroad by those who ought to have known better, in an attempt to keep decisiveness alive, and to bring the national flag into party

political acrimony by ascertain that if the Unity Labour Party won the elections that the ULP Government would revert to the breadfruit flag, as it was derisively called. Today, six months, a mere six months after our elections, the ULP Government has brought to this House a bill to bring closure once and for all to that mischief and to provide the healing of the nation at a symbolic level, "together now." This is a most important declaration in this Bill. The NDP administration was not able to do this because any attempt by them to set about to do this would have appeared to the majority of the population as an attempt to legalize their flag. But we have made it abundantly clear in this bill, that it is not NDP flag, it is not ULP flag, whatever the origin of the flag, however it was born, whatever slight of hand accompanied its hoisting, we declare here today, in law that this flag belongs to the nation. [Applause]. Therefore those voices, which understandably rancour for an original dispensation would face the reality that this time we have to move on. We cannot look back. We have to work on our symbols. So I think that is the first important point we have to make about this bill.

Secondly, it relates to the quite accurate observation by Senator Leacock, that this bill of ten pages, 26 sections and two schedules, no where in it would you find a penalty for doing something wrong with the flag or failing to do something which you ought to do in relation to the flag. This is a deliberate act of public policy on the part of the Government. The reason we do not feel that we ought to penalize people for not doing things right in relation to the flag. On this profound matter of national symbolism we must educate and teach the right thing to be done, not in any way to penalize. So that all the persons who have contributed to this debate, who have emphasized the issue of education, they are right on target in relation to a correct public policy on addressing the matter of the national flag.

Mr. Speaker, there is only one possible offence which could be committed and it is highly unlikely but maybe at the very margin which could be committed in relation to the flag is under general criminal offence of a common nuisance in section 282 of the Criminal Code, "any person who does an act not authorized by law or who omits to discharge a legal duty and thereby causes a common injury or danger or annoyance. So if you have a duty to do something in relation to the flag, a legal duty and it causes annoyance well then you would be guilty of an offence. But that would be stretching something in the most extreme of circumstances, but everything that is within this bill is not intended for anybody to be punished for not doing anything. We want to teach our people about the values of our national symbols including the flag and how to do things right in relation to them and in particular in relation to the flag.

Mr. Speaker, the third point I would like to make relates and I believe that children, they are not looking at television maybe listening to this debate and the teachers and I want to read clause 8 in its entity. The side note says "Flag flown at educational institutions.

“8 (1) The flag should be flown on each school day on or in the precincts of all Government and Government assisted educational institutions from 8:00 a.m. to the time at which the educational institution closes.

8 (2) On the first day of the school term the flag should be ceremonially hoisted and on the last day of school it should be ceremonially lowered.

8 (3) In the section “ceremonially” means in the presence of all students assembled and singing the National Anthem of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.”

Picture this at 8:30 or 9:00 the first morning, of the school term throughout the land the flag is hoisted in the presence of all children assembled in their uniform, beautifully turned out, the future of the nation is there singing lustily, all three verses and the chorus of the national anthem. What a magnificent sight, what magnificent hearing that would provide and uplifting to spirits of all parents, teachers, students, young and old and then when the term is closed whether it is midday on the last day of school or three o'clock on the last day of school, a similar unison is spread across the land in a manner hitherto unknown in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. This is what you are talking about a Government not just addressing real bread and butter issues but touching the soul and the very being of a nation.

Mr. Speaker, the flag is also to be flown on important Government buildings. Notice it is supposed to be flown also at our overseas missions. To be flown at the Governor General's residence at the official residence of the Prime Minister, of course as it is well known I am still at my personal residence because the official residence is yet to be completed. There is very little work that has been done over the last six months, largely because we have been placing our attention more on immediate matters for the people, but maybe the time is just about right when we should start addressing it more seriously. I must say parenthetically Mr. Speaker, I have never been on the grounds of the official residence of the Prime Minister. Because I know how the tongues of the malicious ones are in this country, that if they see me driving up there they would say that I am thirsty to move in. I have a pretty comfortable house. Praise God. But I think after six months they cannot say I am thirsty. You know I make these points because we have, and I have and you notice increasingly, I am confronting those who do not possess the level of culture because this country would not be ruled by the lowest common denominator, not at all, would not permit it. We have to lift things higher as the youths, sing in the choir, 'lift Jesus higher'. Lift things higher. Those who want to go lower and lower and lower can always do that. The flag is flown on the moment on the vehicle of the office of the Prime Minister and that of the Governor General, of course it is open for it to be flown on the vehicles of the Speaker of the House and other members of Cabinet and persons who head overseas mission. But Members of the Cabinet may not wish to do so, because we have a very unpretentious lot, in the image and likeness of the people, but with sturdy and tried and tested values. With no

malice or bad mindedness in our heart, there is a largeness of spirit, this is why we are setting about to heal the nation. You have to pay respect when the national flag is being raised or lowered. And how do you do this? Or if it is being carried in a parade or review, all persons show pay respect to it by standing to attention and facing it, and persons in civilian dress should remove their hats, and all persons in uniform should salute.” I am not a military man like Senator Leacock, but he would appreciate the precision of these provisions. [Interjection] Well I know you would do it, you come in the discipline core but some do not.

Mr. Speaker, the bill tells us that the display of the flag, the angle at which the flag is to be displayed, how you have the national flag on parade, you must display the national flag in a church if you want to and it tells you where you must put it in the church. Interestingly I went to a black church in Harlem, Betel, and that church is dedicated among other things for the praying for St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In the middle of Harlem, I went there, in the right hand corner as you face the congregation a big St. Vincent and the Grenadines flag, in the left hand corner there is one for the United States of America. When you see it, it touches your soul. So those churches who would wish to have the flag in the church there is a specification as to how it is to be flown. How you must display the national flag at public meetings, when you have the national flag at the unveiling of monuments. The national flag at funerals, time of mourning.

Mr. Speaker, it addresses the national flag on coast guards, merchant shipping vessels, ships and vessels in Government services and how the flag is to be destroyed when it is no longer fit for display. It specifically says in very simple language,

“the national flag when it is no longer fit for display should be disposed of by burning and it should not be left lying about with other unserviceable articles.”

Do not want to see the flag with ‘Busta’ empties, with pampers thrown about used or unused pampers, we know how it happens with some people in this country, and they have their national flag among them. We are not going to have that. But we are not legislating a penalty, we are educating, training people about this matter.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of Tourism said we are addressing a number of issues relating to symbols and they relate to pride. And nationalism and this is a process which we have begun from the very first meeting of this House of Assembly. Look around here, it is not yet in a perfect shape but it is clean, we have new carpets on which the Speaker will come to the House and upon which the mace will be carried by the Sergeant-at-Arms and the heads of State of whom we have had from our first native Governor to our Governors General, all since Independence, Sir Sydney, Sir David, Sir Lambert and Sir Charles.

Mr. Speaker, but the dignity which we seek to build goes beyond the mere symbols, because in very symbols there is essence. When we clean the city that is part of building dignity in our land. You want to tell me those who complain that we are so uncreative in this country that we cannot earn in cleanliness, we have to earn it in untidiness, uh? Are we human beings belonging to a civilization which possesses a nobility; these and other things Mr. Speaker, we are addressing and before the House on the Order Paper, there is the OAS Convention on Corruption which would add to people's confidence in our institutions and our symbols and in themselves as a people. Today we had the second reading on three important holidays, not new holidays but holidays' assigned specific dates for their historical significance. One can look at this Government and see a golden tread of consistence. We are not swiping outside of our off stumps, vapping, no. We are doing our job with elegance and with certainty, with a focus direction. I am very pleased to see that the Opposition is falling in line fully with this bill and I applaud them but history will record and do not intend to be partisan here, that for 17 years the NDP administration made very scant respect to these important symbols and to build them. It was like anything to be done was done. And I am sure that a disciplined person like Senator Leacock on many a day, must have stood askance with anxiety and pain at the way in which his leaders dealt very cavalierly with the symbolism of the nation. Well those days are now over [Applause]. No longer the crudities that I, as Prime Minister, I make or unmake Governors General that kind of pomposity and arrogance and commandism, those are things of the past. Yet there are some who find it difficult to escape the shadows of such commandism, of such arrogance and the incubus of 'don't-care-ism' the evil spirit of don't care-ism. Those things no longer under this administration. We will clean what we have to clean because the people give us a mandate; whether it is streets of Kingstown, the corruption at Ottley Hall or any where else and to dust off and clean and polish and uplift the symbolism of the nation. We will do those things - this Government and this Prime Minister, so help me God. I am obliged.

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

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, I can feel the emotion those members who debated this very important measure. I feel proud that we all can say that we want to be in a country that is respected and to be proud to be a Vincentian. You know, I have always taken umbrage sometimes, maybe I am wrong because I said always and then I said sometimes. But I sometimes taken umbrage when people say they do not like Barbadians and more often than not they do not like Barbadians because they are tremendously proud of Barbados and would do anything they can to see that Barbados improve even at the expense of others and sometimes, I say if we were in the same position and had the same attitude we would do the same thing. Because if Barbados is good then Barbadians would be good. I think we need to have a pride, a great pride

in being Vincentians. Too much laxity, immorality, not covertly; too much of it is accepted by the general public.

The expletives, the dirty words that are spoken as a matter of form. Whether they are school children, whether they are women, or whether they are old people. It seems to be of no consequence now to the public. But let me send a word of warning. And I have already started to put measures in place to deal one with noise pollution, and I want the van drivers to understand what I am saying because despite the fact that the law is there, I have stood up and seen policemen around and the noise is deafening but they would do nothing about it, as a matter of fact I had to ask one policeman not too long ago if he is deaf? Possibly he was. I have seen and had to ask certain person, there are school children around, why these four letter words, and even worst than the four letter words. Well we intend to deal with this. You know when you, as the old saying goes that you give an inch you take an 'L'. Let me also give warning to those vendors who sell alcohol without licenses that we intend to deal with it, because I can understand that most sometimes a lot of the crime that is committed are from people who are innervated and who had bought alcohol from sources that do not even have the license to sell alcohol and so we intend to deal with it and I want to throw out the warning that those people with their ice boxes, I have no problem with them selling ju-c, I have no problem with them selling malt but there is a law that says if you want to sell or trade in alcohol you must have a license and we intend to ensure that if you are going to do it you must have a license. So this is just a warning, Mr. Speaker. We are not petty as the Honourable Prime Minister says, we still have some members of the public who are telling us that we must change back the flag. But you cannot continue to be going right one day and then go left the next day and the next administration in the next 40 years or so when they come in would want to change it back again. We feel that the flag is important. It is a symbol of significance.

As the Honourable Prime Minister said there are no penalties in this piece of legislation because it is not supposed to be punitive. It is a measure where we would first of all try to educate the people and we would start from the schools if that is what is necessary. We are dealing with the flag but the highest institution in the land is Parliament, and you cannot see one little flag around even here. The Courts downstairs there is no flag there flying to show the flag of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. When this bill is passed we would have to ask the Prime Minister who is Minister of Finance for money so that we can get flags made.

Now, on session 22 I think it is, there are some questions raised where you would see prohibitions there, in fact it should be exemptions when we go to the committee of the whole House we would correct this, but you would notice that on 22 (d), the question has been raised that the flag should not be printed or otherwise impressed on paper, boxes, napkins or whatever it is but as the marginal line says its exemptions, it does not mean that if it is there and you have the authority or the permission of the Minister,

well if you just don't want to print the flag so that you make it commercial and make money from it we have no problem in getting permission for school children for instance to learn to make the flag, for them to draw it in their books and so on. So I do not think anyone should have any problems as far as that is concerned.

Mr. Speaker, this is only one of a few other measures that we are bringing here. I just want to correct one little thing that was said. I was given the praise for legislation, well I could be given the praise for bringing it to the House but I think the Honourable Minister of Tourism is the one, you would not know this so let me just state it clearly that she is the one who has always been behind this and should be the one to get the praise; getting the legislation and getting legislation into the area that it is now.

Mr. Speaker, I thank all those members who have spoken and I can see that we are all, according to the lawyers, ad diadem on this one, and I know, if I may say so will have an easy passage. There are few little errors that we would have to correct, for instance likes the marginal note, edition and exemption, and there are some other grammatical errors and so on. Mr. Speaker, I now move that the House resolves itself into a committee of the whole House to consider this bill clause by clause.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I beg to second the motion, Mr. Speaker.

*Question put and agreed to.*

*House went into Committee.*

*House resumed.*

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

## **MARITIME SECURITY BILL 2001**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I beg to move that House do suspended for an half an hour for members convenience.

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

*Question put and agreed to.*

**SUSPENSION OF SITTING 6:00 p.m.**

**RESUMPTION OF SITTING 6:35 p.m.**

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the first reading and introduction of a bill to give effect to the Convention for the suppression of unlawful acts against the safety of Maritime Navigation, 1988 and the protocol for the suppression of unlawful acts against the safety of fixed platforms located on the

continental shelf 1988 which supplements that convention and for purposes connected therewith.

Mr. Speaker, the objects and reasons are, the bill seeks to implement the suppression of unlawful acts against the safety of Maritime Navigation 1988 and the protocol for the suppression of unlawful Acts against the safety of fixed platforms located on the continental shelf, 1988 which St. Vincent and the Grenadines is joining shortly by depositing the succession with the Secretary General of IMO.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Second the motion, Mr. Speaker.

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

### **PROTECTION OF AIRCRAFTS AND AIRPORTS BILL 2001**

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the first reading of a bill for an Act to provide for the implementation of the provisions of the convention for the suppression of unlawful Acts against the safety of civil aviation, 1971 and the protocol for the suppression of unlawful acts at airports serving international civil aviation 1998 and for purposes connected therewith.

Mr. Speaker, the objects and reasons of the Bill, St. Vincent and the Grenadines became a party to the 1971 Montreal Convention for the suppression of unlawful acts against the safety of civil aviation by deposition, our accession to that convention on November 29<sup>th</sup> 1991 but no implementing legislation has so far been enacted to make the Acts which constitute an offence under that convention punishable as criminal offence under our law and to confer jurisdiction on our courts to try persons committing such offences in all the circumstances as they find by that Convention.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Second the motion, Mr. Speaker.

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

### **BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS INCORPORATION (REPEAL) BILL 2001.**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Members I wish to move the second reading of an Act to repeal the Brothers of the Christian Schools Incorporation Act 1969 No. 35 of 1969.

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

**FOUNTAIN GOSPEL HALL (SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES)  
INCORPORATION BILL 2001.**

*Bill read a second time.*

**THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES BILL 2001.**

*Bill read a second time.*

**THE KINGSTOWN BAPTIST CHURCH OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES  
BILL 2001.**

*Bill read a second time.*

**THE LIGHT OF TRUTH CHURCH OF GOD BILL 2001.**

*Bill read a second time.*

**LIVING WATERS MINISTRIES SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES  
INCORPORATION BILL 2001.**

*Bill read a first time.*

**THE WELLS OF LIVING WATERS CHURCH SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES  
INCORPORATION BILL 2001.**

*Bill read a first time.*

**APPOSTOLIC DELIVERANCE CHURCH SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES  
INCORPORATION BILL 2001.**

*Bill read a first time.*

**BETHANY BAPTIST CHURCH (SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES)  
INCORPORATION BILL 2001** was introduced and read for the first time.

**HALIBETHIAN CHURCH OF THE EPIPHANY (SAINT VINCENT AND THE  
GRENADINES) INCORPORATION BILL 2001** was introduced and read for the first  
time.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker with respect of all the private bills for second reading No. 16 to 20 on the Order Paper, setting up the select committees, I suggest the Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs, the Honourable Girlyn Miguel as Chairperson, the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Culture, the Honourable Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Senator George. I think there are four persons on this side, I do not know if the Leader of the Opposition likes to name someone. Well I think he would name someone.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** I wish to nominate Senator Shallow.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I think I ought to say to you Mr. Speaker, and the Honourable Members in relation to the matters which have been deferred I should indicate simply the following, the National Lotteries Bill is to have its second reading but it is being looked at by a number of other groups in the society and consultation is further going on because that is an important bill. We are hoping to have that concluded certainly before the ending of this year. Item 2 the Regional Security System Bill 2001, the second reading, as a consequence of the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> in the United States of America, and given the meetings which we have been having with a number of persons responsible for security in the Caribbean and in the hemisphere it will be necessary to look at that particular bill again in many respects or to look at it in conjunction with something else. Items 3 and 4 I have spoken about hitherto on the first day, Mr. Speaker, those are at select committees. The National Parks Bill, No. 5 and the Evasion of Stamp duty bill they have been sent to respective entities to give further comments. And in relation to item 12 the Deed of Rectification Bill, Mr. Speaker, I should report as I indicate to the Leader of the Opposition, the deeds which have been registered in relation to some of the lands at Diamond Dairy, the entity which sought to convey the land had no legal authority to convey. And then on further research some of those listed in the schedule to persons who have received deeds it is found that one or two persons have deposited monies in relation to those same parcels of land. And there are other problems out there, so Cabinet has taken the decision in principle last Wednesday to set up a Commission of Inquiry and the Attorney General is in the process drafting the terms of reference so we can have an inquiry which sought out the mess the Government has bequeathed so that is the reason for the deferral of that particular bill, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, and you would no doubt, would speak to it, but as leader of the House should mention that what is being suggested tomorrow, and I had the consultation with you Mr. Speaker, and also the same question which you have raised, Mr. Speaker, have been raised by the Leader of the Opposition, I concur entirely, that tomorrow when Dr. Hospitalis comes to this Honourable House to address it, it would be an address to Parliamentarians in the parliamentary building but it would not be formally convened as a sitting of the House, but the broadcast will be carried live. Dr. Hospitalis would be addressing the question of HIV/AIDS and a particular programme have been organized through the Ministry of Health and the Office of the Speaker of the House of Assembly. And by agreement we commence at 8:30 a.m. so we can conclude the matter hopefully at 10:00 a.m., 10:30 a.m. the latest, that is the idea. You may wish to say something about that additional before I move the adjournment.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** As I was suggesting to the Minister of Health that we try and get as many persons from the general public here tomorrow to listen to those addresses and discussions on those matters because I think it is of vital importance that the nation be informed on such a important matter. We would also like to urge

every Member of Parliament to try and make every effort to attend because again as representatives I am sure that you would also like be a part of this so that you can assist your various constituency in guiding and directing them in relation to the matter. Tomorrow as I said we are going to start at 8:30 and I going to be the Chairman for that meeting and again I expect to see all of us there. Thank you, very much.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I am going to request a move, a suspension of the house until Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> of this Month at 10:00 a.m. and what we are hoping Mr. Speaker, is that we will have – hopefully we conclude the debate on the motion of constitutional reform and hopefully by then given the expressions of today we would have the select committee on the public holidays concluded so we can have that issue also addressed. I accordingly Mr. Speaker, beg to move the suspension of the House until Wednesday 31<sup>st</sup> October 2001 at 10:00 a.m.

**HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE:** Second the motion, Mr. Speaker.

*House adjourned accordingly at 6:50 p.m.*