

No. 5

THURSDAY

First Session

19th July, 2001

Seventh Parliament

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

THE

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)**

ADVANCE COPY

OFFICIAL REPORT

CONTENTS

Thursday 19th July, 2001

Prayers	6
Obituaries	6
Minutes	15
Statement by the Honourable Prime Minister	15
Petitions	17
Papers	20

Questions	22
Motion	41
Supplementary Estimates 2001	41
Dr. the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves	41
Honourable Arnhim Eustace	57
Honourable Louis Straker	67
Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday	76
Honourable Vincent Beache	84
Honourable Conrad Sayers	90
Honourable Montgomery Daniel	95
Honourable Michael Browne	99
Adjournment	109

THE

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FIFTH 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.

SEVENTH SITTING

19th July, 2001

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

The Honourable House of Assembly met at 10.00 a.m. in the Assembly Chamber, Court House, Kingstown.

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER IN THE CHAIR

Honourable Hendrick Alexander

Present

MEMBERS OF CABINET

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

Dr. The Honourable Ralph Gonsalves

Member for North Central Windward

Attorney General
Honourable Judith Jones-Morgan

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

Honourable Louis Straker

Member for Central Leeward

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

Member for South Windward

Minister of Education, Youth and Sports
Honourable Michael Browne

Member for West St. George

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

Member for Marriaqua

Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries
Honourable Selmon Walters

Member for South Central
Windward

Minister of Health and the Environment
Honourable Dr. Douglas Slater

Member for South Leeward

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

Member for North Leeward

Minister of Tourism and Culture
Honourable Rene Baptist

Member for West Kingstown

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

Member for East St. George

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

Member for North Windward

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

Member for Central Kingstown

Minister of Transport, Works and Housing
Honourable Julian Francis

Government Senator

Honourable Edwin Snagg

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

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE

Honourable Arnhim Eustace	Member for East Kingstown/ Leader of the Opposition
Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday	Member for Northern Grenadines
Honourable Terrance Ollivierre	Member for Southern Grenadines
Honourable Juliet George	Government Senator
Honourable Andrea Young	Government Senator/Deputy Speaker
Honourable Gerard Shallow	Opposition Senator

ABSENT

Honourable Joseph Burns Bonadie	Opposition Senator
---------------------------------	--------------------

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 19TH JULY 2001

PRAYERS

Mr. Speaker, read the Prayers of the House.

OBITUARIES

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute and to honour the memory of a great Vincentian, Alban 'Smiles' Gonsalves, who was deceased on July 7th 2001. Mr. Speaker, I have known, - I have through the years affectionately called him 'Smiles' for a very long time. Not through my dear friend and colleague the Prime Minister, but through an elder brother Thoral 'Bruds' Gonsalves, my classmate at Emmanuel High School and my friend throughout the years. I used to hang around the bus of which he was the owner, I believe at that time he had two, maybe in succession, and I recall the names as 'Island Monarch' and 'Ocean Monarch' and they were the old wooden buses that parked where the Vegetable Market is now built.

I used to talk to Mr. Gonsalves, 'Smiles', and I found him to be a very friendly man, cool, quiet, wise in counsel, folksy, a friend of young people, as well as older ones. 'Smiles,' from his story, was born in humble circumstances, not privileged to receive the kind of education that those who had resources would have given to their children, nevertheless, he was a man who was always contented to work hard and through thrift laid the foundation for a good life, which he enjoyed in his sunset years, and through which he was able to educate his children and make them productive citizens in this country as well as creating a life, with a good measure of ease and comfort, for his beloved wife Mrs. Theresa Gonsalves.

'Smiles' was a man who knew adversity, had his share of trials and tribulations, but he also knew prosperity, because through his hard work, he was able to accumulate some measure of wealth and became an outstanding landowner in his community. He has done well to contribute to the well being of his family, to instill in them values that would stand them for the years to come, and virtues that would make them good citizens of this country. He was an institution in the Village of Colonaire and the surrounding communities, for he built his house at the fork where you must take the road to go up to the major villages of Park Hill and South Rivers, so everybody knew 'Smiles', and his home was a landmark that if you ever to get to Colonaire and you didn't know how

to get to Park Hill or South Rivers, they would tell you just turn around where 'Smiles' lived. He was easy going, unflappable, mixed easily with the rich and the poor, with the famous and the ordinary, or the common folk. He has made a great contribution to this country in his own quiet way, not only through his productive efforts, in his conjugal relationships with his wife, but also in his labours as a farmer and entrepreneur, a bus owner and driver, a shopkeeper, an estate supervisor, and a landowner. His several children are making contributions in various spheres of life, and I do not wish to underestimate their contributions if I should single out his great contribution to this country in the person of our esteemed Prime Minister. I suppose that our Prime Minister has gotten his indomitable will and spirit from his father, because the Prime Minister is not a quitter in the face of difficulties and adversities, and so was 'Smiles'. Our Prime Minister is an affable, congenial person who can sit easily under a breadfruit tree and roast breadfruit with the common folk or sit at table with her majesty the Queen, and conduct himself with dignity, grace, and pride, and so was 'Smiles'. Whatever values and virtues we see in our Prime Minister, a fighter not only for his own cause, but for the causes of those who are underprivileged and for those who do not have a voice and are most vulnerable, this is the man we have as Prime Minister and he has inherited those virtues from his father.

To the grandchildren, to the children, to Mrs. Theresa Francis Gonsalves, my dear friend, and I believe that I am one of the few persons who still called her by her maiden name, I want to wish you God's grace, his comfort and his consolation as you mourn the loss of a man who has been a husband, a father, a grandfather, a good provider. It is not too often that you see children cry, especially male children when their father is deceased. It takes a special kind of relationship, a special kind of bonding, that when your father reached the age, of 86 even though you know he had a good turn at the bat, that you would shed tears of the memories. Tears, because you are going to miss his wise counsel, to share with him the smiles and the laughter that you have grown accustomed to through the years, so I sympathize with all the children when they shed tears for 'Smiles', but be reassured that he has gone to a place of rest and one day you would be reunited with him, all of you would be reunited in that better land where God would wipe away all tears from our eyes. May he, Alban 'Smiles' Gonsalves rest in peace, and may the family be comforted and be consoled through the grace and the strength which God would provide for them.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I also rise to join the Deputy Prime Minister in paying tribute to Alban Gonsalves, better known as 'Smiles'. I did not know Mr. Gonsalves very well, I think I only met him on two occasions both of those a very long time ago. But I know of him, and at the funeral last Sunday, Mr. Speaker, I got to listening to the Prime Minister deliver the eulogy, I got a greater appreciation for his contribution to family and country.

Mr. Speaker, all of us know that people have to die, and all of us, whatever our deep religious convictions, find difficulty in dealing with death, I am no exception to that, Mr. Speaker, because while in the true Christian tradition we should be looking at the celebration of a life well lived, but when the time actually comes and one has to deal with the situation I find it quite difficult. And I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that the family of Mr. Gonsalves, and looking at their countenances at the funeral, Mr. Speaker, had that same difficulty, the sadness of losing a loved one was edged on their faces, and whatever nice words we may find, Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to find consolation and only time is a healer in these matters.

Mr. Alban Gonsalves rose from poverty through the sweat and the toil of his own hands and his own mind, in a society, Mr. Speaker, in which it is often difficult to rise to the top. But he worked hard, and he is a part of a breed of our country which I believe, Mr. Speaker, is a dying breed. A breed, which is prepared, Mr. Speaker, to make great sacrifices, to work very hard to ensure that they were able to provide for their family and to make a contribution to our country.

One may well ask the question, Mr. Speaker, as to what would have happened if he was just starting out in this new age of technology, this new age of great information access, what would he have turned out to be. None of us can really tell, Mr. Speaker, but perhaps we can surmise because he has demonstrated a work ethic and an attitude which, very often, Mr. Speaker, is lacking in our society today, but which is critical for the future development of our country. In that context therefore, Mr. Speaker, I pay this tribute on behalf of myself and my family and also the New Democratic Party.

Mr. Speaker, I think nothing can better sum up the feelings of his family than the words that were printed at the back of the leaflet which were dispatched and used at the funeral service. And I wish, Mr. Speaker, just to read a few of those words, under the heading "Alban D. Gonsalves, 'Smiles'". And this is in fact a tribute from his family. And I quote:

"We will miss our great patriarch, his guidance, his strength and his love, he was the solid rock on which our family was built, we take comfort in knowing our beloved daddy is now safe with Jesus, still watching,

guiding and loving his family that meant everything to him.”

Mr. Speaker, I think those words sum up the situation very well. At this time I wish to express to his wife, to the Honourable Prime Minister, and other members of the family our sincerest condolences, and may his soul rest in peace.

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I think it would be very remiss of me if I am not to say a few words in tribute to a man whom I have known all my life. I was born in the little village of South Rivers which forms the apex of a triangle between Colonaire and Byrea. Alban ‘Smiles’ Gonsalves was born in Byrea and later on went to live in Colonaire. At the funeral, from the eulogy and otherwise, people would know of the greatness of this man. But there are some hidden things that they would not know anything about. Some people felt he was not talkative. And he was not talkative, but he was a man whom, if he liked you, and on the rare occasion would offer sound advice, which he had given to me many times. I knew he agonized when the Honourable Prime Minister and I contested against each other the North Central Windward seat. On occasions he would meet me and say, “Why you all have to fight with each other, can’t you work something out?” As it happens something did work out to the benefit, not only of both of us, but to the country as a whole. And I am sure that he was a happy man when that happened. ‘Smiles’ got the name ‘Smiles’ because, I don’t think anyone, or at least I have never seen him angry, or at least if he was angry he was still smiling. But I don’t think one should have been fooled by that, his character was such that he was soft, he was a man of very strong convictions in what he believed in, would always fight to ensure that those beliefs were accepted or adhered to.

I remember as a boy when somebody broke into his house at Colonaire, adjunct to the one that he has there, that one was still there, and stole, I don’t know even know if Smiles himself knew how much money, but well in excess of \$30,000 which at that time was maybe equivalent to \$1 million now, and when everybody was making cry and saying, ‘But who can do this to this man, a man who was so kind, who gave of everything he has ...,’ and he smiled and he said, ‘Well we might catch the person, but if we don’t catch the person the money is not going to be of any great benefit.’ And he started again and worked his way as a trafficker to start with, and at other areas to become what he has become. And as the Honourable Leader of the Opposition said, a breed of men who believed in hard work, and that you must work hard for what you need and that you have to make sacrifices. We live in a different age and this seems to be more the exception than the rule. I knew ‘Smiles’ very well and I know the communities of Byrea, Park Hill, Colonaire, South Rivers, Diamonds would have a lot to thank him for, because a lot of the school children whom he transported to and from school, their parents at times were unable to pay, but that did not stop him from

carrying those children to school so that they can receive adequate, maybe appropriate education.

I think he has done a great service to this country and he has made a great contribution, it might not be seen written in books, but to come from a worker, maybe forty cents per day, to be able to work hard through thrift and careful management of his business to save money so that he could come to educate during this time all of his children, and to save money to become, I am not saying a millionaire, but at least by our standards fairly well off, had to take a lot of grit, a lot of determination and a lot of hard work. I think he is a shining example of what hard work can do and those of us who want to get rich over night might very well - I hope they have listened to the eulogy as expounded by the Honourable Prime Minister, who at one time I think could not have been able to carry on, the dept of his feelings was so great but that, we should take an example and try to do as 'Smiles' has done. To emulate him and if we do this I am sure that St. Vincent and the Grenadines and all of us would be better, and better persons through all of this.

Mr. Speaker, to all the family, to 'Bruds' whom I have known from a long time, since I was a child, and to all the others, I wish them well, I know that they have already made their mark, they have already laid the foundation and to Mother Theresa, I know that she has the strength and the will to bear up and will continue to do what is right and what is good, not only for his children, but for the community at large. May his soul rest in peace. Thank you.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Mr. Speaker, it is not normal that a member of the family would join in obituaries, but I am not a member of the immediate family, but 'Smiles' was my uncle. Now, when I say immediate family, the immediate family sitting across there, his kids, his wife, and I want to be very brief on it. Uncle Alban was my favorite uncle on my mother's side, having known him longest out of all the uncles. In my youth, my little boy days in Park Hill and Colonarie, I spent a lot of time down at his house. I grew up with the kids, Judy, Annette, Biggie, Ashly, Ralph was a little bit older then, but I enjoyed my boyhood days around 'T-T' and 'Smiles'. 'T-T' is the home name and village name for Auntie Theresa.

Smiles lived a long and fruitful life. Everybody knows he was a hard worker, a very friendly person. Very helpful person, and as the Leader of the Opposition said if we were to get more of this stock within the population today, St. Vincent would be a better place. But unfortunately the likes of 'Smiles', seem to be a dying breed. I think 'Smiles' has lived such a good life, that the Lord blessed him, and the Lord smiled upon him in two ways. The Bible says we are given three scores and ten, 'Smiles' had sixteen years over time, and he thoroughly enjoyed them, suffered in the end while he was in the hospital, with illness and so on, but at least he enjoyed sixteen additional years than what the Bible states, and the Lord promised to us, and I believe that was

because of his good works on earth. The second thing I think the Lord smiled upon 'Smiles' with, was to keep him alive to see the fruits of his son come to reality. I think in the political history of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, it is the first time, that an individual who has become Prime Minister, became Prime Minister when his father was still alive. It is not a feat of the present Prime Minister, but I want to record that as the Lord realising that 'Smiles' should stay here to see his son become Prime Minister of this country. And I think his son, Dr. the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves, our present Prime Minister, has a lot of the attributes of his father, and a lot of his mother. A lot has been said of Smiles because he is the one who died, but 'T-T' is still alive, and the strength of Smiles that was exhibited over the years was ably supported by that of Auntie Theresa and I think that we should also be saying very good things about her.

I know it is not easy when your favourite – or your dad passes away, I am fortunate that both my parents are still alive, and I could understand the sorrow and the grief that exists within the hearts and souls of members sitting with us here today. Bros unfortunately is not here, but I want to extend from the rest of the extended family our deepest sympathies and condolences to those with us here today. And to wish you God speed. Thank you, very much.

HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE: Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker, I wish to join in the expressions made by the preceding three speakers in relation to Smiles.

I stand to speak about, whose passing shocked a number of us yesterday, Mr. Hugh Drakes. Some of my colleagues are now hearing for the first time. Yes, we heard the announcement on the air yesterday morning, some of us, and it was a bit shattering for some of us who have known him over the years, the shock of it, we had only seen him a few days prior to that on the road, and he seemed quite healthy and fit for another ten or fifteen years. But we will remember him in two major capacities, and in two disciplines. In the area as an educator, and more specifically as a mathematician and as a mathematics teacher. And secondly in the discipline of sports in his capacity as a cricket documentalist and scorer. Both of those responsibilities come under the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports so, I think it is appropriate that we pay some tribute to Mr. Hugh Drakes. And I wouldn't be long, because we have been under this area of Obituaries for some time, but I think it is fitting that we acknowledge his profound contribution to mathematics in this country. In a number of ways when Hugh Drakes came to this country and started to teach mathematics, he was paddling up the creek, because the history of the educational system from the 1830's upwards has been a history where the arts dominated the educational system and where Maths and Sciences were given lesser places. And it is against that backdrop that his contribution has to be appreciated, that he was literally going against the tide educationally, and we still today still inherit some of that difficulty from that educational legacy, but we have to acknowledge within that frame, the contribution of Hugh Drakes. He not only taught mathematics to a large a number of people in and out of the formal system, but he

engendered a love for mathematics a result of which has produced a number of the modern day mathematicians and Maths teachers, and we must thank him for that important contribution to education in this country.

In the realm of sports, in his quiet way, he was a solid back bone of documentation of cricket in this country, through statistics and scoring, and we want to again thank him for that solid contribution without fanfare, and I share with his scoring cricket colleague Bobby Fraser, the words of his contribution to cricket and he had noted that Hugh Drakes had come up with a system of scoring that aided them as young scorers in increasing the accuracy of their work. We will miss him, I am not sure when his funeral is going to be. But we hope that we could have a strong representation of educators and other people from the community who would have passed through his hands. This side of the House and I am sure the entire House would like to send their condolences to his family. And we hope his soul rests in peace. Thank you.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER; Mr. Speaker, I would crave your indulgence, to say something about a man whom I have known for many years, Mr. Hugh Drakes. I am shocked to hear of his passing. Hugh Drakes came from Barbados as a young man and met me at the Emmanuel High School, that was his first job, having been brought here by a man whose memory I revered, Dr. John Pamenos Eustace. I never thought he would hang around St. Vincent for that long, but he taught me for a number of years, and I was just going through some papers, an end of the year exam I had in 1959 and he was the Maths teacher at the Emmanuel High School. I wouldn't say what my grade was, but I was first in the class. He has really made a tremendous contribution to the Emmanuel High School, filling a great need for a Maths teacher, staying there permanently, well I shouldn't say permanently, for the years that I was there, I left him at the Emmanuel High School and learnt that he subsequently moved on to the Grammar School. He knew his math, not only was he a mathematician, but he was a devout Christian, he took the devotion on mornings when we gathered in the Assembly Hall. He engaged in debates, for we used to have debates in Emmanuel High School not only among the students, but among the staff, and I recall he was on one side and Doc Eustace on the other side, and if I remember correctly and that was in the '50's the topic was "The Victories of Peace, are Greater than the Victories of War", he made a good presentation, but the 'Doc' won the debate.

Since my return here, he has been a great source of inspiration and encouragement and counsel to me. As a matter of fact I even mentioned his name to sit on one of the Boards because I thought he could make such a great contribution in retirement to this country. But when I saw him subsequently, he said, "Listen I am not looking for anything now, I just want to relax and enjoy myself, I have made a contribution already and I just want to feel relaxed at home".

I know of his contribution in the matter of cricket scoring, he and Bobby Fraser, for we discussed that at times, but certainly, it seemed as if I had seen him just last week and usually refer to him when I see him as 'Professor', it may be I am a little bit biased, but I thought he was the greatest mathematician alive at that time, and I am really saddened to hear of his passing so suddenly. He has become one of us, having left his home to sojourn here, showed his love for this country, contributed most of his youthful and later years to this country. I think there are many Vincentians, including my dear friend 'Bruds' Gonsalves who owe him a debt of gratitude for his labours and his contributions to us. I certainly would want to pay my last respects whenever the funeral, but I am shocked at his passing. I don't know that he has any relatives here, since he is from Barbados, but certainly I would want to wish his relatives in Barbados my deepest sympathy and condolences.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay my respects as well to Mr. Drakes, I didn't know him very well but I remember that in the two years that I spent at Grammar School, he was a teacher there at the time and though he never taught me, and in fact in all the years that I was there I may have spoken to him maybe once or twice. He was one of the few teachers in all the years since I have left that institution that I still remember, because I have heard many stories about him from the people, from the colleagues and friends I have had while I was at the school which indicated the impact that he had on the lives of the people whom he taught. I remember him as a very quiet person. The stories that were told about him were that he was a serious person, his demeanour not inconsistent with the discipline which he taught, with seriousness and the discipline required in the study of mathematics. Having had trouble with that discipline myself I suppose I had a greater respect for his contribution as a teacher, because I always admired anyone who could do something that I always found difficult to do.

So, it is with great sadness that I now hear of his passing, and having crossed his path in those years past and it would seem in such superficial manner but yet having such an impact, that I did think of him, quite frankly over the years when I was in Canada, as a teacher at the Grammar School, and I didn't remember all of them but I did remember Drakes, and that is the only name I knew him by at the time.

So on behalf of the members on this side, I wish to express our condolences to the family and to recognize the contribution that Mr. Drakes made to the profession of teaching and particularly in the discipline of mathematics. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Mr. Speaker, I know that we have been here for a long period, but I too want to rise and pay my respects to Mr. Drakes. The announcement by the Honourable Minister of Education, was the first time I was hearing of his passing. I would think, though I would want to pay respects in my capacity as past president of the Parent Teachers Association of the St. Vincent

Grammar School, and also a present and past Grammar School student, and we have quite a lot of them on both sides of the House and the Gallery, and I want to say that we will miss Mr. Drakes, and as the previous Speakers have said, he has contributed tremendously to the development of many of us including myself who was taught mathematics and was encouraged during my years at Grammar School and even after. In fact, I last spoke to him about two weeks ago and he was brimming with health, at least apparently, and I commented to him, "Whatever you are doing keep on doing it, because you look very well". Well, that's how life is.

But I want to say I wish his relatives, I think he does have some relatives here, and those overseas all the very best and that he will rest in peace. I thank you.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I would like to join those Honourable Members who have paid tribute to Mr. Drakes, and I am sure that the entire House will join the sentiments expressed. And on behalf of the Government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, I extend to his family our profound condolences.

I would like very much to thank all the Honourable Members on behalf of my family, and on my own behalf for the tributes paid here today to my father. I want to use this opportunity too, Mr. Speaker, to thank the dozens of persons who have telephoned my mother and other members of the family and me, to express their sympathy and to all those who have sent letters, cards, and those who attended the funeral, I want to thank you very much, I would never forget your kindness to me and my family.

I think it is fitting in expressing thanks to read just the first verse of a poem given to me this morning by a twenty year old public servant, a young lady, who apparently came to my office yesterday, but was unable to see me, and she waited until early this morning, she came early this morning and its beautifully designed, one of her colleagues designed it for her and there are five verses, but I would only read the first one and I would want to thank her very much and it is entitled "Looking from the Sky Above"

**"I see the trace of your tears,
Let my gift of love be the power that calms your fears,
I see the pain you think will never pass,
But believe me in time it will never last.'**

I am sure that my mother will be given a transcript of the proceedings, the kind expressions here today. I want to thank you all very, very, much. It has moved me very deeply. Thank you.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Mr. Speaker, I think it might be appropriate at this time, since some family members have expressed their desire to leave at the end of the tributes that we adjourn for a period of five minutes in order to, since there are so many, to give them a chance to make their exist from the Chamber, for those who would like to leave, because I know Mother Theresa has expressed the desire of going back to her home.

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

***Question put and agreed to.
House suspended at 10:55 a.m.
House resumed at 11:01 a.m.***

MINUTES

The Minutes of the Sittings held on the 26th June 2001 and 29th June 2001, copies of which had been circulated previously, were taken as read and were confirmed.

STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE PRIME MINISTER

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable members, I would wish to be brief. I want to speak on the issue of the Caribbean Court of Justice and the position of Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines as taken at recently concluded Heads of Government conference of the Caribbean Community in the Bahamas, which ran from July the 3rd to July the 6th inclusive. I rise to make this statement, Mr. Speaker, for two reasons, (a) matter is sufficiently fundamental to inform the Parliament of this country of the position of the Government which was taken there and secondly to hopefully once and for all clear up a misunderstanding in a second of the regional media regarding the position taken by the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

As is well known, Mr. Speaker, for those who have been following the tortuous process, important one never the less of the amendment of the Treaty of Chagaramus since 1973 which brought in the Caribbean community and the integration into that amended treaty, of all the protocols, more particularly those regarding the establishment of the Caribbean Single Market and economy as one exercise, and a related though separate exercise has been that concerning the agreement to establish the Caribbean Court of Justice. Within the Agreement to establish the Caribbean Court of Justice, there are two jurisdictions, one the original jurisdiction of the Court which will concern itself with matters arise out of the interpretation of the Treaty or conflicts which may emerge through the operation of the single market and economy, those conflicts not only concerning States but individuals and the original jurisdiction of

the Caribbean Court of Justice addresses the Treaty of Chagaramus as amended, and all the protocols integrated therein in relation to the Caribbean Single Market and economy and there is in the agreement of the CCJ another jurisdiction, the Appellate Jurisdiction, that is to have final Court of Appeal for all matters established for the signatory countries and those which incorporate that particular final Court of Appeal into their domestic law. The establishment of a final Court of Appeal in the Caribbean Court of Justice would in our case necessitate the abolition of the Privy Council. Inside of the agreement establishing the CCJ, the Caribbean Court of Justice there is Article 39, which permits a signatory to the Caribbean Court of Justice to enter a reservation in relation to Article 25, Article 25 carries the provisions regarding the establishment of the CCJ in its Appellate Jurisdiction. On the fourth of July I informed the Heads of Government on behalf of the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines that the Government intends to enter a reservation under Article 39 in respect of Article 25, in short we would adopt the original jurisdiction of the Court but not its Appellate Jurisdiction.

I did in fact prepare a notice of our intention to enter a reservation and that document was drafted with the assistance of persons at the CARICOM Secretariat, and on July the fourth at a press conference in the Bahamas I read that intention to enter the reservation in relation to Article 25, the Appellate Jurisdiction. It turned out however, that it was not necessary for me to sign the CCJ agreement with the reservation simply because it was felt that since I had announced the reservation that it was not in the interest of all matters related to CARICOM for me to actually sign the agreement for the CCJ, so the agreement has not been signed by the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in relation to the Caribbean Court of Justice. What the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines has signed is the amended Treaty of Chagaramus incorporating all the protocols in an integrated manner but those protocols have nothing to do with the CCJ in its Appellate Jurisdiction, only in respect of its original jurisdiction, but out of an abundance of caution I nevertheless filed the intention to enter the reservation for anytime the agreement is brought before me to be signed in respect of the CCJ.

I think that this matter needs the clarification which I have given here because of conflicting reports in the news media. In the one sense they reported accurately in the region that I have said that I was entering the reservation, they reported that on the fourth, but I understand that when I signed the Treaty of Chagaramus in its amended form, the amended Treaty of Chagaramus with the integrated protocols regarding the Caribbean Single Market and economy my signature in relation to that amended Treaty, that was done on the 6th of July, that was carried as though I had reversed my position. But the position in fact had not been reversed, it is only that – it isn't that I have reversed my position and that of the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, it is just that those who were reporting, some of those that were reporting

didn't quite understand what had in fact transpired. And I think it is my duty to explain it.

So the long and short of it, the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines has signed the amended Treaty incorporating all the protocols, integrating the protocols into the amended Treaty and that is necessary for us to be involved in the Caribbean Single Market and economy, and we cannot be involved in the Caribbean Single Market and economy without being involve in the CCJ in its original jurisdiction, so I think if no one understands it now, well there is nothing more I can do. There is nothing more frankly I can do and I had indicated to the conference, the Heads of Governments that both the Government and the Opposition had given an undertaken to the people of this country in this Parliament that we will not accede to the Appellate Jurisdiction of the CCJ until the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines had so authorize us to do and that authorization had not come either in the form of a general elections or in the form of a referendum which some judicial opinions is required for us to go to abolish the Privy Council.

So I think the general public should be clear in their mind therefore wherein the CCJ only in so far as it relates to the original jurisdiction to deal with the Single Market and economy, economic questions, but we are not in it as regards the Appellate Jurisdiction so the Privy Council continues, in layman's language. And I think that was necessary for me to clarify in the House. And I see a number of journalists here including regional persons, who have regional connections, so wherever that error emerges that they will correct it. I can't correct everything; all I can do is speak the truth about what we have done. If the media decides that they are going to still confuse the issue well it doesn't change the price of eggs, and I am not making an anti-media point, I am simply making a point that sometimes there is a sufficient lack of comprehension by many persons who seek to analyze these matters. I am obliged.

PETITIONS

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I beg to lay on the table **The Humble Petition of Roger Blache, Carlene Jones, Brent Frederick, Margaret-Ann Mar, Patricia Samuel, Ellis Davis, Andre Peters, Victoria Jules, Mary Franklyn Patricia Allen and Louise Adams** all members of the Kingstown International Church of Christ showeth:-

That in 1979 a Church called "The International Churches of Christ" was started at Boston Massachusetts.

That the said Church has since established a branch at Kingstown, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

That it is the intention of our Church to serve the entire Vincentian community.

That our church is active in social as well as religious work.

That our church is dedicated to the growth and survival and strengthening of the Christian community within the State of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

That if necessary, our parent body situated at Kingstown, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines will present its articles for your co-operation and approval under the Laws of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

That it is essential that the executive committee of our church be created an ecclesiastical corporation under the laws of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines with power to appoint trustees and their successors in office and o own property for the sole use of the Kingstown International Church of Christ.

That there is existing legislation in the State of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for upholding religion and perpetuating the rights and interests in like bodies.

It is therefore desirable that a private bill, the objects and reasons for which is to provide for the incorporation of the said body of the Kingstown International Church of Christ as a Corporation aggregate, and to effect the above purposes should be introduced in the House of Assembly.

And your Petitioners will in duty bound ever pray.

Dated at Kingstown this 5th day of July in the year of Our Lord Two Thousand and One.

Signed Roger Blache
Church Leader

Endorsed as being in accordance with the Rules with respect to Petitions.

/s/ Theresa Adams
Clerk/House of Assembly
11/7/2001

In the Matter of the Application by the Trustees of “Gospel Pavilion Tabanacle Church” to the House of Assembly seeking Incorporation as a Body Corporate to:-

The Speaker and Honourable Members of the House of Assembly of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

The Humble Petition of:-

- (1) Mrs. Leadina Richards - Pastor and Founder of Spring Estate near Biabou.
- (2) Mr. Phillip Cornwall - Treasurer and Trustee of the aforesaid address.
- (3) Mr. Albert Richards - Elder of the aforesaid address.
- (4) Mrs. Elvita Cornwall - Worship Leader, Assistant Treasurer of the aforesaid address.
- (5) Mrs. Sharon Quammie - Member and Secretary of Diamonds, Belvedere.
- (6) Mr. Desmond Quammie - Member and Speaker, of Diamonds, Belvedere.
- (7) Mr. Junior Caine - Member of Spring Estate near Biabou.

SHOWETH THAT:-

1. Your Petitioners are the members of the Executive Committee of "GOSPEL PAVILION TABANACLE CHURCH" in the State of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (hereinafter referred to as "the CHURCH")
2. Your Petitioners have been mandated by the Church to seek legal incorporation as a body Corporate of the said Church.
3. The said Church was established in the State of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines with the objective of carrying out the great Commission of Jesus Christ to go into all the world and preach the gospel.

Your petitioners further state that the Church seeks not what it can receive but what it can give so that lives can be enriched and to assist Government in the eradication of social evils such as drugs, unemployment and generally

associated with teenagers, adult and the socially deprived persons in our society.

/s/ Mrs. Leadina Richards
/s/ Mr. Phillip Cornwall
/s/ Mr. Albert Richards
/s/ Mrs. Elvita Cornwall
/s/ Mrs. Sharon Quammie
/s/ Mr. Desmond Quammie
/s/ Mr. Junior Caine

Endorsed as being in accordance with the Rules with respect to Petitions for the Incorporation of a Religious Church in Respect to the Petitioners.

/s/ Theresa Adams
Clerk of the House of Assembly
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

Petitions laid on the table.

PAPERS

House of Assembly Paper
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Supplementary Estimates 2001.
(Honourable Prime Minister, Minister of Finance.)
Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting held at Cabinet Room, Prime's Office on Wednesday 18th July, 2001 at 5:25 p.m.

HONOURABLE ARHNIM EUSTACE: With respect to the Minutes of the Finance Committee Meeting the second paragraph, 'he Chairman then informed the meeting that the Honourable Joseph Bonadie was out of the State and that none of the Opposition members were present. Mr. Speaker, with all due respect I would request an amendment to indicate the reasons for the absence of the Opposition

Maybe late notification or something.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I think that is very fair. This morning I spoke to the Leader of the Opposition. It is true the Opposition members were not present but they were not present because as everyone knows who was involved in this matter that the notification given to them was late.

I should point out Mr. Speaker, and I indicated this to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, as is known it is not usual for meetings of the Finance Committee to be held to consider Supplementary Estimates, Supplementary Appropriation Bills, in fact I think this is the first time we have held a Finance Committee in the history of this Parliament to address the issue of Supplementary Estimates and Supplementary Appropriation Bills. We would wish very much to have that become a regular feature, and I indicate that to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, so that the Government can provide what explanations maybe necessary to be given prior to the Honourable Members coming to the House. Of course, they will get explanations in the House but it has been part of the tradition of the House for this not to happen, that is to say, for there to be a Finance Committee but in the interest of transparency and in the interest of recognizing the importance of Parliament and its institutions and Honourable Members, I requested that my staff provide for circulation in the House, and in fact they did so, provided detailed answers to possible queries which would be raised by having explanations for each of the items on the Supplementary Estimates which would not normally be found in the regular estimates, but which would be and ought to be in the Supplementary Estimates. So I think the position of the Leader of the Opposition is quite correct, and I would support his request to an amendment to the Minutes of the Finance Committee to that extent, and I am hoping that this explanation satisfy him to the public. I am obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Just before we have the questions, I would like to make a statement, it is in relation to Order 21, and perhaps those of you who might be listening would have heard the questions being read instead of being referred to by their number as the Rule says, we did agree at sometime that we would go that way. But I think for the records someone looking at the Rules probably later down the road may think that we are contravening the Rules of the House, and I believe for the record we should consider bringing motions to have this matter fully rectified, and maybe we could look at the question of amending the Rules of the House, so that we can have the record straight. We would go with it again this morning, but I think in future it should be done in the proper way, so that the record would so show.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I am very much with you on both points you have made, as has been realized in the spirit of openness and transparency which characterize the business of this Government, that for easy of understanding members of the public, particularly since we are now broadcasting the proceedings live that they hear the questions so as to make the answers intelligible, we could have said otherwise, but we want us to be open, but I think that not only that issue, Mr. Speaker.

But there are several other matters in the Standing Orders which we, when we were in the Opposition have been asking for a long time, to be amended and that we should

set up at an appropriate time, Mr. Speaker, perhaps with discussions through the body first which we are trying to have meet, the Local Branch of the Parliamentary Association, so that we can begin to have some preliminary discussions and to set up the appropriate entity to look at the Rules and redesign the Rules to make the House more workable, and when we are looking at these Rules to contemplate things like for instance, I have no objections, Mr. Speaker, for at the Committee stage of the House let's say there is a particular Bill which the Bar Association has an interest in for them to make a presentation at the Committee stage of the House, or some particular medium or mechanism could be devised, and choose the Bar Association because the President of the Bar Association, but it could be the Employers Federation or the National Labour Congress, or any other entity so that there are many things we need to look at, and there are some aspects of the Rules which are in fact in conflict with constitution and so on and so forth, and I think the point that you raise is a germane one, and I think the public would expect us to strengthen the capacity of the House to do its business in a more transparent and orderly way.

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWERS

1. *The Hon. Arnhim Eustace (Leader of the Opposition) to ask the Minister for Ports whether the old Port launch has been sold, and if in the affirmative to state:*

- (a) the number of firms or individuals that submitted bids;*
- (b) the offer price for each bid;*
- (c) which bid was accepted;*
- (d) the name of the bidder.*

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, in answer to this question, I must say that I am happy that the question of the sale of the old Port Launch has been raised and especially by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition who in February of 1993 paid a deposit of forty thousand dollars (\$40,000.00) on one of the fishing vessels given to S.V.G. and which at the time the selling price was four hundred thousand dollars (\$400,000.00).

The terms of payment were twelve thousand and thirty-three dollars and seventy-six cents (12,033.76) per quarterly. So far the records show that eighty thousand and sixty-seven dollars and fifty-two cents (\$80,067.52) were paid, leaving a balance of three hundred and nineteen thousand, nine hundred and thirty-two dollars and forty-eight cents (\$319,932.48). The price of this vessel as for three other vessels were reduced by 50% that is \$200,000.00 without any valid reasons or explanations given, thereby making the full purchase price of the vessel two hundred thousand dollars (\$200,000.00). Even with this reduction, there is still an unpaid balance of one

hundred and nineteen thousand, nine hundred and thirty-two dollars and forty-eight cents (\$119,932.48), and interest charges are not included.

As long ago as the 26th January 1993, the Port Authority Council requested the Port Manager to submit a report on the Launch as they were concerned about the frequency of its out of operation. (These are their words, not mine). On the 24th January 1993, the Council took a decision to sell the Launch. The Launch was advertised for sale in May and June of this year, after Mr. Adams made an offer of four thousand dollars (\$4,000.00) for the Launch.

The old Port Launch has been sold to Mr. Adolphus Adams for the sum of six thousand dollars (\$6,000.00), the reason being that from the advertisement and the offers that came in two persons submitted bids of six thousand dollars (\$6000.00) each in Mr. Kenneth Forbes and Mr. Gilbert Brooker. They were lower bids but to save time these were not given, since Mr. Adams was the first person to ask, even before the Launch was advertised for sale of \$4,000.00 he was asked if he was prepared to pay the highest price that other persons had submitted; he agreed to do so and the Launch was sold to him.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Is the Honourable Minister saying, Mr. Speaker, that the process of bidding that the person who eventually won the bid, Mr. Adolphus Adams bid \$4,000.00 whilst others bid \$6,000.00 and then he was asked to increase his bid? Well certainly that would not be legal.

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker, the bid was launched and I have the documents here, it was advertised for sale, there was not a bid that asked for tenders. There was a – I have them here I could read it, in the Vincentian what is stated here, in the paper: For sale, one pilot land cedar, and it gave you the model et cetera. Please contact the Port Manager. Therefore persons were authorized to offer bid for the lot. It was not a matter that you would be tendering and therefore you had a time where you open tenders and the lowest tender or the highest tender in this case got the bid. Mr. Adams had offered a bid of \$4,000.00 for the Launch before even, (it was after he made this offer) before the advertisement went out for sale. In fairness to him, he felt, well people were offering more money, he was the first if you want to call him bidder, the first person to offer a bid for the Launch and if he was prepared to match which was the highest bid he - had the opportunity, he was able to match it and the Launch was sold to him.

2. *The Hon. Arnhim Eustace (Opposition Leader) to ask the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, to please state the total cost to the tax payers, of the new car for the Prime Minister.*

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I would state in Parliament here in answer to this question what I have stated openly, what I have stated at the Press Conference and in several other speeches, so that the answer which is being elicited here is not that which is coming to the country for the first time.

A provision for EC\$105,000.00 was made in the 2001 Estimates, that is to say the Estimates of the former Government for the purchase of a car. Indeed this was a sum there for two or three years. There was a car, an old car. Some 12 years old I have been told, it broke down continuously causing severe public embarrassment and using up excessive funds for repairs. In fact, on one occasion, Mr. Speaker, I was going with my wife to a formal function at the Governor General and the hubcap came off. I had to stop and a policeman had to run and pick up the hubcap. Then when the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister was acting for me once he drove it to Layou and that was the last time any body had to drive in it. It broke down. Well, he didn't drive it of course; he was being driven as his right as Acting Prime Minister.

Before I got into office, quotations were sent. I met quotations there, quotations from several dealers and they ranged from EC\$183,000.00 to EC\$223,000.00, maybe the then Prime Minister now Leader of the Opposition felt he shouldn't buy a car for EC\$183,000.00 or EC\$223,000.00. When those were shown to me I said no, I wouldn't buy a car for that, I would buy a car for the office of the Prime Minister within the range which I personally, if I were in private practice could afford and I indicated to the Permanent Secretary that I had paid \$115,000.00 for my Pajero three years ago, and that I would put on another \$30,000.00 or so, three years have passed to buy something that is reasonable for the Prime Minister, something which is consistent with the dignity of the office but something which is not outlandish. Another bid came in the range of \$200 and something thousand dollars, I said no I do not want such a vehicle. Finally a vehicle was sourced through Barbados Simmons Motors, a Mercedes Benz B320 year 2001, it has been described as an elegant family professional car of a moderate price. The showroom price, duty free, less special discount given \$100,000.00 Barbadian dollars; the freight from Barbados \$2,500.00; the marine insurance \$902 Barbadian; two flag poles had to be fitted, I didn't even recognize that flag poles could be so expensive, \$5,000, but you have to have one for the flag of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and if another person from another country is riding with me it has to have their flag too. We are sovereign State I must say they are beautiful flagpoles, they appear to be stainless steel to my untrained eyes in these matters. They look like fine flagpoles. So the total cost CIF, (Cost Insurance of Freight) at Kingstown is \$108,402.00 Barbadian dollars and we had to pay \$35 for the electronic transfer to transfer the money to Simmons Motors. So the total cost in EC is

\$150,426.28. And I don't think that the leader of the Opposition would begrudge the Office of the Prime Minister to buy a car so moderately priced. I don't think so.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, I have heard it being said that the car, first of all they say it was \$500,000.00 and I am glad the Honourable Leader of the Opposition asked it, then I heard that it was \$300,000.00, then it was said it was bullet proof, so I asked the simple question, why would I need a bullet proof car when on Carnival day I walked down in my jeans pants to town, me and God alone, without a security Comrade Ralph doesn't need any security you know, I tell the police them that. But they say they have to do it, because it is their job. What I did upon becoming Prime Minister, I told the police that I do not want the SSU which used to accompany – the three or four SSU policemen in Army Uniform in a jeep-which used to accompany the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and before him the Prime Minister. I said I am not going to hide myself from the people, I don't want security, that kind of security between me and the people. So when people talk like that, not the Leader of the Opposition, he has not addressed the question of bullet proof but the de facto leader of his party, has done so repeatedly; the de facto leader of his party has done so repeatedly; but people mustn't judge this Prime Minister on the basis of standards with other people.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the final price.

- 3. The Hon. Arnhim Eustace (Leader of the Opposition) to ask the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs to indicate whether he is aware that some 180 young men and women from SVG who were recruited by the British Army during the NDP administration have completed their training and are now members for that Army. And to also indicate whether the ULP Government intends to continue this programme.*

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: The answer to the question is that the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs is aware; the answer to the second part is in the positive.

Mr. Speaker, may I say that I really didn't intend to answer so curtly the Opposition Leader, but just to show him the way the NDP answered the questions of the Opposition in the past. I would like in the interest of openness, transparency and [interruption]

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: I never answered you in that way.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Well, I didn't say the Prime Minister or the Minister of Finance; I said members of the NDP Administration. Mr. Speaker, in answering according to how we answer questions on this side of the House: The young men and

women who were enlisted for the British Army received 12 weeks of training, or they were supposed to receive 12 weeks of training, and if successful they would sign a contract for four years. Of the numbers, 180 given by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, 18 came home for one reason or the other which is about 10%. And that is better than what was expected by the British Army. So it was about 10% that returned and that is better than the 20% that the British Army had expected.

It is unfortunate that more young men and women did not embrace the opportunity to sign up and show up for the interview for this opportunity to serve in the British Army. In St. Lucia where the British Army is now recruiting, over 1500 young people have already applied, the British Army has sent personnel to make preparation for the recruitment team to come down to St. Lucia, and interview these young people in St. Lucia. The High Commissioner, Mr. Cenio Lewis has been instrumental in following up on this programme in the United Kingdom, and we would be pleased to share with you some of the correspondence to show that he has been diligent. Less than one month after this new administration has been in office, because we have been in communication and we told him that this is something that he should follow up.

If I may read Mr. Speaker, from the correspondence which the High Commissioner has sent to Major Nigel Bagley. And this letter is the 25th April, 2001.

It says:

Dear Mr. Bagley,

I must apologize for not writing to you earlier as I had intended to do, but I had been extremely busy and time simply destroyed many of my good intentions. I hope you will understand.

May we thank you very much for attending the Mission with Lieutenant Cornel Nicholls and subsequently going to St. Vincent and Grenadines with a team of Army Recruitment personnel to recruit our nationals to the British Army. We can assure you that the families of those recruited have been very pleased, and I am confident that the recruits are grateful for the opportunity to enter such a professional Army. We are hopeful that during their training, their duties with the Army they will do their very best and meet the high standards expected of them.

From our last conversation I think, if my memory serves me right, that you were leaving your current post, if my recollection of the conversation is correct, I would wish to take this opportunity to wish you every success for the future. You may recall when I spoke to you that I had mentioned some of the applicants and indeed others who did not attend the interviews and

did take the tests have been making inquiries to this Office as to whether another Army Recruitment team would be returning to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. From our conversation I got the impression that this is unlikely, at least not in the near future. I did mention that I understand many St. Lucians had applied to join the Army. If that is so, and in the event that a British Army recruitment team were to go to St. Lucia I wonder whether the team would be kind to interview applicants from St. Vincent and the Grenadines who would be willing to travel to St. Lucia.

I'm aware that you may not be dealing with this matter for much longer, therefore I should be pleased if this request is brought to your successor. Please accept the sincere thanks of the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the High Commission Staff, the families of the recruits and indeed the recruits, some of whom I think will soon complete their training, for your kindness and assistance, and we are indeed grateful.

With out best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Cenio Lewis

The response to that letter dated the 8th of May from a member of the Recruiting Team. It says-

*Mr. Cenio Lewis
High Commissioner for
St. Vincent and the Grenadines*

Dear Mr. Lewis,

Thank you for your letter of 25 April 2001. Major Bagley has now left this appointment but he did see it (that is the letter) before he left. I have now taken over from him and hence this reply to you.

I am delighted to read that there continues to be interest in the British Army but as you surmised there is no plan to send another Selection Team to St. Vincent in the near future. We are, however, in the very early stages of planning a visit to St. Lucia. We are entirely sympathetic to your request of interviewing potential applicants from St. Vincent in St. Lucia if the opportunity presented itself and would do our best to accommodate your request. At this stage it is difficult to give you a definitive answer as we do

not know how many St. Lucia applicants we will see and therefore we do not know whether we will have any spare capacity in the Selection Team to interview candidates from St. Vincent. I would hope that by mid September we should have a clearer idea of numbers and then may be in a better position to advise you.

Thank you again for your warm letter of praise. I sincerely trust that the positive relationship that you established with Major Bagley will continue and I look forward to corresponding in the future.

I should indicate, Mr. Speaker, that in addition to his communication with the British Recruiting Team that the High Commissioner has met with Vincentians in England and has sought to raise a sum of two thousand pounds from them. Has made arrangement with the British Army that if we were to get three or four at a time, young people to come up to England, whether they would interview them there and would take them in the Army. The answer he received that if the training were provided by the police in St. Vincent and they were successful that they would interview them within one week and that they would accept them in the Army.

So once that money is raised the High Commissioner would be seeking to get three or four, however much the money can pay for their passages to come to England. He would make arrangements with Vincentians in England to have them stay at their homes and lodge their until they are officially inducted in the British Army. There is an agreement that these young people would pay back their fares to the High Commissioner's Office and that money would be used in a revolving way to bring three or four other young people and so it would go on.

And we want to thank the High Commissioner for his initiative and the effort he is making in carrying on this programme to help our young people here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

May I, Mr. Speaker, with your permission kindly acknowledged the presence of his Excellency the High Commissioner for the United Kingdom, High Commissioner Cenio Lewis, The Consul General for New York, His Excellency Cosmos Cozier and her Excellency Ambassador Designate Mrs. Margaret Ferrari and Ambassador Elworth John to Washington/ and the Organisation of United States, I want to recognize them in the Gallery.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much, you are being recognized

- 4. The Hon. Dr. Godwin Friday (Northern Grenadines) to ask the Hon. Vincent Beache Minister of National Security and Airport Development to please indicate:*

(i) Whether the Government has reversed the decision of the NDP government to provide restaurant and restroom facilities especially for passengers from and to the Grenadines in the building closest to the Grenadines ferry berth;

(ii) if not, why was the building intended for those services recently fenced-off from the Grenadines ferry berth by a tall fence with barbed wire at the top, thereby apparently giving cruise ship passengers exclusive access to it.

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker, the former New Democratic Party Administration encouraged and engaged in a policy of Free For All for seventeen (17) years in such that even after a cost over run-in excess of fifteen million dollars (\$15,000,000.00) the Cruise Ship Berth was in such a state of squalor that the Princess Cruise Line removed St. Vincent and the Grenadines from its itinerary. We have now beautified the area and put in place security measures, all this is consultation and agreement with the Honourable Minister for Tourism.

The N.D.P. Administration conducted Government affairs in secrecy. I am not aware of any decision taken to provide restroom and restaurant facilities especially for passengers to and from the Grenadines, therefore no decision could be taken on a matter that as far as I know is non-existent. In any case, access to the restroom and restaurant facilities would be controlled at the gates by Port Security.

The cruise ship terminal was fenced off in an effort to protect the area from vandalism and cruise passengers from molestation. The fence will therefore not be removed.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: If the Honourable Member is unaware of any decision having been taken will the Honourable Member indicate to the House whether such a decision to provide restroom and terminal building facilities for passengers who use the ferry berth to travel back and forth to the Grenadines, whether such facilities will be put in place and whether the building that had originally been intended for that purpose can be used and will be used for that purpose.

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker, I answered the question. No one is barred whether, it is passengers going to the Grenadines. I answered the question because it was stated that specifically these facilities were for passengers travelling to and from the Grenadines. The other people who are going to use the cruise ship terminal - rest room and restaurant facilities are there for all. People who are going to the Grenadines would use those facilities like any other person. What we are saying is that there is fenced off and there is a gate that any passengers, or anybody going to

the Grenadines would use but we would have security personnel there to ensure that things are in an orderly manner.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GOWIN FRIDAY: Mr. Speaker, thanks to the Honourable Prime Minister for pointing out that number 5 has already been answered, I had come to that conclusion myself.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: May be I need to say this when we examined the questions we found that one question was of excessive length and you know that there is a matter in relation to the Rules. We could get on to the member to modify the question so we thought that we make three questions out of it. Yes, that's why it is three questions.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Thank you for the clarification Mr. Speaker, well I will just follow up on the question Number 6.

5. *The Hon. Dr. Godwin Friday (Northern Grenadines) to ask the Hon. Vincent Beache Minister of National Security and Airport Development the following:- Will the Minister remove the fence which now separates the Building from the Grenadines ferry berth and from the passengers using that berth.*
6. *The Hon. Dr. Godwin Friday (Northern Grenadines) to ask the Hon. Vincent Beache Minister of National Security and Airport Development the following:- Given the highly negative impression that such a high fence topped with barbed wire conveys, whether the Minister of Tourism was consulted and agreed to the fence before it was erected.*

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker, we had a situation over the prison, purely security matters. We are not going to allow the Port to develop into such a manner. For those who would look at the Port and see the fence I think the fence is a very well constructed fence and it is pleasing to the eye. It is tasty if I can use that term, and it is true that there are barbwire on top, but it is for security reasons. If we electrify the fence you would never hear the end of it, we trying to kill people, but who are complaining? The cruise passengers are happy with it because they feel that they are being protected. I answered the question that the fence would stay because we think that it is necessary.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: The Honourable Member said that the cruise passengers said that they are pleased with the fence since it was constructed, when and where did he seek the opinion of the cruise passengers after having constructed the fence.

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker, we have had a delegation from the Florida Caribbean Cruise and I didn't have to go and speak to an individual cruise passenger one by one. I am speaking about what the people who run the cruises, and know about it what they said. If the Honourable Member wants me to say that there was a cruise so that he can say I am lying that there was a cruise ship that came in, since that, and therefore I didn't speak, that's not so. I am not talking about that. I am speaking about the people who run the cruise who have ships and who know what passengers need, and they are the ones who advised us in this respect and so on.

7. The Hon. Terrence Ollivierre (Southern Grenadines) to ask the Minister responsible for Grenadines Affairs to please indicate the function, role, of the two young women who were recently hired and operating out of the Revenue Office in Union Island.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members the two young women at the Union Island Revenue Office were recruited through the Department of Labour as would be 17 other persons throughout the country on a temporary basis for about three months to carry out a registration process at five unemployment registration centres. The one in the Southern Grenadines, in Union Island, is the first one, which is already up and running, which attests to the commitment of this Government to the people of the Southern Grenadines.

The five unemployment registrations centres would be at the following places: at Barrouallie, at Kingstown, at Marriagua, and at Byrea. I have been informed by the Minister responsible for Works who has the job of ensuring that these centres are established, that the one in Kingstown is pretty much ready to kick off, either today, tomorrow, some time next week. That in Marriagua also next week; that in Byrea apparently the windows, for the one in Byrea, the people who measured the windows then took the wrong windows so they had to come back into town. You know, I am Prime Minister, I can't go and measure windows. But those are some of the inheritance we get. It is a legacy which we have inherited. And there is of course the one in the Southern Grenadines. The idea is because as you know, the reduction of unemployment is the foremost single priority of this Government, and we, Mr. Speaker, have been demonstrating this already. Currently nearly 800 persons, certainly in excess of 750 persons are being employed on the repair, the largest most extensive repair programme ever done in the OECS on all State-owned schools; 71 of them at the same time. There have been close to 80 contracts and the contractors are selecting people, local contractors, selecting workers from their own locality - people who normally work with them. Then the labour intensive road programme I understand either has commenced or about to commence with second phase which will employ close to 400 workers. Then we are having 350 workers in the youth empowerment service; young people in training apprenticeship systems and all these are before you

look at the employment which has been generated in all areas already, and more which would be generated when the Call Centres are established sometime in September I have been informed by the Minister of Telecommunications. In fact I am told tomorrow there is a signing of the Telecom's Agreement with the Call Centres because there has been a restructuring and a review of the original agreement which was left for us by the outgoing administration, the former NDP Administration.

So, all these we are doing and why we need the unemployment registration centres is simple, we don't want the Census to tell us that you have 5, 7, 8,000 people unemployed. We want to know the names, flesh and blood, that there is Tom Jones, age 25, occupation, education, residence, your telephone number, which work you want to get, which area you want to work in, or if you have the appropriate qualifications, which training you want to get in, so that we would know individually who these people are and we would put them on a data bank. There would be a database, so that inside of the Ministry of Labour, we can direct out the employment. And we are not asking them incidentally in the questionnaire which political party they belong to, and that is the purpose of unemployment registration centre in Union Island and you would admit, it has not been the usual thing to involve Union Island in these sort of national programmes.

The Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Grenadines Affairs, Senator Edwin Snagg, has been doing an excellent job in this area and it is his own personal direction on this programme why the one was started in the Southern Grenadines first. I am sure the representative for the Southern Grenadines does not begrudge the two young people getting a job. I am sure equally he doesn't begrudge the fact that we have such a programme, and that we want to identify those who are unemployed to see if we can have jobs for them or training about which we will hear a little bit more later today when we discuss the Estimates and the Appropriation Bill. Thank you.

HONOURABLE TERRANCE OLLIVIERRE: Yes, Mr. Prime Minister, all I asked for role and function. Thank you very much, Sir.

8. *The Hon. Terrence Ollivierre (Southern Grenadines) to ask the Hon. Minister of Culture to please state :-*

(a) What disbursements have been made to each rural carnival committee and the extent to which such disbursements have been used for the purpose intended.

(b) To whom is the accounting for these expenditures reported.

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I think the Honourable Member meant disbursements, and following the Leader of Government business in the House you will get a fulsome answer despite the fact he did not date his question. There is no reference as to the date and time span.

The ULP Administration, Mr. Speaker, promised the people of this country a bigger and better Carnival and we opened the season May 19th at Unity Square with over 30,000 people converging there. They witnessed a programme of mass, steel and calypso; there was an exhibition of Arts and Craft; Caribbean Cuisine was on sale, even the local Hotel Association participated. Bearing in mind the CDC was appointed just weeks before. The CDC subsequently appointed and assigned two office members to coordinate and assist the rural Carnival organizations, Miss Ishmael Shotte and the National Youth Council representative Mr. Israel Bruce. Mr. Speaker, these members were given six specific tasks: ensure that a reputable organization exists in the various areas where Carnival activities are to be held; ensure that each group has a programme of activities for the area, ensure that there is a budget for the activities prepared, detailing revenue and expenses, report to the CDC on the process and function of each group that required or requested assistance; ensure that the funds granted to any organizations that they were properly spent for the purpose for which it was granted, and to ensure that a report is submitted to the CDC for each organisation that held Carnival activities.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Shotte indicated to the CDC and to myself that he took the lead to communicate to various organizations these controls in respect of disbursements. Now we take it into full context so we can understand. In 1999, Mr. Speaker, a total of \$4,000 was paid by the CDC to Bequia and Georgetown, \$2,000 to Bequia, \$2,000 to Georgetown, two rural Carnivals. In the year 2000, a total of \$9,000 was paid by the CDC to five rural Carnival organizations, Windward \$2,000, Layou \$2,000, Bequia \$2,000, Union Island \$1,000, North Leeward \$2,000. Mr. Speaker, in the year \$2,001 disbursements by the CDC went to eight rural organizations. Did we say bigger? Disbursements were as follows each person submitted, each organisation submitted a budget. Layou Cultural Organisation and they budgeted \$10,000, the CDC gave them \$4,000 representing 40% of their budget. Windward CDC submitted \$67,000 the CDC made a disbursement of \$12,500 representing 19% of their budget. Bequia CDC submitted a budget for \$42,000, and the CDC gave Bequia \$10,000, representing 24% of their budget; bearing in mind in 1999 Bequia got \$2,000 and in the year 2000, \$2,000. So they got five times. The Greggs Culture Organisation submitted a budget requesting \$4,000, they got \$2,000, representing 50%. Union Island \$16,000, CDC disbursed \$4,000 representing 25%, North Leeward CDC \$20,000 by budget request, \$9,000 which represented 45 %, Ranker Sports Club of Campden Park, \$5,625 the budgeted request, \$3,000 was disbursed by the CDC, representing 53% and Beutex International in Georgetown \$15,000 they requested they got \$3,600 representing 24%.

Mr. Speaker eight rural organizations participated and received a total of \$48,100. Let's take it into full context, 1999 two rural organizations \$4,000, year 2000 five organizations \$9,000, 2001 rural organizations, \$48,100. Least I be asked I should state in 1999 the Government allocation was \$250,000 for CDC, in the year 2000 it was \$275,000 and in the year 2001 the same \$275,000. In respect of (b) the second part the extent ought to be gleaned and determined when the reports are submitted to the CDC. And in correlation to (b) the accounting for these expenditures is to be reported to the CDC, since a report is required by the CDC and the CDC is currently awaiting those reports. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

HONOURABLE TERRANCE OLLIVIERRE: When I asked the Honourable Minister whether she is aware of any of the participants or the contestant in the Northern Grenadines Carnival competition, in various competitions, whether they have been paid and if not if she can guarantee that they would receive their amounts that they have been guaranteed for participating in this competition, because we know they are the backbone of Carnival celebrations in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: Mr. Speaker, that could not be a supplemental question to the substance of which he asked. He is asking me for details which will come in a report, and therefore I am unable to answer him since I am not furnished with those reports from the CDC. I like things in writing signed and dated.

9. The Honourable Terrence Ollivierre (Southern Grenadines) to ask the Minister responsible for Education to please indicate:

(a) How the school maintenance is to be executed, that is, whether by private contract or the Public Works Department; the period envisaged for execution, the total sum allocated for the programme, and a break down of estimated expenditure for each school.

(b) Who will be in charge of supervision of the projects and what is the fee to be paid for such supervision.

(c) And which of these projects will require Tenders Board approval.

HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, the question addresses the Minister responsible for Education, in fact it is directed to me but it really should be addressed to the Minister of Works. I am the Minister responsible for Education, not for Works, notwithstanding Mr. Speaker and consistent with our policy for transparency, and unlike the way the current opposition treated us when they were in Government by not answering questions which were wrongly directed, I will answer the question

Mr. Speaker, we have inherited in education as just about every facet of this country and NDP legacy of neglect and incompetence. The school plants are no exemption, that is to say, they have suffered tremendously under the NDP administration and just about every building in the country, including fairly new ones, are in a state of disrepair, windows are falling from the A'Level or the Community College, threatening the lives of people. The plumbing situation at the Campden Park Secondary School is in a total mess and we could go and on. Recently we had the debacle Prep School an institution that many people thought was so well established and so well kept, only to discover that despite numerous reports of termites attacking the building year after year there was little action done, and termites don't operate overnight, they operate over a very extended period of time. And all of these are manifestations of the neglect by the New Democratic Party administration in relation to education in general and to school buildings in particular.

The Honourable Member failed to indicate which of the school maintenance programmes he is talking about; there is essentially two at this time. There is the on-going school maintenance programme which is usually budgeted for in the Estimates and there is currently a labour intensive school maintenance programme. I am assuming that he means the latter and therefore will respond in that vein. How is the maintenance programme to be executed whether by private contract or the Public Works Department? Indeed it is a combination. The project will be executed by private contractors but under the supervision of the Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing to the Buildings Division. The period of the execution in terms of the contract - it can extend for about a year but we intend to try and get as much done in this upcoming period before the schools reopen, so it is going to be extremely intensive over the next few weeks. So we are proposing that the bulk of work probably not all be done during the July/August vacation, in order to ensure minimal disruption. In fact we hope no distraction at all of classes during the upcoming term and this you know, was a feature of the NDP administration, for some weird reason they used to wait until the last week, days before school is due to reopen, to start repairing schools and painting them.

The total sum is public knowledge, \$5.5 million have been raised through the very hard effort and I would say consummate negotiating skill of our Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.

The break down of the estimated expenditure per school is not available, simply because some of these contracts are still under discussions and therefore the figures for the 71 schools are not currently available.

Who will be in charge of supervision of projects, and what is the fee to be paid for such supervision? Given the magnitude of the project the Ministry of Works had to set up a

Project Implementation Unit, a PIU and the money budgeted for that implementation unit is \$375,000. Which of these projects would require Tenders' Board approval? Well in keeping with the Financial Rules, Mr. Speaker, all works in excess of \$20,000 would require Tenders Board approval. Thank you.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Since the question was most likely was incorrectly directed I don't think it might be fair to ask a supplementary question unless the member feels he can answer it.

HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE: I don't think I should answer.

HONOURABLE GERALD SHALLOW: Mr. Speaker, in the absence of the Honourable Opposition Senator, Joseph 'Burns' Bonadie I was asked to ask the question standing in his name, with your permission. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

10. *The Hon. Joseph Burns Bonadie (Opposition Senator) to ask the Minister of Health and the Environment to please indicate:*

(a) The average waiting time at the accident and emergency section of the hospital in light of the continuing concern expressed by citizens who are brought to the facility some of whom are alleged to have spent 5 or 6 hours waiting before their emergency is attended to.

(b) What is the staffing complement in a given 24 hours period.

HONOURABLE DR DOUGLAS SLATER: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I would very much have preferred to respond to the former Minister of Health, who is absent. Nevertheless the first part of the question asked what is the average waiting time at the accident and emergency section of the hospital, and I must correct the figures given here and the answer is average – (which is very difficult to determine) ranges from about 2 to 4 hours but it is a hard question in the sense that patients who attend the Accident and Emergency Department of the hospital they go through what is called a triad process in which they are classified according to their needs. Most of us who have gone to the Accident and Emergency would know that the majority of persons who go there should not be going there. And I want to indicate to this Honourable House that this Ministry of Health and the Environment we plan very soon to do something about that, in educating the citizens of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, something that the former administration failed to do. The urgent cases are flagged as red and are seen almost immediately, and what are urgent cases, we talk about people with an asthmatic attack, people who are unconscious, people who are bleeding heavily, these are basically the cases that should go to Accident and Emergency. Well

everybody should know what is an emergency. It seems though that the Honourable Senator who is absent was not too certain about how you defined emergency, and the question stated about patients' emergencies. Well it is the doctors and the nurses who determine what is an emergency, okay. The intermediate cases are flagged as yellow, and are seen after the urgent cases, and these are cases like appendicitis which people term as emergency; it is to some extent but the doctor would determine how important that is. Those patients whose symptoms have been present for two days and are not urgent and therefore not emergency are flagged green, and this is the grand majority of the cases that go to Accident and Emergency and they are seen after the two categories. In fact, Mr. Speaker, if I may indulge, when I was Medical Officer of Health, even though I was not directly connected to the hospital services, on occasions I had to go down there and assist in triaging and trying to educate patients that some of the concerns that they come to the Accident and Emergency for they really should be going to the District Clinic. And it is a problem of education.

Now, there is an international standard for properly run Accident and Emergency Department in all countries and we try to adhere to them in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The workload in the Unit has increased considerably as more and more patients use the facilities, quite often incorrectly. We will continue to make every effort to reduce the average waiting time. If I may, so though nothing significantly has changed for the past three months to justify, waiting times have been more than six hours in the past, and many are here in the gallery, and who are out there listening, can attest to that, in fact there has been an improvement in the services at the Accident and Emergency.

Part two of the question, well there are three shifts normally operate, and each shift overlap; in any 24-hour period you would have at least one physician and quite often two or more. There is in addition a Senior Registrar who heads the Department who works basically from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. who supervises the work of the other physicians. And in a real case of emergency there is a mechanism where other physicians from the wards are brought in to play. And I have seen this occurring. In fact one Carnival night I passed before I went to a show and this indeed was in place. So the answer to the question is that we need to educate our people more, we will continue to do that; that the Accident and emergency service is really for what it is intended to be for emergencies and not for general visits to the doctor for which the District Clinics are there providing that service. Much obliged.

HONOURABLE GERALD SHALLOW: Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask for the Honourable Joseph 'Burns' Bonadie Opposition Senator question addressed to the Minister of National Security.

11. *The Hon. Joseph Burns Bonadie (Opposition Senator) to ask the Minister of National Security to please state the circumstances surrounding the shooting of three civilians in the vicinity of the Triangle at Murray's Road on Wednesday 27th June, 2001.*

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker, there was no incident of shooting civilians on Wednesday 27th June 2001, at the Triangle Murray's Road. What actually took place is as follows:

On June 28th, 2001 officers of the Criminal Investigation Department of the Royal St. Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force conducted an operation in the Richmond Hill area, in the vicinity of the National Lottery Tennis Court. On completion of the exercise the Officers who were armed went through the routine of clearing their weapons.

During the process, one of the Officers pointed his weapon to the ground and pulled the trigger to ensure that the chamber was empty. A round, which was lodged in the breach, was discharged. It disintegrated on contact with the ground and shrapnel from the projectile struck three females nearby namely, Robertha Samuel, Marva Shallow and Marilyn Gurley, who were in the immediate vicinity.

The victims were taken to the Accident and Emergency Department at the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital, (and I don't know if that really is the name for the hospital, I don't know if there was a naming, anyhow, to what we know as the Kingstown General Hospital) where they were treated by Dr. Christine Sotero Harry and discharged. Medication was prescribed for them at the expense of the Police Department. The victims were interviewed by the Deputy Commissioner of Police following, which they were transported to their respective homes.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, may I crave your indulgence, so that the general public will be aware and the answer given by the Honourable Minister of National Security was very comprehensive as to what took place. But to allay the fears of the Opposition or any members of the public we are very concerned about incidents like this and so concerned, and having had a report from the Minister of National Security I made it my business personally to go to inquire of the three persons at the place where they work. I had a message transmitted to them by one Josiah Ash that they should get the medical reports, bring them to the Office of the Prime Minister and Minister of Legal Affairs so that I can transmit the medical reports to the Attorney General with any requisite recommendation from the Ministry of Finance in respect of any compensation. The injuries were very slight. I myself went subsequently. Mr. Ash indicated to me that he had so communicated my request and I personally went a few mornings ago at the work place of these three ladies. I met one of, them Ms. Gurley,

and relayed the same message to them, so I want to assure you that this Government is dealing with these matters with firmness and with sensitivity.

12. *The Hon. Gerard Shallow (Opposition Senator) to ask the Minister of Social Welfare, to state how many people were denied Public Assistance for the month of July and further will the Minister please explain the reasons for the removal of these person who were perceived to be NDP supporters and whose removal was not based on their social and economic condition.*

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Mr. Speaker, Honourable members, a re-certification process was conducted throughout the State during the month of June 2001, and it was revealed that the Public Assistance list was rife with corruption.

The names of persons who have died were still on the list, and assistance was still being collected. Mr. Speaker, I craved your indulgence here to name a few persons, they are dead so it would not be any harm. The names of persons who have died who were still on the list and number one, Edna Ragogue of Bequia died January 2000 but collections were made up to June 2001. Amount collected, one thousand four hundred and forty dollars (\$1,440.00). Agnes Richardson of Kingstown died in 1990, collections were made up to June 2001, amount collected, seven thousand five hundred and sixty dollars (\$7,560.00). Emmanuel Stephens of Marriagua, on checking the date when he died it was shown that his death was not recorded, but after questioning it is alleged that he would have died in 1986. Benefits were collected up to June 2001. Amount collected, nine thousand seven hundred and twenty dollars (\$9,720.00). And Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like us to know that the person whom we found to be collecting all this money she herself is a recipient of public assistance. Minnie Stevenson of Kingstown died 1998. Benefits were collected up to June 2001. Amount collected, two thousand seven hundred and twenty dollars (\$2,720.00). Lottie Sylvester of Kingstown died 1996. Benefits were collected up to June 2001. Amount collected three thousand nine hundred and sixty dollars (\$3, 960.00). I can go on and on Mr. Speaker, Honourable members, but I will just pause for now.

Persons who left the State many years ago still had their names on the list and benefits were being collected.

There were persons who never met the criteria to qualify and some who no longer qualified but continued to benefit from the Public Assistance Programme.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, and for the sake of our listeners at home Public Assistance is not Social Security. The Public Assistance Act Chapter 231 of 1990 states that the very poor and needy should benefit.

It is interesting to note that while persons who failed to meet the criteria for Public Assistance continued to benefit, many needy, aged persons were denied. Let's take the case of Mr. Alfred Gould, a retired labourer from Barrouallie who is eighty-nine (89) years old and lives in extreme poverty. Mr. Gould was denied Public Assistance over the years because of his support for the Labour Party. July 2001, for the first time in his life, Mr. Gould is receiving Public Assistance. Mr. Damion Edwards, an eighty-five (85) year old retired fisherman from Rose Bank was more fortunate. About ten (10) years ago, he received Public Assistance for two (2) months before his name was abruptly deleted. Upon inquiring, he was informed that he was not singing the right political song. It is persons like Mr. Gould and Mr. Edwards, Public Assistance was intended for, not the girlfriends of N.D.P. Ministers.

A total of two hundred and fifty-one (251) persons consisting of persons who have died; out of the State; residing in Government Institutions; persons who no longer qualified and we think of orphans who are mature and persons who never met the criteria to qualify but had their names put on the list for sinister reasons did not receive Public Assistance for July 2001.

The present system in place is a fair and honest one in that once someone meets the criteria that person will qualify despite their political support.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the re-certification process continues because there are persons at home who could not come out to the places where the monies were paid, our officers would be going to their homes and we will be doing our on the spot assessment. Thank you.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

HONOURABLE GERALD SHALLOW: Mr. Speaker, while we do appreciate the fact that people who do not meet the criteria should be taken off, I would like to find out if isn't it a fact that there are old people, very old people who are in very poor conditions who were denied public assistance.

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I do not like generalizations; I think I am more serious with the people's business than the Honourable Senator thinks. I would love the Honourable Senator to quote names. And then I would be able to answer properly.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move under Standing Order 12 (5) that the proceedings of this day's sitting be exempted from the provision of the Standing Order Hours' of sitting.

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

Question put and agreed to.

1. SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES 2001

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members the Supplementary Estimates for the year 2001 having been laid I now beg to move

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, we are likely to have a significant debate on this particular item and I am wondering whether in the context of the 15 or 18 minutes we have left before 1:00 p.m. if this might not be the more appropriate time to the adjournment.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: If the Honourable Leader of the Opposition would like an early lunch I would be obliged to let him have an early lunch and be fortified for this afternoon sitting, and I so move, Mr. Speaker, that we take the luncheon adjournment until 2:00 p.m. or do you want 2:30 p.m. Well, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition always like 2 hours lunches, so we say 2:30 p.m. I so move, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question put and agreed to.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING - 12:42 p.m. (Lunch)

RESUMPTION OF SITTING - 2:30 p.m.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: At the luncheon adjournment this morning I was indicating that the Supplementary Estimates No. 5 for the year 2001 were laid before the House this morning, accordingly I beg to move the motion for the adoption of these estimates.

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

Question put and agreed to.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I had indicated this morning to the Leader of the Opposition that we perhaps may discuss these Supplementary Estimates, jointly with the Supplementary Appropriation Bill. That has been the usual pattern with Supplementary Estimates, and Supplementary Appropriation Bills though of course, even though the debate is done jointly we have to have a separate process in the House to deal with the Supplementary Appropriation Bill. The difference of course, Honourable Members, (and if I may say this parenthetically, between the process in which we are now engaged and the annual estimates and the Appropriation Bill which hopefully would come to this House in late November, for the year 2001, that in those debates there are specific rules which are laid out in the Standing Orders as to how they are to be dealt with, and the way in which we have dealt historically with the Supplementary Estimates and the Supplementary Appropriation Bill, is to debate them in some joint fashion, though in that annual estimates and the supplementary and the appropriation bill, that what happens is that you debate the estimates of expenditure on the debate of the Estimates and deal with the matters of appropriation and revenue on the Appropriation Bill, and of course at that annual debate on the Appropriation Bill one can discuss broadly the state and condition of the economy and other matters connected thereto.

So I will continue the tradition of the House, Mr. Speaker. This is not to say for other members would wish when the Appropriation Bill comes before the House to have an opportunity also to speak, but hopefully we would do so not in the detailed manner in which it usually takes place on the Appropriation Bill at the end of the year, and I think that is an understanding which we have, as to how we are going to proceed. In the interest of time also.

Mr. Speaker, if I may also say that usually Supplementary Estimates which come before the House, come before the House, having gone through the process of the Special Warrants as provided for in the Finance and Audit Act. In these particular Supplementary Estimates we have not gone by way of the Special Warrants since we do have a bundle of Supplementary measures to put, and we thought it proper to bring them in the form in which we have brought them which is provided for under the Constitution of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. And that is another difference in this exercise in which are involved.

Mr. Speaker, if you would permit me to make some introductory remarks since we are bringing these as a bundle, remarks which would normally be connected to the stage of an Appropriation Bill proper. It is now in history that this Government received a mandate on the 28th of March to govern the country in communion with the people for the next five years. But what we receive is more than a mandate simply to govern the country, it was a mandate to launch a war against poverty, unemployment and a sense

of hopelessness which pervades the society. It is a mandate to provide the means by which all Vincentians can obtain a better way of life. A mandate to build a top class quality educational system for living and production in the new century. To wage war against corruption, to reform and modernize government and of course to strength and even the process of Caribbean integration.

Since the memorable day in March, this administration has moved assiduously to implement policies and programmes designed to generate the social and economic development which we all seek. I am convinced that in order for us to achieve this goal, one important prerequisite is the unity of the Vincentian people. We must not approach the challenges of today's world as divided people, we will have political differences as a consequence of the competitive nature of politics, but that does not mean on the core issue we must be divided.

It is in recognition of this important fact that I have emphasized both in theory and in practice the idea of 'together now'. These Supplementary Estimates follow against that back drop and I intend to obtain the necessary Parliamentary approval for funds required to fully implement the programmes and projects which we will peruse in the second half of the current financial year. We also intend to continue with necessary adjustments with those programmes and projects started by the previous administration for which provisions have been made in the 2001 Estimates and those which we consider to be in the country's interest. Because, Mr. Speaker, this document, St. Vincent and the Grenadines 2001 Estimates, which was passed last year December in this House is the law of the land with the Appropriation Bill. What we are doing here is to have work supplementary to these and to look at some of the central programmes particularly on the Capital side, which are here, and see those which we can implement. These estimates, Mr. Speaker, required that briefly that I give a backdrop of our current economic situation.

In June, a comprehensive review of the economy was undertaken by a team from the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank and the Caribbean Development Bank. The final report is not yet with us. But we have a draft report, and the draft report shows that over the last five years of the NDP administration, the current account surplus of the Central Government had deteriorated both in nominal terms and as a percentage of the gross domestic product, moving from \$29.5 million or 3.9% of GDP in 1996 to \$20.3 million to 2.2% of GDP in the year 2000. The fall in the surplus was due to increases (and I am quoting still). The fall in the surplus was due to increases in the current expenditure associated with wage increases and higher debt obligations. Modest growth was recorded in the domestic debt throughout the period. However, the external outstanding debt of the Central Government burgeon (that is to say increased) tremendously in 1999 as a consequence of the assumption of the Ottley Hall debt. The total outstanding debt, domestic and external of the central government

and the statutory corporations stood at 62.2% of the GDP in 2000 compared to 44.9% of the GDP in 1996”.

The report went on to state, “ that real growth was projected to slow this year 2001 to no more than 1.5% but to increase to around to 4.5% in 2003. In this scenario Government will have to incur and overall deficit averaging 2.5% GDP over the period. The financing for the deficit would adversely impact Government finances further exacerbating the country’s debt profile”. In a summary of the main policy issues the draft report points decline under the NDP administration in the economic performance in St. Vincent and the Grenadines; that is to say the decline in growth, reduce savings and investments and not very robust prospects for an upturn in the medium term of the economy, unless urgent action is taken on all fronts. In other words if things were to continue like how they were going for the last five years, things were going to deteriorate and get worst unless we take certain kinds of action because if we were continuing how we were going we would get no more than 1.5% this year. That is what growth in GDP, that is what we were told.

Now this is a very sobering situation of which we must all be aware, and the Leader of the Opposition will on that side of the House, having been Minister of Finance for several years would be aware of this very sobering situation. It calls therefore for careful and prudent fiscal management if we are to avoid an International Monetary Fund, (IMF) programme while at the same time generating local counterpart funds for our Public Sector Investment Programme. Several measures have already been introduced to improve the Public Finances, including the situation in the Public Sector enterprises and these measures which we have taken so far have been aimed at reducing operational costs by cutting back on wastage and abuse of public funds and property, a reduction in official overseas travel and I want to say this. Some Ministers I have had to turn down their travel requests. Some public servants I have had to turn down their travel requests. Not an easy business, you have to sometimes put yourself in the position to make the judgment as to what is important, as to what is not important. Sometimes I would no doubt make the judgment call correctly, other times I would probably make it incorrectly, but that is the hand which you have to play, because anyone who has been in Government would know that there are just tones of these requests coming to you, for overseas travel and everyone of them, you can put up a justification and it is left to the Minister of Finance finally to say no to that one, yes. And to tell you the truth sometimes when I say yes, for some of them, I say it with a most heavy heart.

And then we have to eliminate official corruption and cutting out unnecessary expenditure in these ways, we are already making savings. In May and June of this year we implemented a successful tax amnesty programme whereby a large number of delinquent taxpayers were able to obtain significant reduction in the accumulated interest and penalty charges while regulating their tax status. We also cutting back on

the grant of duty free concessions, by ensuring that concessions are only given to deserving cases, and the rules and policies are made more transparent. I have met a situation, and I no doubt the former Minister of Finance, the Leader of the Opposition, every single Cabinet, there are dozens of these things which come. Everybody who wants to import anything, or importing anything they want duty-free concessions. Well if they have them, if they get the duty-free concessions there would be no money to pay salaries and to fix the roads, and to send people's children to university, and to pay the public assistance, and sometimes when I turn them down they feel that I am being unnecessarily harsh or difficult, but we have to understand the nature of the economy which we have, and the balancing act which you have to perform while at the same time having enough money released into the system to stimulate investment and to create jobs, create wealth, create a wider tax base from which you can get more money. It a difficulty which I want the general public to appreciate, and certainly Members of Parliament.

Further, we have strengthened the administrative capacity of the major revenue departments including, the Inland Revenue, the Customs and Excise Department, the Post Office and the Registry and we still have to strengthen them more, so that we will be able to make sure that what is legally due to the Consolidated Fund, that it gets it.

Then my government has moved speedily to put in place a policy framework for addressing the central economic and fiscal issues, and I have spoken about these already, we have established a Cabinet committee on the economy, a tripartite committee on the economy, national economic and social development council, and these entities are to involve the public and to make sure that we have a participation by the non-governmental organization, the trade union movement, and the business community.

Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that with the collective wisdom of the persons involved in these committees and other private sector, NGO persons and the public service, and with the help and support of the general population the public finance will be vibrant, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines will be able to place more reliance on its own ability to finance this growth and development, and that is why I say we have to do it 'together now'. And have an agreement on a core set of principles and ideas even though we may have our necessary political differences which will emerge from the rough and tumble of the competitive politics.

Mr. Speaker, the Supplementary Estimates presented here today amount to about 20 million, 5 hundred and 17 thousand, 3 hundred and sixty-five dollars which is comprised of recurrent expenditure estimates of 6 million, 7 hundred and 26 thousand, 8 hundred and seventy-three dollars and capital estimates of 13 million, 7 hundred and 90 thousand, 492 dollars. When added to the original budget for this current fiscal financial year the revised budget now amounts to 444 million, 660 thousand, 821

dollars. Further there are other supplementary estimates which will come to this House to cover expenditure approved by special warrants by the previous administration which we do not have yet entrain, and no doubt there would be some that may yet arise from this current administration. And what has been happening, and the former Minister of Finance would know this, that when you have special warrants for urgent and unforeseen expenditures, that what you have to do is make savings in the Estimates which have been approved otherwise you are going to have problems in order to “balance” the books at the end of the year or certainly to have some surplus to go to the capital side.

Before, I present the details, Mr. Speaker, I wish to highlight the fact that the Supplementary Appropriation Bill only shows that those new programmes which are now been introduced, and those existing programmes which are being supplemented in terms of both revenue and expenditure, and I’d like to offer an explanation about certain matters. The Supplementary Estimates as presented only highlights as I have said before, the new programmes and the Supplementing of existing programmes. In addition, those programmes which have been shifted from one Ministry to another as a result of the portfolio changes, and which are now being supplemented are shown under the old accounting head, and I say that so that you would be able to follow it easily. For example, postal services, which previously fell under the jurisdiction of the former Ministry of Communications and Works, but which is now a part of the Ministry of Telecommunications, Industry, Science and Technology is still reflected under Account number 55/570. The public officials would no doubt have to make the requisite changes when we go for the Estimates for the year 2002 which would be introduced at the end of the year. So that in this particular case this is only an accounting arrangement since the administration of the postal services is done by the Ministry of Telecommunications, based on those clarifications, therefore, it is obvious that in these estimates those which are not now supplemented are not highlighted, hence for the fiscal year 2001 the Estimates as passed in the House of Assembly on December the 6th 2000, and these supplementary estimates must be read as one.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to look at the details of the expenditure and I have provided for Honourable Members, in addition to the Estimates themselves, the Supplementary Estimates several pages headed “Summary of Supplementary Expenditure/ Supplementary Estimates.” The increase in the estimated Recurrent Expenditure is primarily concentrated in the following Ministries (a) Ministry of Finance and Planning. In the Ministry of Finance and Planning, and amount of \$3 million has been included to meet part of the arrears of contributions due to the University of the West Indies and the OECS institutions, and which includes the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court. We place a great deal of emphasis in this administration on the need for more functional corporation and closer integration of the Caribbean region. And we would therefore ensure that St. Vincent and the Grenadines would meet in full its commitments to the regional organizations which play such a pivotal role in the development of our

Caribbean Civilization. Provisions have been included under the Ministry of Finance and Planning to meet the administrative costs to the tripartite committee and the national economic and social development council. Mr. Speaker, if I may say this, in relation to the \$3 million, \$2 million for the University of the West Indies, when we came into office, we met a debt of some \$7 million to the University of the West Indies, now I gave instructions every month for us to bring this down. The reason being, a lot of poor people children are getting qualified and not so poor people children are getting qualified, to go to University, but if you allow the debt to run up too much at the University, they would not be able to go to university because they would not be able to pay the economic costs. And life would be very difficult for them. And I am interesting in young people going to University, so since I got into office I am chipping away every single month at the debt to the University, and now we come to these Supplementary Estimates, we are putting a further \$2 million for the University of the West Indies.

(B) Ministry of Agriculture, it is another major area. The Supplementary Estimates in this Ministry consist entirely of a provision of \$2 million dollars to honour severance pay due to former workers, on the estates at Richmond, Wallilabou, and Orange Hill to which I have referred to on many other occasions. The latest numbers they have given to me, the Ministry of Agriculture, 841 as I recall, I have the numbers here, 841. Now, this Government is a people's government, it is a Labour Government and for 16 years, hundreds of workers were not paid their severance pay which was due to them, and we are now righting this historic wrong. I know when I had spoken about this in the election campaign they said no, they said that how I lie oh. Remember those things, it is blah, blah, talk. Well, I have told this country repeatedly, when I tell you something, believe me. I am too old to come to lie to the people. I want to say that there is a number of persons who would be getting severance pay, who strictly speaking are not legally entitled, some are but others are not. You take at Rabacca where we would be paying, just over 500. The government took over the Estates around 1985 according to the records, they kept a lot of the workers on before the land reform programme was instituted. The then government therefore is responsible for the severance pay of those workers. It was said time and again, by the NDP administration to these workers that what you want severance pay for, you get land. But the people had to pay monies for the lease, which is leading towards the purchase, in any event severance pay is for your sweat, and further only some people got lands, and lands indeed which they had to pay for. So we are putting together, and have put together the records. We have done so, there may be the odd case here and there which may be left out, but if that happens we have the machinery to take care of that. But there are some people strictly speaking who are not qualified to get the severance pay, because some of them would have been laid off a little earlier and didn't get any severance pay, or even laid off before 1980 when the Severance Pay Act did not come into place. But for those persons we have given an ex gratia payment because Honourable Members would appreciate that if Mary left in 1983 and didn't get any severance pay, and Tom left in 1986 but he is getting severance pay, Mary doesn't get

any but Tom gets, there would be some sense that Mary has been discriminated against. Not a question of politics, but discriminated against from the standpoint that why is it you used that year rather than another? We who are lawyers would understand it, but the ordinary man down in Paget Farm or in Roseau or in Clifton or in Rabacca, or Fitz Hughes or Wallilabou wouldn't understand. In any case for those numbers the figure is not so large, and I am sure, and I want to hear whether any member of the Opposition is going to get up and tell me I shouldn't pay the workers, and begrudge them the money. I want them to go on record if they feel I shouldn't pay it. I am waiting to hear in the debate. [Interruption] Eh, you would hear that we shouldn't pay it? All right, we will hear the debate. I want to hear that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, honourable members in these Supplementary Estimates I want you to get a picture for two depressed areas remember how I started the backdrop to alleviate poverty, to give employment, to help the poor, to put money in people's pocket, to increase wealth. You take in North Windward about \$1.5 million will be paid out for these workers, that community is also having close to \$400,000 on the school repair programme. They are having a share of the road programme. A school is being built in Sandy Bay, other works are being put on at Post Office, drains have been cleaned, a clinic is here for Overland/Orange Hill, within a period of two to three months in that area alone, from the Government you would be having two and half million dollars minimum spinning around in that small area. Then you look at North Leeward, they would be having over half a million dollars collected on the programme for payment for the workers, then they have about \$400,000 for the schools plus other works, when you finish with North Leeward too, you coming close to about a million and a half dollars, within two to three months. The money would be flowing in those communities and are starting to flow in those communities because the school repair programme is already on; that those who doubted the word of the ULP Government must be feeling quiet ashamed, because of the progress which is now being made in practice, and we have come here to approve this money.

Mr. Speaker, so much money is going to be flowing that we probably have to put on some programmes on the radio to urge persons to manage their money properly, manage their money properly; because a fellow who is 70 years old who is picking up a \$5,000 and a \$6,000, he never expected that in his life, he would have supported the NDP for all his life, all his life he supported the NDP they denied him his gratuity, his severance, it has to be left to Comrade Ralph and the Unity Labour Party Government to deliver after 16 years. And I want to say this, I have already indicated to the Ministry of Agriculture, and I want them to go over these numbers of 841 with a fine teeth comb because I want by the weekend, before I go away to the OECS meeting in Dominica, I want to sign the list so that they would start to make the checks, so that by the time I get back here, in Emancipation month, poor people would be getting their money in the month of August. We will be making provisions for those persons who are entitled but who for those persons who are dead but who would have been entitled, and their

families must get the money. And we are making the arrangement for that to take place, and we are looking at amending the law in relation to the administration of Estate's Act to simplify the process in respect of administration to severance pay, and I am sure the Opposition in the spirit of 'together now' will support us in all those things.

The third major area, Mr. Speaker, with expenditure is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade, and Consumer Affairs. If you notice Mr. Speaker, we would be establishing a Consulate in Miami for the remaining of the current fiscal year, and we have taken the strategic decision to set up a Consulate and Tourism Office in Miami, which is the gateway to Latin America to prepare ourselves for the free trade area of the Americas the year 2006 and to close the Dallas Office which in fact we have done already, the closure of the Dallas Office will save us a year \$425,000, so that even if the estimates have increased by the sum for the Miami Office, it would be a sense of transferring the money from the Dallas Office over, so while the numbers look larger for the total amount, that would be part of the programme which will not be done, the Dallas Office, because we have to address the Miami consulate, and that is a centre of cruise tourism, so when we set up the consulate there and the steps we are taking in cleaning up the town and fixing up by the cruise ship pier, all those are integrated elements in the same programme so that the angst shown by the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines in relation to a nicely designed fence that angst was clearly politically inspired because in his reflective and genuine moment he will know that the ULP Government is on the right track in putting all these matters in a coordinated way.

Mr. Speaker, if I may just say here parenthetically and I have not spoken about all the debts which we have met only some, and I am discovering things new every day. Two weeks ago, I got a communication and even some members of the Government don't know about it yet from the Kuwaiti contractors, we still owe them \$6.7 million on the cruise ship pier, we haven't finished paying them. I am just saying I know the Honourable Minister for National Security didn't even know that because there are some details which will come to the Ministry of Finance because the Cabinet Committee on the economy hasn't met yet, and that didn't come up as an item on the agenda for our last Cabinet, \$6.7 million. I gave instructions; I said I can't pay that. I gave instructions to the Officials up there in the Ministry to write Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Development and tell them that we want to borrow \$7 million at 3% so we can pay somebody in Kuwait, because I just don't have the money to pay them at the moment. And every single day a new debt comes before you.

Now, Mr. Speaker, similarly we are upgrading the consulate in Toronto and as you notice, we are also put a Consul General's Office in New York, because we have to interface better with the Diaspora. New York is the largest Vincentian city in the world and I am quiet sure that we would not be criticized in anyway by any reasonable person for so doing, because we need to make sure that our Vincentians oversees are

properly represented and we interface with them so that they can contribute to the development of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the recurrent supplementary estimates the figures are very clear which I have outlined and they come up to \$6.7 million. But I want to turn to the Capital Estimates. On the Capital side what are the major items, the computerization of schools, additional provision \$1.69 million; when we came into office we met 11 schools with computers under the computerized programme for the Government, by September we intend to have 27 and additional \$1.6 million. Then the Youth Empowerment Service, \$815,000 where we are going to engage 350 young people, training attachments, job programmes, that is financed by the Republic of China on Taiwan. Then there is the new public library, we have the money US \$1 million from the Republic of China on Taiwan but we intend to spend EC \$800,000 this year. I have on my desk already a draft, architectural drawings and plans for this facility, and I must commend the Minister of Works for having the staff inside the Ministry to give them the confidence that they can draw up something like this which hitherto they have already been excluded. And I want to complement the Minister of Works and the staff within that Ministry. That new public library again, something for the young people.

There are \$2 million for the purchase of land at Diamond. Mr. Speaker, well this is something which the Opposition can't criticize the Government about, for eight years, they were dancing with Diamond Dairy put in liquidation, the debts have increased, you have to privatize it, and in these Estimates we are putting \$2.154 million to the arrangements come to – concluded which the liquidator put to court. \$2 million, I think it is 13 acres of land, and the former Minister of Finance knows about it, and a hundred and fifty four thousand dollars for the minority shareholders, when we do that put it in order we would be able to deal with the private sector bids so that more employment and development can take place at Diamond Dairy. All you need was a decisive Prime Minister and Finance Minister to bite the bullet and move with the question, that's all you needed.

Then, Mr. Speaker, we spoke about the Labour Intensive Emergency School repair programme, \$5.5 million, if I may just say this on that programme a report came to me that a vehicle broke down delivering some supplies and when they were taking off the paints somebody was around, or person or persons and stole two or three gallons of paint, I want to send out the word clearly that we had to fight hard for this \$5.5 million we cannot go about stealing government property, if you do that, once we have the evidence and we catch you, nobody comes to me for any mercy, we have to make sure that we maintain a basic honesty on these programmes, we don't want the school building programme to deteriorate into something like what the NDP had when you had out at the Arnos Vale playing field more windows ordered than you had space to put windows, and the same thing with paint.

Then, Mr. Speaker, in the Capital Supplementary Estimates we have an additional \$1.27 million for phase 3 of the Kingstown Hospital redevelopment, that is the wooden section of the building, we are going to knock that down and we are going to build something nice there. That is something where the former government continuing a programme by the Honourable Milton Cato, they have taken it to a certain stage too, and we will do the finishing touches, it is a 'together now' programme.

Now, Mr. Speaker, of \$13.79 million allocated for Capital expenditure, I want the country to know that \$9.05 million relates to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports to show our commitment to education and young people in this country; \$5.5 million dollars under the Ministry of Works for the school repair programme and \$0.24 million, \$240,000 for the Ministry of Telecommunications, Industry, Science and Technology for the training in informatics, to train young people as programmers and data entry people, again more money for the young, bright, disciplined persons in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Because I putting the future squarely on your shoulders and I want you to respond to it.

Mr. Speaker, financing for these additional expenditure on the recurrent side will be derived mainly from savings on the existing Estimates, for example, I have already alluded to savings from the closure of the Dallas Mission, there is also a number of projects and programmes which cannot at this stage be fully implemented during the current financial year and from which resources can be reallocated, for example the upgrade of the traffic light system, costal protection, and the National Health Insurance project. These are just some of the major ones but there are also a number of small projects which make up this pool of savings, the savings would more than make up any budgetary gap on the recurrent side. On the capital side, you have noticed how the particular items we are financing them and they are listed.

We have also negotiated two loans, and Mr. Speaker, if I may point out here, in the Estimates which were presented by the Honourable Minister of Finance then and he is now Leader of the Opposition in his budget last year he budgeted to raise \$15.8 million in local loans and \$43.4 million in external loans a total of \$59 million to finance a capital budget of \$132.4 million, unfortunately he didn't leave me any money, he didn't leave me the loans, he didn't negotiate the loans, either the external or the local. So he had the projects down on paper, was there for three months, of course he could pledge mitigation that he was trying to win his seat in East Kingstown and therefore had no time to pay too much time attention to fixing up these loans; for example, the road coming down at Murray Village by the Girl's High School right down to the Customs, phase two and three of that project he had allocate \$2.5 million to be spent this year on those two phases, and they were supposed to come from the external loans but there was no money, much as I wanted to do them, you can look it up, it is there, I'm right about it, look it under external loans and then you will see other, it is \$2.5 million this year. I had to go and negotiate the loans. I have given the Minister of

Works instructions in anticipation of these Estimates being approved and the two Bills related to the loans, one for \$20 million and one for \$30 million, that to begin the preparation for us to get on the way for us to fix that piece of road and as more money in the kitty spin and the NDP could leave it on paper but it is the ULP had to put it in fact by getting the money from sources which they did not negotiate before.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have negotiated these two loans, one for \$30 million on the local capital market and the other for \$20 million on the regional market to partially finance the existing and supplementary capital projects, notice capita, we are not borrowing money to spend on recurrent expenditure. These loans were included as I said in the 2001 Estimates which were passed in the House of Assembly last year, but it was left to this administration to negotiate with the lenders and to obtain suitable terms and conditions.

Mr. Speaker, further in order to complete the financing of these supplementary estimates we have been forced to consider some revenue measures, but these measures will not pose any hardship on the general population and indeed will strengthen the fiscal position of the government and redone to the advantage of the people and the economy as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, may I be told how much time I have left, so that I will know whether to address the revenue measures now or to leave them on the Appropriation Bill.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Well, you have as far as I am concern you had four hours. This is not the ... [interruption]

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: No it is the normal estimates, Mr. Speaker. It is the normal ..

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Then you would have exceeded your time, any way.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I would have exceeded my time by now. We have agreed upon that, the Leader of the Opposition, that it is the normal time. It is the normal time.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: One hour. Oh, no, then you still have at least 15 minutes.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Oh, I still have 15 minutes. I am obliged. It is an hour I have, and half and hour to reply. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would take the rest of the time to point out how we will finance additionally some items on the supplementary recurrent side of the budget. You would recall, Mr. Speaker, that we introduced legislations during the June sitting of

Parliament to require all external companies owning lands in St. Vincent and the Grenadines to register with the local registrar of companies. An external company is defined as a company which has been incorporated in a jurisdiction outside of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The records on these external companies are incomplete, but in Mustique and Canouan alone we have about 400 of such companies, in addition to others in Bequia, mainland St. Vincent, external companies formed outside but own lands in St. Vincent. We passed the law saying, in June we did that, you owning land in St. Vincent you have to register your company here, and the fee for the registration of such a company is \$3,000 and we have included an additional amount of \$1 million in revenue estimates from the Registry. I want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that they have up to six months to comply, but already we have sent out, communication has gone out to those companies, and I had discussions today with the people at the Mustique Company and they have already been in the process of informing their people that they have to pay this money, a one off fee of \$3,000 and we are doing the same thing with Canouan and doing the same thing with the other companies and that will not in any way bring any hardship at all to anybody in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, because it is people from outside paying that money. Then we are going to restructure the residential permits and citizenship, again these are not going to be impositions on people in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, these are people who want work permits in our country and these are people who want to reside in our country.

I propose to increase the fees payable by applicants for residential permits and citizenship with immediate effect, in addition, I propose to introduce an annual fee for person who have obtain permanent residence, this annual fee will not however apply to CARICOM citizens and to foreign nationals owning land in St. Vincent and the Grenadines pursuant to an Alien and Land Holding Licence issued by the Governor General. These increases are not an imposition on Vincentians and will bring an addition \$100,000.00 and we will let it, when we say with immediate effect complete the legislation and have it for the 1st of August, the Statutory Rule and Order. The proposed changes are as follows: Permanent residence and annual thereafter by CARICOM citizens \$1,200 to \$1500 a one off fee, by other Commonwealth Citizens, \$1800 to \$1500 but that is annual. By others \$2,400 to \$2,000 but that's annual. By non-CARICOM citizens having an interest in land it is currently \$2,400 but we will make it a flat \$5,000. So some will be annual but those for CARICOM and for non-CARICOM citizens owning lands by virtue of an Alien Holding Licence they will pay flat sums. For temporary residence and thereafter, by CARICOM citizens, \$300 it moves to \$500, other Commonwealth Citizens from \$600 to \$1,000, by others \$1,000 to \$1500. And the fees payable for acquisition of citizenship from \$1,000 to \$1500. And for the renunciation of citizenship from \$1,000 to \$1500, so that people outside who are coming in to enjoy our beautiful sea and sun and our democracy and our level of services, it is only fair that they pay a little bit more towards these things. And I don't

think that one single Vincentian would be vexed with me about that. Not at all, because I have to find and I have to piece together the money.

I want to turn to something where Vincentians will have to pay, but very small, very marginal. Petroleum products, during the last budget address the then Minister of Finance now the Leader of the Opposition announced an increase in the price of diesel from \$4.95 per gallon to \$5.50 per gallon with effect from January the 1st 2001. The Minister went on then to explain the reason for this measure which was mainly due to the increase in the world market prices of crude during 1999 and 2000. Indeed, and he can't doubt me if I say this, only the forth coming general elections then restrained him from increasing diesel by \$1 per gallon because I see the document, but because the elections was coming you only put it up to 50 cents. [Interjection] In fact he changed his mind overnight, 55 cents, quiet right, 55 cents.

Unfortunately, for oil importing country like St. Vincent and the Grenadines this trend of increase in the world market price of crude oil has not changed, and the adjustment announced in December is inadequate to deal with the fiscal problems created by the high oil prices. In deed in February of this year, the then Minister of Finance now the Leader of the Opposition he awarded an increase of 10 cents a gallon on the retail margins for all refined petroleum but because of the timing of this increase just one month before elections it was not passed on to the consumer, but because he give them the extra 10 cents in February, he would have had to increase it afterwards, so he put the hock in the gill and leave it for me. That's what he did, he put in the 10 cents in February but didn't pass it on and left it to me to try to sort out.

Now, we have to make the adjustment. I therefore wish to announce a further adjustment in the retail price of gasoline and diesel with effect from August 3rd, this year. The retail price of gasoline will be increased from \$6.60 to \$6.75, that is by 15 cents per gallon and for diesel from \$5.50 to \$5.75 per gallon an increase of 25 cents per gallon. We have attempted in this way to keep the increase to a minimum which will allow us to recover the 10 cents increase in the retailers margin and at the same time ensure that the prices of petroleum products are not subsidize by the Government. The expected revenue yield from this very slight increase in fuel prices will be only \$900,000.

I wish to inform the public that the Government is actively examining the feasibility of accessing the oil facility offered by the Government of Venezuela to Caribbean countries, and in this regard we requested assistance from a Vincentian engineer who has had many years experience in the oil industry and is now retired and has since return home we will therefore keep his matter of energy price under constant review because we appreciate how important this is to the social and economic development of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

I have a document here, Mr. Speaker, honourable members, which provides the analysis for the accessing of the Venezuelan oil, you have to deal with the issue now, of the slight increase but I am going to try and access the Venezuelan oil to put things back quite in order. So you just have to bear with me and trust me on this issue and I am not increasing it by anything which is large very slight.

In fact, we will still have a problem, because I want to tell you this, we have had to subsidize in the year 2000, oil prices for people who buy diesel and gasoline to the tune of \$610,000 and matters have gotten worst in the first part of this year. So I have to take the tough decision, but as always, if we take a tough decision there you notice what benefits we are giving all around and how we are seeking to deal with the problems and as I say that is not going to affect us in any serious way on the ground.

But I have to announce, Mr. Speaker, honourable members, something in respect of the elderly poor, something which they would be pleased about. From September the 1st, Vinlec will be reducing the basic charge which faces poor people for those at the lower end and this would give relieve to 2,800 households, reducing the basic charge from \$7.65 by \$2.65 to \$5.00. I want to repeat the poor people in this country 2,800 households are going to get a reduction as from September the first on the basic charge paid to electricity. You remember, that I had promised you, in the election campaign, \$10.00 off on the electricity, the way the electricity rate is being structured it will amount to more than \$10.00 but the direct reduction, immediately for you would be \$2.65, the basic charge. Further to that by the end of September, the elderly poor will be getting the \$10 off for the water metre. I promised you that, you are getting that by the end of September.

This morning a telephone message came to my office from the Central Water and Sewage Authority to that effect, because since we have gone in we have been working on that particular problem and the names for the elderly poor being finalized.

Mr. Speaker, I propose to amend the Excise Duty Act to make whiskey, vodka and other spirits excisable. I have been told that there is some peculiar kind of vodka which they are bringing in now, which they are using like rum. I see the former Minister of Finance, the Leader of the Opposition shaking his head, I say I have been told, because I don't drink rum, or vodka, I don't know these things, but I understand they give you as bad a head as the strong rum and people not wanting to buy the strong rum which is excisable, so I want to amend the Excise Duty Act to make whiskey, vodka and other spirits excisable. Rum produced in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and in other CARICOM countries are already subject to this excise tax, or in the case of CARICOM rum excise equalization tax. It therefore means that rum produced in the region is subjected to both excise duty and consumption duty whereas these other spirits are only charged the consumption tax, this is not acceptable, and I am saying if you want to drink whiskey, it is fair that you pay a little something more to the kitty. I

therefore proposed to charge an excise tax of \$12 per liquid gallon on vodka, whiskey, brandy and gin produced in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the CARICOM region this measure will be implemented with immediate effect, the expected annual revenue yield from this measure is \$250,000. In all therefore the new revenue measures are expected to yield \$2.5 million for the remainder of the current financial year.

I must say, Mr. Speaker, there are two pieces of legislation which are going to bring in additional revenue, but they will come as a bonuses, that law which we passed when we passed in June, the one which the Leader of the Opposition said that we are passing tax measures outside of period of presentation of Supplementary Estimates, and this is the one where rich people try to get away by forming companies, get away from paying the 5%, the 10% with the transfer tax for land, so they would form a company. The company buys the land but, when they sell the land they don't sell the land, they just sell the shares in the company and therefore avoid that. Well I was in the legal business and I know the trick, so I close that loophole, and that would bring some extra money, but I haven't quantified that yet, that will come on as a little bonus, and I have also on the Order Paper for this sitting of the House wouldn't pass it this time, I am hoping we will pass it in August because I want us to sit three days in August. I know some members wouldn't like that, but we have plenty work to do, and we have to set the example from the House. We have to work hard from here. Some lawyers would play a very interesting game on the revenue by Mr. Speaker, seeking to avoid [Interruption] you say I know it,...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: We just want to tell you, you have just about three minutes.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I am winding up, Mr. Speaker, this is the last of the revenue measures.

Mr. Speaker, they would seek to avoid the 10% by using a creative way with a mortgage, they don't intend to have a mortgage, but they give the vendor and the purchaser agree that a mortgage will be done, and that there would be a loan and the mortgage deed would be prepared in such a way that within one month the loan would be due and person who is selling the property will default on the mortgage and the buyer who will be the mortgagee will then take what is called with him the equity of redemption, and in that way avoid the 10%. That is on the Order Paper, I'm also going to block that, I know the trick and some of the lawyers wouldn't like it but I have been in the business for a good while and I know the tricks and I would try to block as many of them as I can, because I represent now the whole of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, we are therefore presented to this House Estimates of a balanced nature. Estimates which are focused. Revenue measures which no one can reasonably complain about and indeed, revenue measures which the vast majority of this country

would applaud. The people of Rabacca, the people of Wallilabou, the people of Richmond Vale, of Fitz Hughes will remember this day in the House, the 19th of July as their day when the beginning of their release towards emancipation for them to get their severance pay. This is the day when it came to the House. The people of this country would also remember this day as the day upon which there has been a formal approval of \$5.5 million dollars to repair all 71 State owned schools in this country, this would be the day when it is announced for the 10 dollar-water-metre charge will go as from the end of September, and as from September the 1st the poor people in this country – well the water metre charge will go for the elderly poor and then the poor people in this country will get from August 1st \$2.65 off on the basic charge for electricity. We doing that while we creating jobs without imposing hardships on the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines; that is what you call a workers Government, the people's Government, a 'together now' Government. I wish Mr. Speaker, that these Estimates be given a speedy approval at today's sitting of the House.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members. Mr. Speaker, we just had a presentation from the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance on the Supplementary Estimates for the year 2001 which was laid in the House this morning. In fact, what we have had Mr. Speaker, is the presentation of a mini budget. Not only did the Minister of Finance deal with the Estimates, he also dealt with the measures to raise the revenue necessary for the implementation of the additional programmes that his Government wishes to bring on.

Mr. Speaker, these Supplementary Estimates which we have before us have a few new measures, the most important of which would be the payment of retirement benefits to workers at Rabacca and other places, the youth empowerment programme and the schools maintenance programme. I would say both the youth empowerment programme, and the schools maintenance programme since they deal with all schools at the present time is a departure, and therefore a new programme. But a lot of the others, Mr. Speaker, in the Supplementary Estimates are the continuation of projects and programmes of the last administration. Essentially, Mr. Speaker, despite all of the debate on the budget in December, the bulk of that budget is still intact. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that when you are in Opposition you have a certain amount of licence, Mr. Speaker, to talk, you don't often, Mr. Speaker, have the accountability, and today I see the clear demonstration that the current Minister of Finance now faces the reality of feeling the pinch of the shoe, and therefore finds himself in a position, Mr. Speaker, in which he is making points which I have made on that side of the House with which he disagreed when he was on this side of the House. [Interjection] I didn't say I was disagreeing, I am simply saying that he is facing the reality of the management of the finances of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and I am telling you, Mr. Speaker, that it is a harsh reality and it something – unlike me he has, a lot of hair on his head, and it is something he will see the evidence of it later on as he turns to grey. That Mr. Speaker

is the reality of Government. [Interjection] No, that's all right, that is the nature, I have no problem with that, that is the nature of the system which we have, we have an election one side wins and one side lose. If I lose I accept that I have lost, but I am pleased to see that you are beginning to face the reality. You now no longer have the licence without the accountability. The accountability now lies on your head. [Interjection] He has both; I have the licence without the accountability.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister in his presentation at the beginning sort to place the general macro framework in which he was operating, and in a sense he presented a supplementary estimate in a manner if one was not careful, or did not have the experience, you would say that he is presenting a deficit budget on the recurrent side, but effectively when the figures are presented the revenue measures are not commensurate with the additional expenditure, and therefore if you look at it on the surface, Mr. Speaker, one would be of the view that there would be no recurrent surplus.

I recall Mr. Speaker, and I am sure that the Honourable Member for South Windward, now Minister of National Security, will recall how many times in this House of Assembly he criticized the fact of surplus, we are balancing the books he says, but I noticed this afternoon that the Honourable Prime Minister recognizes he has to balance the books, we have said in this House, Mr. Speaker, over the years, and we have done so for 17 years, that it is important for this country in terms of the management of its finances, to have a current surplus. The Prime Minister read from the draft report of the ECCB which is now in his possession in which they pointed to the fall off in the current surplus, from \$29.5 million or 3.9% of GDP to \$20.3 million by the year 2000, the fact remains, Mr. Speaker, that we had the surplus and I want to stress, Mr. Speaker, and I think the Prime Minister takes the point, I want to stress it that we cannot operate any other way in the context of the present international environment. We must operate on the basis, Mr. Speaker, of a current surplus. You wouldn't have an overall deficit, but certainly in the current account, it is expected by those who would fund our capital programmes that we operate on that basis. In deed, Mr. Speaker, I want to remind the Prime Minister, and to remind this Honourable House that the biggest contributor to our public sector investment programme, the European Union, and the framework agreements signed with the Governments of this region and other parts of the world with respect to the utilization of the STABEX funds, requires that we have 8.5%, 9% public sector savings, those are the targets we have to achieve. Note I said public sector, Mr. Speaker, not Central Government. So it means, Mr. Speaker, that the central government, institution like Vinlec, the NIS, the Port, the Water Authority all have a role to play in the public savings of this country, without those public savings, Mr. Speaker, we will be unable to meaningfully access the funds that could be available to us for a public sector investment programme. I therefore expect from now on, Mr. Speaker, that in this Honourable House that we would not be having any criticisms of the surplus, because I certainly will not be criticizing it from this side of the

House, because I know, Mr. Speaker, despite the fact that I have the licence without the accountability I still have an accountability to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and I will exercise that in their best interest.

The Prime Minister himself in his presentation, Mr. Speaker, did point to the fact that despite the appearance that there may not be a current surplus there are going to be savings which can be realized during the course of the year, and therefore at the end of the year he would expect to have a current surplus. So sometimes when we had the criticisms that this was not done and this was held back, you had this approved and you did not spend that, that is part of the reason and now you find yourselves having to do the same thing, and you would have to do it every year once you are on that side of the House. But, mind you, Mr. Speaker, I will continue as long as I am on this side to support any measures which are going to mean that St. Vincent and the Grenadines adheres to the requirements of International Community, and indeed, Mr. Speaker, it is good fiscal management to the maintenance of a current surplus, year after year. It is crucial.

Mr. Speaker, time and time again I have heard the Honourable Prime Minister, and he said it again today, that he didn't meet this and he didn't meet that, he didn't meet any money for this, and any money for that, what I think in his heart he knows what the real truth is, and he is playing a bit of politics, well he has the right to do that, I have the right to do the same thing. [Interjection] I will deal with the loans in due course. I didn't interrupt you.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, himself in respect of the very loans he was talking about, recognized that in the first half of this year in the throws of the election campaign, that we did have some negotiations with respect to at least one of the loans that he is bringing to this Honourable House at this sitting. The agreement was there, but there was a difference of opinion between myself and those who were prepared to provide the money, and that difference, Mr. Speaker, related basically to one or two conditions, and also there was a question of some dissatisfaction on my part with the interest rate, therefore we could not conclude it before the election, but I will deal with that more fulsomely when we discuss the loan itself because that is not before us at this present time.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the Honourable Prime Minister that I recognized that one is going to try from time to time to see ways in which one can assist, different sectors of our country, different sectors of our economy, different sectors in terms of our people in various ways, but Mr. Speaker, we also have to take into account that when we provide that assistance, we do so in a manner which does not endanger the public savings targets that we wish to achieve. This is not politics now, Mr. Speaker, this finance and, this is a situation which will affect how we earn, or able to borrow in the future, so I just want to sound that warning, although I believe the Prime Minister is

now fully seized since he is now the Minister of Finance, is fully seized of the need to approach matter of that sort in that way.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to some of the measures which are included in the Supplementary Estimates. And I want, Mr. Speaker, to start with the programme as it relates to the maintenance programme for the schools. Mr. Speaker, the programme for the schools is to cover 71 schools as I understand it, and it is hoped that a great portion of the work can be compressed between a period of 8 maybe 10 weeks. It is an ambitious programme, but it assumes, Mr. Speaker, it assumes a level of efficiency on the part of both the public and the private sector in terms of its implementation. To spend the bulk of \$5.5 million in the period of 10 weeks is fraught Mr. Speaker, with dangers in our current society, supervision, Mr. Speaker will have to be extremely tight and sometimes, Mr. Speaker, the tighter the supervision the slower you proceed, because you have to keep changing and rejecting things which you don't think are right if you are a tight supervisor, on the other hand, Mr. Speaker, if the supervision is weak or at best average, you will find, Mr. Speaker, that a lot of the money would not be spent for purposes for which it is intended. And that is the danger of trying to handle 71 schools all at once. We, to my mind, Mr. Speaker,, have many limitations in capacity to handle programmes of that type, especially in so short a time frame, we been dealing with the same public officers and the same contractors. There is no evidence, Mr. Speaker, which suggests that our private sector is so efficient, or so much more efficient than the public sector, there is no evidence to suggest that, Mr. Speaker. You go into business places in Kingstown and in many instances you find the same lethargy that you find in the public service. All of us have experienced that in going into businesses one way or the other, and I am saying, Mr. Speaker, to the Prime Minister and to his Government that they would have to hold a very tight reign on the implementation of that programme. There is nothing wrong with it in concept, the issue is do we have the capacity on the ground to implement it, in a meaningful manner or in the most efficient manner possible, that is the fundamental question that we face with that programme. And I am sure, Mr. Speaker, I am not talking politics here, I would like to see the resources spent in the most efficient manner possible but I know, Mr. Speaker, I have seen Mr. Speaker, how many of our officials in the sector and indeed persons in the private sector work on implementation, and particularly when you have to move fast and there is a grave danger, Mr. Speaker, in this programme because of that. I am not questioning the concept. I have no problem with the concept I am questioning, Mr. Speaker, the ability to implement within the compressed time frame.

Mr. Speaker, I want the public to understand something else, in this programme, Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding they would be utilizing STABEX funds, and to the extent that to do this programme how ever laudable it may be, it means we have to give up another programme because we have a special pool of funds which is not likely to increase, if anything, Mr. Speaker it is decreasing because of the decline in the

value of the Euro, because STABEX funds are denominated in Euros, and the Euro as all of us know has declined nearly 20% over the last few months, so the pool of STABEX funds in terms of EC dollars is much smaller than it was, and even as we continue this implementation of projects, unless there is some big change in the European situation, vis- a-vis the US, we are likely to see a further diminution of the amount of STABEX funds that we have available to us, so we have to take from that existing pool, it is not new money, we have to take from the existing pool of STABEX funds to finance that programme.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn now to the question of the payment of the retirement benefits to workers at Rabacca, Walilabou, Richmond et cetera. Mr. Speaker, the Government has provided \$2 million in the Supplementary Estimates for this purpose. The Prime Minister in his presentation presented it as a righting of a historical wrong, he said for 16 maybe 17 years the NDP administration did nothing, and it has taken his administration to come forward and to right this historical wrong. Mr. Speaker, sometimes we have to be a little broader than that. Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, we have to be. As I understand it, Mr. Speaker, at some point in time the Orange Hill Estates, owned by the Barnard family, and they sold their estate to the Danes, subsequent to that sale the Government acquired that estate, the question then arises was there any liability in terms of severance payment by the Danes, since the estate was in the hands of the Barnard's for all these years, was there any liability on this matter, I asked the question, was there any liability on the part of the Danes for payment of severance to the workers that is another question that I asked, those who are well versed in the law can answer it, well I think the Prime Minister knows the answer. The Government had the estate for a much shorter period than the Barnard's are we bailing out, Mr. Speaker, private individuals who should have made those payments and now paying them from tax payers money? That is the question we have to ask ourselves. You see, Mr. Speaker, any government has the right if it wants to do something and within the law and the framework of this Parliament you can provide funding to assist people in our society, but I ask the question are we bailing out the Danes.

But, Mr. Speaker, what I find so strange about the writing of this historic wrong, the Prime Minister mentioned it in passing here we had a situation, Mr. Speaker, dating back to colonial times, and which that Estate especially Rabacca what is now known as Rabacca Farms, was owned by one family in this country where workers sweat and toiled for many years, many generations, Mr. Speaker, many generations, then sometime in 1984, '85 I can't remember what year, it was one of those two years the Barnard's wanted to sell the estate, the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines at the time made an offer for the estate, there was no reply and the Barnard's proceeded to sell the Estates to the Danes, and Mr. Speaker, there is a long history to that, because the price that was announced in the sale may have been a price set to minimize the amount of the transfer tax and other payments made elsewhere, some of the same sorts of measures that the Prime Minister is talking about now in plugging

loopholes, but I'll come to those loopholes just now. So, Mr. Speaker, the Government of day, the NDP administration, rather than let the sale continue, decided that it was in the interest of the people of Rabacca Farms, then known as Orange Hill, to acquire the Estate, so a notice was published in the Gazette, one or two notices, and I think under the law when the second notice is published, the land vest in the Crown, in other words the Government becomes the owner but in the acquisition notice the purpose of the acquisition, Mr. Speaker, was for a public purpose and that public purpose was to hand over the land to workers who worked there and toiled all the years, for generations, but now we are equating that as nothing. In fact technical assistance was sought, surveying was done, and over a period of time one was able to pass over five acre and other size plot to some of the very same workers who had toiled on that estate, their fore parents had toiled on that estate, and now they were given the right to own, not work for, owned a piece of the land on which their fore parents had toil for, for many generations.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot ignore that, it was a change of a structure, a change of the status of the workers of Orange Hill and the other places. They now became owners of land, that is what they became, no longer mere workers on the estate, they became owners of the land. You know there is an old saying, Mr. Speaker, you can give a man a fish and he will eat it, and he will come back tomorrow, if you teach him how to fish he will be able to look after himself, and that was the motto behind the acquisition. So to come here and make a presentation of righting historic wrongs I put it to you that the historic wrong that was righted was when that land was leased out to the workers of the estate, that is the historic wrong that was righted.

Mr. Speaker, I know that every time we come in this House there is a harping that the NDP administration did nothing about this, did nothing about that, nothing happened for 17 years and what I have to do for 17 years you finished in three months, I hear that every day. But I am saying without the administration of the NDP the Danes would have been owing that land today and the hundreds of workers who now have leases for that land would still be mere labourers. Huers of wood and drawers of water. So, Mr. Speaker, it is not fair to present in the manner this matter in the way it was presented here in this House today. There is nothing wrong if you want to give them some extra money, but I submit to you that it is more useful for them to own the lands on which they live. [Interjection] Let me finish. I did not say that I just said there was nothing wrong if he wanted to give them, government has the right to do that, but don't place it in terms of this righting of this historic wrong, the righting of this historic wrong was when the people got the land, that is the righting of the historic wrong, and what he wants to do he wants to cover it down in all this flowery language, but the reality is, Mr. Speaker, that is the wrong that was righted. That is the wrong that was righted.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: The NDP doesn't want us to pay the workers the money.

HONOURABLE ARHNIM EUSTACE: You could try to make it whatever joke you want, the reality is under the NDP that the people go the lands.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: And they are getting \$2 million from the ULP.

HONOURABLE ARHNIM EUSTACE: Well, the ULP Government has taken such a decision, and the ULP Government has a right to take such a decision. But the ULP Government does not have the right to present it in such a manner, because it is not fair,, and you know it is not fair, but I put it down as the usual politics, so I have to respond to it in the same way. I respond to it in the same way. [Interjection] No check is coming to me so I am not pulling any check out of their hands.

Well, Mr. Speaker,

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Do you want me to read out the names of all those who going to get the money?

HONOURABLE ARHNIM EUSTACE: No, I have them right here. Well, you know, they have white angels and it have black angels.

Mr. Speaker, I have looked at this list. Mr. Speaker, the first name on the list I have before me here is someone by the name of Ray Abbott. He was employed, - he is from Georgetown, he was employed from the year 1935 to 1987 a period of 52 years. [Interjection] The list is marked deceased. I am aware of that. I don't know whose father it is. Mr. Speaker, for those 52 years he will get \$2,704.00. [Interjection] It is better to get the land. Lacy Adams, 40 years, in 1945 to 1985, \$2,028.00. This list, Mr. Speaker, has 557 names, the Rabacca list, and Mr. Speaker, most of the payments range, there are some \$1,900.00 and so forth, \$1,200.00, some even below a thousand where the person did not have as many years.[Interjection] I am not saying it is unfair. Then you have names like Felix Baptiste from Sandy Bay for 20 years he gets \$2,080.00. You have Malcolm Baptiste \$1,352.00 for 13 years, then you have some with 40 years who will get \$4,600.00. There are a number of them at \$4,600.00 and \$3,600.00. Mr. Speaker, in most cases they run between \$2,000.00 and \$4,000.00. [Interjection] I recognize that. Mr. Speaker, I have looked in some detail at this list, and I see that there are some individuals who will do better, I see a Rita Crozier here who will get \$14,963.00 and I see a Winston Crozier who will get \$19,500.00, so some people will a reasonable sum, others because of their pay, will get a significant lower sum. [Interjection] I did not say it was arbitrary. I just said on the basis of their pay, so I could not say it was arbitrary. I was just pointing out, you

don't worry about it, don't you have the list? Well I am just pointing out. I said that already, I am just pointing out.

So, Mr. Speaker, you have these persons and as the Prime Minister said some of them have already passed on and will have to go to their estate. But Mr. Speaker, I look at this matter in the following way, to me and to my party, Mr. Speaker, the most important contribution we could make was to provide the land to the persons who worked on those estates all the years, that for me Mr. Speaker, is the most important contribution. That is what Mr. Speaker, broke the barrier. That is what broke the barrier and try as we may, Mr. Speaker, we cannot minimize that, we cannot minimize it. That is what would help to change the social condition, ownership. Ownership of land which is so important in our country.

I listened to the Prime Minister last Sunday as eulogize his father and one of the sound points he made, Mr. Speaker, was his closeness to the land, and his desire, Mr. Speaker, to get the lands in areas where he worked and where he had a hard time, and I think the Prime Minister said that his father had told him that even after he has gone there in a particular area, I think it is in Mt. William, that he would like his family to own so, it is, Mr. Speaker, with these workers. They have the same interest in wanting to own the land on which their fore parents worked, that Mr. Speaker, that is what will change the social conditions, so one comes now, Mr. Speaker to the question of the payment and the ULP Administration has taken a political decision, [interjection] Let me finish now, you are to hurry, wait and find out if I agree. There is a political choice that I have to make, but I preferred the choice that was made already to give them the land. Mr. Speaker, the ULP administration is the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and that administration has the right if it so desires to either bail out some of his rich friends and it has the right also assist those who are poor. The people on this list are poor and I have no objection to them getting pay, but Mr. Speaker, I want the Prime Minister in his reply to clarify for me the legal position, because he was blocking loopholes all day, you know, as a lawyer, I want him to clarify for me the position with respect to whether in providing these funds we in fact bailing out the Danes or Barnard's who are rich people. [Interjection] I just asked him to clarify. So I look forward to the clarification. Because the bulk of the time these people work they worked with Orange Hill Estates.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: There was no obligation to pay them before 1980.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: I am aware of Employment Act, I am aware of that.

Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have remaining?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Fifteen minutes.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Fifteen minutes? Plus three. It is no bonus time that is the time that is left.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to the revenue measures. Gasoline and diesel. Oh, boy, what a life! Mr. Speaker, I recall during the last Budget debate in this Honourable House when I took the decision as Minister of Finance to increase the price of diesel by 55 cents, the argument was made in relation to what is happening with the bonus malus system that existed, and that there was a loss of revenue to the Government as a result. I remember very clearly Mr. Speaker, the opposition to that measure, indeed the member for South Windward, the current Minister of National Security, spent most of his presentation in explaining the bonus malus system and what the requirements are, the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister who sometimes have a short memory in terms of his presentations in the past also opposed this measure. The present Prime Minister and Minister of Finance opposed this measure, and so it was on that side of the House, I can excuse those who were not there before, but generally speaking, Mr. Speaker, there was opposition to the measure despite the presentation, in terms of the loss to the revenue, and in fact we were not recouping the lost, and he is saying [Interruption] Let me finish, I'll have to ask for more time, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was positive if the view earlier today when he made his presentations that it was near to elections so I couldn't go the full way, well, he is a politician so he has to know, I want to say to him now, that because elections have just finished, why he now trying to bring it. If elections were close he would not bring any measure like that in the House today. No, both of us are doing the same thing. That's right, you have it right. If elections were around the corner the Honourable Prime Minister will not be bringing any measure like this to this Honourable House. [Interruption] Well, apart from honeymoon you also have divorce.

Mr. Speaker, the increases are for diesel that are proposed, I assumed that you would hear a bit more on this later on is 25 cents and for gasoline 15 cents. Gasoline will be removed from \$6.60 per gallon to \$6.75 and diesel from \$5.50 to \$5.75 per gallon. I remember well, Mr. Speaker, the cries that we increasing diesel what it will do to the poor and to small business, but the cries aren't going to be any different now. The question is, in the present state of the economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, how will this go down? How will it go down, are we going to have increases in minibus fares, [interjection] You asked that question the last time, are we going to have that? How are they going to react to this? The diesel you say a lot of poor people use, agriculture use, those were the arguments the last time, I am using them back on you now, because you are doing the same thing for the very same reasons a lost of revenues to the treasury. And I am not going to let you forget it. You are doing the same thing that you criticized in December, but I always say when you start to wear the shoe you will know where it pinches, and this is a prime example, Mr. Speaker of that. [Interjection] You have a lot of vehicles in Transport and Works, you know.

Electricity, Mr. Speaker, I understand from the Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker that sometime not too long from now, I think he said September he is going to give a reduction in the base rate, I assume that he is talking about the rate of \$7.65 for those persons who burn less than 17 kilowatts hours in any month, because this is something that I had examined before, and as I understand the proposal, Mr. Speaker, reduce it by \$2.65 so that the base rate for the poor elderly will become \$5.00. And he went on to say that 2,800.00, he did not say poor elderly, he was very specific, he said 2,800 households, was the term used. No he did not say elderly households, I want to make that distinction. He didn't say the households of the elderly, he said households. And there is a good reason for him saying so. Because this is something that I had investigated before last year, Vinlec does not keep its records in terms of people's income. They are consumers, so that a person who is well off and has a house and who might be out of the island and nobody living in the house for a month will also benefit from this. And I want to submit to you, Mr. Speaker that there is going to be need for a very closer examination to see that they reach the elderly poor, because this also applies to those house and apartments which are rented from time to time in this country. You have a number of apartments in the area where I live which are rented to the medical students. You have apartments and houses all over this country which are rented from time to time, which do not consume a lot of electricity when they are not rented, so I want to know, Mr. Speaker, when the Prime Minister replies, I want him to give me the assurance that this benefit is not going to those who are well off. I want to know where the database is which will give him the information that the persons who in fact benefit are poor and elderly. He dealt with this matter last year. There was a discussion on this last year. Is there anything you can do for those who are less well off?

Mr. Speaker, I don't know what the base on water is but I assume that an exercise is being done and we will get the information.

I come now, Mr. Speaker, to this excise tax,...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: And while you do that you have five minutes.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: On vodka, five plus three, Mr. Speaker, on vodka, whiskey and gin. [Interjection] I hope you are speaking to yourself. Mr. Speaker, you have an excise tax, I think the increase is \$12.00. I remember, the now Honourable Prime Minister, in the previous budget, not the one that just gone, the one before, when he made some little representation to make a small increase on this on excise taxes, on rum, there was a hue and cry in this Honourable House, but Mr. Speaker, I live to see in this Honourable House that all of the same types of measures that have been criticized year after year are being brought back here, I know it is a different kettle of fish, but it is still fish nevertheless. All of those same measures, Mr. Speaker, are

being brought back to this Honourable House for implementations by the very persons who criticized them all the time, that is license without accountability. But today when you have the accountability you singing the same tune that I had to sing. Same tune.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister made some reference to succession duties, that it was the NDP administration that abolished them, but I assumed that was a bad thing now he wants to do something about that. I don't have any problem with that though. I just want to make the point over and over again, Mr. Speaker, that what we have here, what is being presented here this evening, Mr. Speaker, is a mini budget with new tax measures. You can call it any kind of Supplementary Appropriations, and the Prime Minister at the previous sitting of the House brought two additional measures so he had two then, and he has one, two, three, four more now, about six measures which should normally come in the budget at the end of the year. So what he is seeking to do, Mr. Speaker, is hoping that things will improve that come December he can present a tax-free budget. But I already fore see the whole thing long time, that is why I raised at him the last time. All these little measures, coming at different time during the financial year, and all of them are tax measures, all of them are revenue measures, and then you come and say well, 'the Unity Labour Party Administration has presented a tax free budget to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines,' not a word about all the taxes that are imposed during the course of the year, but that is not going to work, we are letting the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines know that we are imposing taxes now to avoid having to put them on during the normal budget exercise.

Mr. Speaker, it is the right of the Government to bring in measures to supplement the revenue. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that the present state of the economy and the present state of what is happening externally, and its impact on us including what is going to happen to bananas in the not too distant future, which the Honourable Minister say he doesn't know the answer for yet, but I know he knows now, and I am waiting for him to announce, all these things, Mr. Speaker, especially the tax on fuel is going to have its impact, and it is coming at a bad time, it might be a good time for the revenue, but it might be a bad time for a particular sector of the economy. And I want the Government to take note of that.

Mr. Speaker, as I close [Interjection] Wait until I vote, Mr. Speaker, as I close I want to go back to the righting of the historical wrong, because it was a very unfair statement. Because the righting of the historical wrong when the land was passed over to farmers the workers at Rabacca, Wallilabou and Richmond, that is when it was righted. If the present Government chooses to deal and give an additional payment, I have no problem with it, but I want the public to know that the historical wrong was righted many years ago. Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker, much obliged.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Thank you, very much Mr. Speaker, and since I am a man of few words I am not sure I would use up all my time. Mr. Speaker I must crave

your indulgence to recognize before I start speaking, someone who is as dear to me as life itself. The one who has made a tremendous sacrifice in order for me to be here to make representation on behalf of the people of Central Leeward and the country as a whole, who must be both father and mother for our children. The delight of my heart, my life long companion, my beloved wife who is sitting in the gallery, Mrs. Linda Tate Straker. [Applause].

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Mrs. Straker we recognize her.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Mr. Speaker, when I speak about my wife I can really wax poetic because I love her dearly, and I thank her for what she is doing.

Mr. Speaker, we have before us a Supplementary Estimates for the year 2001 and one would have expected that the Opposition without any condition or reservation would have come here and praise the Estimates and give an unqualified support to the measures being presented here. Of course the Leader of the Opposition has said that there is hardly any change between budget he presenting at the end of last year and what we are presented in the Supplementary Estimates, if that is so, he had a lot to say for not much difference. But there is fundamental difference between those of us on this side of the House and the NDP administration. In 1998 the people gave us a mandate, a strong mandate, 55% of the people said they had absolutely no confidence in the NDP administration that mandate was revalidated to a larger extent in the year 2001. We are not sitting here on this side of the House by some constitutional technicality, or through some aberration of the democratic process, we are here because we have, shown the people the programmes and the policies and the plans that we have and they have given us a resounding vote of confidence to carry out those plans and policies for the betterment of the country. We on this side of the House, see our role as asking the people to give us the power so that we can empower them and serve them. Those in the NDP administration were asking to use the people. They wanted power for themselves. All we are doing is to use the power that we have for the betterment of our people. Most of the regional and international lending organizations are saying that now our budgets, two things they are emphasizing, one, good governance and our budget should be pro-poor. Those on the other side are complaining that too much of the money given by these donor countries are going towards poverty alleviation but see that as our job to alleviate poverty in order to increase the economic well-being of the people of this country. So we don't complain and this is a Labour Government that should stand foremost with those who are poor and destitute and those without a voice and that is why we sit here. That is our basic policy. And that is the reason why foremost in all our plans is the alleviation of unemployment.

For 17 years the people have entrusted the governance of this country to the NDP and what do we have after 17 years. The statistic from the Caribbean Development Bank

and from CARICOM indicate to us that after 17 years in power the NDP has left us with the highest rate of unemployment in the OECS, the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States, and I challenge them to deny that. They have left us with the highest rate of poverty. Those are not ULP figures. Those are the figures from the Caribbean Development Bank, and from CARICOM, and I challenge them to deny that. They have left us with the lowest per capita income, and I challenge them to deny that. So we have a legacy after 17 years of the highest rate of unemployment. The highest incidence of poverty and the lowest per capita income. Now, what do they brag about? What do they have to talk about sitting in Opposition; they have the temerity to even show up here to debate the Estimates here this afternoon. They know that it is true, and what we are seeking to do is to help poor people in all of these programmes proposed by the Supplementary Estimates here.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition talked at length about the school maintenance programme where we are spending \$5.5 million dollars to make certain repairs to the 71 government owned schools in this country. I don't know whether he supports it or not, because he has made so many criticisms, and he says he supports the concept but the implementation of the programme. [Interjection] Well close to that. He has doubts about the implementation within the period of time, or the institutional capability in order to implement. [Interjection] However much you may couch it in flowery language, it comes out to the same thing to poor people, that you are trying to oppose it but you are afraid of the political licks so you are hedging and hemming in order to hide your true intent but I'll expose you. If this Government had done what it is supposed to do; and if you go to every single school and challenge them again, I'll sit down, you know, if they want to challenge me and let them take the floor, they would find that in most of the schools there are major problems with regards to repairs, particularly in the toilets. They have not done anything about it. Cavalierly they have neglected it and they couldn't care less what happened to the children in these schools. Almost every semester, the beginning of every school year, even though they had a period of time during which they could have done repairs we had serious problems at the beginning of schools with regards to the physical structures of these schools. So I know it must be a terrible rebuke to them. It is a hard pill to swallow that for 17 years they have allow this thing to go festering and here is a government in place in 100 days moving with dispatch, in a decisive way to do something to prepare these schools so that the learning environment can be one to enhance the learning process of the children. But they wouldn't give us the credit. Instead of saying that the ULP has done a fantastic job they are trying desperately to see whether they can denigrate or criticize it, or cast cold water upon it, but the people in this country they are not asleep. There are many people who have said the things we had promised in our manifestos and what we propounded in our public meetings you couldn't do them, because if NDP couldn't do them in 17 years how you expect to do them. And we asked them just to give us a chance and we would show them what a competent government, a government with vision and with purpose can do. They have trusted us

and entrusted the reigns of government in our hands, and however much the Opposition might want to criticize, they must be grudgingly even when you sleep at night and the angel touched their bawl heads, they must confess that this government is doing a lot for this country in the space of a very short time.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition talks about the lethargy of workers in the public and the private sector, for 17 years they have been complaining about this, they have done nothing about it. We have said that we must change the work ethics among our people. I agree that there is lethargy there, but you have done nothing to correct that and we are trying to create a new ethic among our people. What has happened in the past 17 years is that the NDP and the Prime Minister has been talking much as a new convert, in espousing the cause of the poor but it is not so much the cause of the poor that he is espousing it is the cause of the greedy NDP supporters who want to continually reap the benefit, collect large sums without giving their efforts for those large sums.

It is this kind of greed, this kind of dishonesty that broke the back of the camel that cause the whole country to rise up against them in April and May, and turn them out of Office. He is espousing the cause of the NDP who want to continue in their corrupt ways. Some we have learnt were being paid from the Treasury without a single days work, some collecting poor relief for people who are long dead. People going out to work, they work for one hour, and they get one days pay. People who have no experience in building back walls given fat contracts and in two months the back wall crumble. This is the legacy of the NDP, and this is what the NDP is seeking to perpetuate, not poor people but their supporters who have been bleeding the purses and putting their hands in the pocket books of every Vincentian, and they are afraid that they are going to loose that and we make no apology in having them turn out of office because we would not tolerate worthlessness, laziness among those people, NDP supporters who have been in there for years and have been reaping the benefit without making their contributions. We make no apology for that. So that when they say we victimize poor people, when they say we turn poor people out of work, what they are saying is not that, they are saying we want to keep on all those NDP people who have been reaping the benefits for years and we say Hell no we are not going to do that.

We want to create a work ethic in which we get solid work from people. It would take some time to turn people around, because they are so addictive to their way of life that it would take them a while to get them to change around. But we would change them. Because we have said quite clearly to our supporters that if they find themselves in dishonesty, or if they do the same things that the NDP has been doing for years, there would be no sympathy for them in this administration. And so with the school programme, Mr. Speaker, there are hundreds of people who would be employed, and our schools would be placed in a better position so that when school reopens the

learning environment would be a pleasant one. The Leader of the Opposition has said that the money come from STABEX funds and because of the constant erosion of the value of the Euro we are likely to get less and less. By that same token it behooves us to get as much as we can get now before the value of the Euro goes further down.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has criticized the Government, he has spent a lot of time with regards to the \$2 million that we plan to spend for the estate workers righting of historic wrong. And I am glad to see that the Leader of the Opposition has picked up on a nice phrase by the Prime Minister. It is not the first time he is doing that. He knows a good phrase when he sees it. And I am sure he would be using that for the rest of this term in this House. But Mr. Speaker, this touches me very dearly, because I am a descendant of the people who have worked on estates, albeit Rutland Vale Estate that was privately owned. I know they have toiled, I know they have sweat; I know their trials and tribulations.

The Leader of the Opposition does not know that. I was surprised to hear the Leader of the Opposition say he never knew how poor people lived until the last election when he happened to visit their homes. Their little 'ajupers,' and that surprised me because I went to high school as a poor boy with people who were better off but many of the young folks who were better off, were glad to come in the country to see how poor people lived, but he was in his ivory tower with a gold spoon in his mouth and he never knew how poor people lived, until he was ready to use poor people to vote for him, so he would walk into their houses at night and ask them please vote for him and he learnt how poor people live. Well that is a terrible indictment on the Leader of the Opposition, because I would like to carry him down to Layou, to Buccament, to Barrouallie, to Kertons and let him get a taste as to how poor people live. The former Prime Minister was born in wealth, and he doesn't know one thing about the travails of poor people, I don't even think he knows when a breadfruit is roasted, the Leader of the Opposition, he doesn't even know one thing, he's never scraped a roast breadfruit because I'm sure he doesn't want to get his hand black up. So when he now comes to expose the cause of the poor, I say welcome, when he was in government and had it in his authority to do something to the poor and we were crying to him to consider the poor he didn't understand the language. But now he is languishing in opposition [interjection] Yes, and he would be because as I have said in my broadcast for you to be truly repentant and become now one of those who understand the problems of the poor, you have to come with your head banded with a candle and a snaky to show that you are truly repentant and you understand what you are talking about.

Mr. Speaker, these people have worked hard on these estates. The Leader of the Opposition has put it, it is either or. They get lands so they have no right to have their severance pay. [Interjection] Well it is the same difference. What you are saying, you are emphasizing the fact that you gave them land and that was the righting of the historic wrong, so therefore what we are doing now is not righting any historic wrong. I

said no, it was a matter of evolution, even in the most private state in Layou. The Rutland Vale Estate, there is no estate there any longer. That estate has been cut up, sold, in the case of other estates, the lands have been leased, and people have to pay for these estates. But that does not deny the people of their right to their severance pay, and the people would have been glad to hear you say yes, indeed this is righting a historic wrong. For 17 years you did nothing about it. You didn't consider the cause of the poor with regards to their severance pay. You used the poor only at election time to put you in power, we use the power that the poor give us in order to right the historic wrong and give them their severance pay. [Heavy thumping].

And so this is an historic occasion for my brothers and sisters in Fitz Hughes and when we preach that gospel in Fitz Hughes some of those people said, and chief among them were the strong supporters of the NDP, 'they would never see that, Ralph lie ooh, he is only trying to fool people, it wouldn't happen.' But today it is beginning to sink in, and already proverbially they are putting their pots on the fire, waiting for their checks to come in at Fitz Hughes. They would understand that when we make a promise in the ULP, it is not an idle promise to get their votes, but those of us who understand what poverty is all about, it is inside of us, the Leader of the Opposition doesn't know anything of it. It is like a little boy poking his head in the school and coming out and say he has an education. You can't just walk in somebody house at night and ask them for their votes and then come out and tell me that you know how poor people live. That's not it. You have to feel it; you have to experience it, and where you live apparently there were no poor people around you, you never enter into their feelings, or if there were poor people around them, you were like the parable of the Levite and the Priest, you walked the other side, so you wouldn't have to attend to be the Good Samaritan to those who are in need. And so the poor people in Fitz Hughes, those who now live in Kertons, Barrouallie, Spring Village, who worked on the Wallilabou Estate, the bulk from the Orange Hill Estate they can rejoice in knowing, -- even those who did not vote for the ULP in knowing here is a government that has made a promise to them and is fulfilling that promise, not in 17 years but in 100 days. Many of them would have hefty sums, depending on what the law allows, and many of them with moderate sums. But whatever it is, when the checks are passed out, they would take it with gratitude because they did not expect it, and if the NDP had return to power they would never have seen a penny of this money.

The Leader of the Opposition has said that we are bailing out the Danes or the Barnards, but once the government has acquired the estate, it would appear to me that the government has acquired the liabilities attendant with the acquisition of the estate. So what he is trying to do is just to get an argument. It is a cheap debating tactic he is using that he is trying to edge something in, in order to make him appear he is scoring points, but he is not scoring any points. The more he debates the point that the Barnards and the Danes should have paid this money and the government should not, is the more he turns off the poor people because in a underhanded way he appears to

be opposing what is coming to them. And so, Mr. Speaker, the Supplementary Estimates are focused on the poor, it is pro-poor and I think as a Labour Government this is what we set out to do. I didn't come here, to this country to represent the interest of those who are fortunate, those who have connections, I have come here to join the cause and to rally shoulder by shoulder with the likes of Vincent Beache, Mike Browne, Ralph Gonsalves, Thompson, Miguel, Slater, Daniel and all those on this side who, when we sit in caucus I am impressed by the debt of their commitment to the poor people of this country. So we must proceed in that vain despite what the Opposition would say. Our commitment also goes toward school children and of course, many of them are children of the poor. The rich can import the latest equipment in information technology, they can import their own computers, but the poor people would not have the wherewithal to bring in their own computers, and because of that you would see under this ULP government more and more schools being computerized from the 11 that we met when we took office, to at least 27 by the September month, and I am sure that before the term is up in our first five years, every single school would be computerized. This is a commitment to the children of poor people. It is a commitment to educational system, and we are duty bound to help those who are less fortunate in bring them to the 21st Century, helping them to acquire computer literacy, because without a minimum amount of computer education they could not compete in this modern age and they would find it very difficult to get a job either in the country, in the region or the world. So we are committed towards computerization of our schools.

Not only that, Mr. Speaker, within a very short few years by the year 2006 we in this hemisphere would be entering in to what is called the free trade area of the Americas. All the countries within this hemisphere with the exception probably of Cuba would be part of this economic block because of that we have to make sure that our children become part of the hemispheric family and learn Spanish, so in the various high schools that are teaching French, we are going to introduce Spanish as a second language, not only that we are going to introduce on a pilot basis, Spanish in elementary schools, in order that our children can at least begin to have a working vocabulary, a working knowledge of a language that is spoken by a large number of people within the hemisphere. Some people here may have to work in that free trade area in countries in Latin America where Spanish is the official language, and it would be to their advantage if they have a working knowledge they can continue their studies, they can acquire jobs in those areas and we have made provision in this budget not only for the training of teachers but for the hiring of teachers in order to facilitate the learning process in the various schools.

Then we have the unemployment situation, and I have said the legacy of the NDP is the highest rate of unemployment in the Eastern Caribbean States. We have started to implement programmes that would have a tremendous impact on the unemployment situation, and I am sure the Opposition NDP, they are trembling about this. They don't

want to show that they are oppose to this, but they know that the more jobs are created the longer they would remain in Opposition. Because if we can alleviate the unemployment situation in five years, they know that they are doomed to their condition because the people would ask if [interjection] All fifteen. If the ULP could do this in the first term you were all fooling us for 15 years that you were there. We are [Interjection] Well, as my colleague says when the next election comes, next 15 elections come it would be all together now. All fifteen.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You have nine minutes remaining, Sir.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Mr. Speaker, we have decided to set up centres, and it is being questioned as to what we have down there with two girls in an office, in Union Island, the member for Southern Grenadines should have called and be praising us, no, you know what they were doing, you just wanted to ask questions. Don't say you don't know. You literate enough to find out, to know how to get information. If you didn't know what we were doing, you go to the Parliamentary Secretary who is responsible for the Grenadines and ask him please enlighten you as to what it is all about, and I am sure he would oblige. [Heavy Thumping] But we have these centres to register our young people, keeping an inventory, helping them to acquire the necessary skills and their apprenticeship programme that we promised, part of the 1500 jobs that we promised that we don't hear too much now from the Opposition, that we can't do it, they are very silent because it looks like we are going to do it, and they are terribly afraid of the accomplishment of this promise. And more than that. And so we have the youth empowerment service coming on with 350 young people who would be taking advantage of that, and when we have that I hope you would be man enough and swallow your pride and say my hats off to the Unity Labour Party Government for what they are doing there. I challenge the Opposition again, [Interjection] Yes you can recommend some young people for this programme because it is not for ULP people alone, it is for all young people. In this programme we would be together now. [Thumping]

For several years we have lost the major library here in Kingstown. We have raised question upon question, and I know it must be an embarrassment to the Leader of the Opposition because when I touched on this issue, I noticed he is holding his head down. I want him to eyeball me with this, the library in Kingstown. Watch me as a man. The library that you have failed to produce in this country after so many years, over 10 years. I can't remember how many years since they close that library down. And the Centre for Performing Arts and the Peace Memorial Hall, all these you have given lip service to, but you just couldn't do it, and now that we are about to deliver, I know it is hard for you but you would rejoice with us when these things come to fruition, and you would take your hats off to us, because what you have fail to do we have already obtain the money, you couldn't get the money for the past 17 years but we have the money, and I know when you drive past that library you might be a little

embarrassed to turn your head to the left to look at it because it would be a reproach to your stewardship while you were in government, and it would be a credit to those of us who have come here and make it a reality. So we are going to put down a library.

Mr. Speaker, there is much to be said with the Diamond Dairy and our acquisition, taking care of that problem that was festering there for many years, but time does not permit. I love to speak about the health situation and what we plan to do with the hospital there. But in every facet of life here, there are those who can say that this Unity Labour Party, we are not perfect, and we expect to make some mistakes, but we hope that they would be very far and few in between. But we have come to this Government and alleviating unemployment and we are doing that. We have come with a promise to help poor people and we are doing that. We have come with a promise to do something better for education, and we are doing that. We have come with a promise to do better with health area and we are doing that. We have promised to do something better in agriculture and we are doing that. And that's what we promised, and it will be a reproach. We don't have to say anything, you know, our performance would speak for itself. I tell you, Mr. Speaker, those on the opposite side I would expect them at some time to say "well, it is needless to oppose, we would have to concede that it was a blessing to this country that there was a change in Government, and the people gave that mandate to the Unity Labour Party."

Mr. Speaker, I am very happy that we have had the opportunity to bring these supplementary measures. We expect some flogging from the Opposition. They had to say something after all, but I know in their hearts of heart that they realize that this is a progressive Government, and ideas presented in the Estimates are for the benefit of the people. They may expect and speculate that the implementations of some things might not go right, that's just trying to make points and to throw cold water on it. Let us be positive and hope that every thing goes right so that the people of this country can begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel and begin to experience a brighter and a better day when their children and their children's children would be benefited from the hard work, the vision and prosperity which the Unity Labour Party would bring to this country. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I think that this is perhaps an appropriate opportunity to take a break for tea. We are going to have a long evening it appears and the Clerk has informed me that the House of Assembly has made the requisite provisions. So we adjourn for 20 minutes, half and hour? Until 6:00 p.m. Okay we try and get back here promptly at 6:00 p.m. to start. I so move, for a suspension, Mr. Speaker.

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

Question put and agreed to.

HOUSE SUSPENDED AT 5:25 p.m. (Tea)

HOUSE RESUMED AT 6:00 p.m.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I wish to rise to make submissions on the Supplementary Estimates, much of what I have to say will be consistent with what the Honourable Member of the Opposition has said but there are some areas that, because of lack of time, he was not able to cover. Now, the [interjection] Let me first begin by saying, the Government seems to have a windfall, which came like manna from heaven. If the Government intends to extend the programme that the NDP administration started and implement it in its most substantial aspects by paying severance pay and ex gratias payments to the workers who are now landowners of Orange Hill Estates and the other estates in question, that is something that we support. I support that whole-heartedly, any monies in the hands and pockets of the people in this country I think would be better spent than any money left in the hands of the Government. So if you intend to give money to these workers I welcome that. Don't however; try to compare that with what the NDP did for many of those same people who are now about to receive for the most part \$2,000.00 or \$3,000.00. There is absolutely no comparison between the land reform programme of the NDP in the 1980's and the extension of severance payments and ex gratia payments that amount essentially to a one-time contribution that is less than the salaries of most people for a month. Well, not less than yours maybe. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition is correct in saying that the historic wrong that was righted by the NDP is the matter of substance in this issue, not the payments that are about to be made by the present administration. I suppose the members of the government are in a sense jealous of the efforts of the NDP, that they don't have a similar programme with the breath and depth of vision that the NDP programme had in the 1980's; the programme which transforms people who were labourers, people who could not remove a single item of fruit from the estates on which they worked, who could not graze livestock on those estates, and who today can reap entire crops for their own benefits, who today can put down concrete structures and park automobiles on property that was once alienated in the hands of large land owners, that is the historic event that we are talking about with these three estates in question. Naturally the workers, or the people who are now landowners would be happy to receive the payments, why wouldn't they, many of them, the Prime Minister said, were entitled to severance payments, but he has admitted that some of them are just simply a hand out that he is giving them under the guise of saying that it would be discriminatory, not to pay them. It is either you are entitled or you are not. But I have no problems with that. As I say I trust the people to put the money to better use than the Government would, because that's all well and good. [Interjection]

Mr. Speaker, it is not simply a matter of land being transferred to the landless, the NDP constructed roads in those areas, that made it possible for electrification of certain areas, all that's being done now by this present administration is simply trying to piggy

back on what is possibly the most important single social programme that was instituted in this country in the last 25 years. But the people are not foolish. They know, when they get something for nothing, and they will be happy to get it. The Honourable Prime Minister said well, they voted against the NDP, but that was after 17 years, don't forget that in 1989, there was not a single member of the Opposition, and the Honourable Minister for National Security and Airports possibly would feel it more keenly than anyone else. Because he was most directly affected. That meant the end of the Labour Party, as it was and this was one of the programmes that killed it, you cannot achieve the same effect by handing people \$2,000.00 and \$3,000.00 and a few exceptional individuals \$14,000.00 and \$19,000.00 and expect it will have the same impact on the NDP, because there is no comparison between the scope, the breath and the vision of the programmes, there is simply is nothing that compares with the NDP's initiative. You know, the members on the Government side, they stand and they beat their chests proudly about what they intend to do, and it reminds me quite frankly of analogy that I think most people would find apt, and familiar of the young cricketers who come into the game having been called up to the team and suddenly they start comparing themselves to the great players, Lara and Holding and Sobers, when some of them haven't even batted yet; and they get a couple of innings, and before you know it they start scoring docks and ones and twos and you can't find them. When you have been batting for 17 years then you can compare yourself to the NDP record. The NDP, as I have said repeatedly in this House, is proud record, if it were not so they would not have been elected four times in a row. My only regret is that I didn't contribute to that directly, by being a part of the government at that time. What I would say however, is that when the Government is being generous with taxpayer's money, it must also be fair so if you find that there are other pockets in our society, and there are many where there is great need, those pockets should be addressed as well. You can't simply give to some because it suits your political ambitions, and not to others. There is great need in our society. There are other areas where people need contributions rather simply having contributions as the Prime Minister says that they are legally entitled to, because you will know that the severance payments the argument being made for it, is that there is a legal entitlement, it is not needs test. There are other areas where there is great need, I would point therefore to the fishermen in the Grenadines and on the mainland, and don't tell me that the problems are the problems of the NDP, and that you don't have time to fix it, you had made a promise to change the world in a hundred days, well, I read the "100 Days" programme. The fact of the matter is there is no provision made to assist such persons, I know that the restructuring that is been taking place in the fishing industry is causing severe hardship, and there is not a word from this Government simply beyond the funds that are voted for the repair of the fishing facility. There needs to be fair handed approach in alleviating poverty, you cannot go back to the neglectful days of the old labour government which essentially relegated the people in the Grenadines to second class citizens in this country. [Interruption] And they would have re-elected him again. Isn't that an enviable position? You try matching that. You don't get re-

elected unless you are performing. And I would to you that if you intend to match the record of the NDP then you would have to be more even handed, fair minded and much more understanding to the real needs of the people rather than the needs of the Government.

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: You are just a passing through, my brother. Just a passing through.

HONOURABLE DR DOUGLAS SLATER: How can he assess the batsman so quickly.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Mr. Speaker, I take offence at the remark of the Minister for Tourism and Culture, I meant to refer to it earlier on, because the Prime Minister himself said it, although I don't think he meant it, in any malicious way. I want to make it clear the only basis or reason for my being here is because I am elected as the representative by the people of the constituency of the Northern Grenadines, nobody else in this House has a higher title or a higher role or a higher right to be here. And I take it as an offence when Ministers and representatives on the other side of the House attempt to demean the Grenadines essentially by demeaning its representative by suggesting that I am only here as a temporary representative. That is Mr. Speaker, the kind of thing that might happen outside on the street where we don't have to observe the decorum of the House, but Rules require us to be civil to one another and I expect that the Minister would be civil with her comments towards me.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I would wish that the Member stick to your point and ignore the pekans.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Mr. Speaker, this is not pekan, I am the representative, the people have elected me to me here. I expect to be treated equally as any other representative in this House.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay, continue the debate, then. Honourable let us allow him to make his debate.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Now the next issue of course is, you hear a lot about severance payments and people who work on the estate many years ago and as I said we applaud that we welcome it, because we think the people would use the money wisely. But we hear a thunderous silence on the other side with respect to the severance payment to the people who lost their jobs in the recent purge of the bureaucracy that this government has engaged in. We don't hear anything about the severance payments for the people who suffered under the victimization that has recently been carried out by this administration. If you are going to be fair in the allocation of severance payments, take care of those people who now have no jobs, they don't have any land to fall back on, they don't have any way of

making a living, give them their severance payments as well, and I know of people in that situation, you can laugh about it, because you have a pay cheque at the end of the month, a lot of these people you are talking about they have been reduced to destitution and poverty, and that is because of the victimization that your administration has perpetrated on them. You can deny it as much as you want to. The louder you deny it, the more credence you give to it. If there was nothing to it you would not have mentioned it.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister made the point that his administration is about alleviating poverty, I have said to this Honourable House that there is wide spread poverty and that it needs to be fair in the way it attempts to alleviate that poverty. The NDP's programme essentially improve the living standards of the people on those estates, now it is up to this administration to try to do the same in other areas of the economy, and to reflect essentially on the situation, let me clarify it, the Honourable Prime Minister said in his remarks as well, made reference to the people of Clifton and the people of Paget Farm as if to suggest that some how they benefit from the severance payments. There is no programme that hands money out to anybody in the Grenadines going on down there. So that is absolutely clear. In fact institutions, buildings, programmes that were in place to come to fruition under the NDP such as the Grenadines Ferry berth facility has been taken away from the people using those facilities, the ferries. And don't tell me it is simply a matter that they still have access to it, you just look at the construction of the fence, it was never intended to allow access to that building. There is one gate that allows vehicles to drive in and out, and there is no walk way there for any body, if a vehicle is coming in you cannot enter, it is not a matter of saying that they have access to the building, if access was ever intended, it would not be done like that, nobody would design a fence in that manner if it was intended to allow access to that building.

At the same time I am pleased to see that the members on the other side are recognising the importance of the cruise ship berth, now to the economy of this country. Now it is turning out to be the only programme upon which the tourism strategy appears to be based, because looking at the Supplementary Estimates, there is not a single penny that's been voted to promote tourism other than the establishment of the office overseas. There is no strategy on tourism beyond cruise ship berth, and that is a vindication of the efforts of the NDP administration. That's much malign facility now is being turn to as the saviour of this present administration. I now can see why it is you always holding yourselves up to the mirror of the NDP. The same thing that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition pointed out with respect to the fiscal measures that you are recognizing that governance is a lot more difficult than being in opposition. Talk is cheap, and now a lot of the measures that you decried when you were in Opposition, you are now finding yourselves within the first "100 Days", I don't think that was one of the pledge, you are now finding yourselves raising taxes no fewer than four times.

We look at the last sitting of the House we had the Hotel Tax, sneak in one day, no debate, no consultation, I read it, I understood it, it raised the interest rates, it also increase the number of hotels that would be covered by the tax. If it were not a revenue measure, why would it be introduced? Then you have of course,..

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, on a point of correction, would the Honourable Member give way. The measure that was introduced was not a Hotel Tax, it was a tax in relation to occupants of hotels. It is not a Hotel Tax. That is to say persons who go to a hotel and use the bar and restaurant and hotel facilities will in fact pay a tax, that tax exists for a very long time and all what happened rather than having it applied to hotels with six rooms and above, occupants in hotels of six rooms and above it is applied to hotels with five rooms, because the Hotel Aids Act defines a hotel to get the concession as one of five rooms, it is not a tax on the hotel. And let us speak the facts as they are.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Mr. Speaker, it is called the Hotel Tax Act. I say, if it looks like a duck and it quacks like a duck, it is a duck; end of story. The next issue of course, is a price increase on fuel which is in fact a tax on all people, so it is "for all ah we", this tax is for all ah we. Last sitting it was for the hotel industry, we have now a tax for all ah we. So everybody, all the people who drive their buses from Colonaire and Georgetown and from Mespo and from Chateaubelair to Kingstown would have to pay more, for every hundred gallons of gasoline they purchase they must pay a extra \$15.00, for every hundred gallons of diesel you have now pay an additional \$25.00. That is a tax. It is not a defence to say the NDP looked like they were going to impose the same thing after the election. If all you come to office to do is to follow what the NDP would do, I think the people would be very disappointed in you. What it is, is that in the first 100 days you have introduced tax, after tax, after tax on the people of this country. And the Honourable Leader of the Opposition had it right when he said that in fact what's being done is you are sneaking taxes on. What will happen to the fishermen who are already in a destitute situation who now have to buy fuel, gasoline, for 15% more and they cannot find markets for their fish, that their fishes are dwindling in their catch.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, on a point of correction again. Fifteen cents per gallon, if the Honourable Member gives way, it can only be 15%, if the cost of gasoline was a dollar, but he conceded this morning when he was paying tribute to Mr. Drakes that he knew no mathematics; 15 cents and \$6.60 please put 15 to calculate it, put 15 over \$6. 60 and multiply by 100 over 1 and then you will get what the percentage is. That's how it is done.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Well done, Honourable Prime Minister. The fact of the matter is ultimately, it is a tax whether it is 15 cents, 30 cents, or 20 cents

you cannot get away from the fact that you have imposed a tax on people who can ill afford to pay at this time. It may not be in the amount that I previously indicated, but the fact of the matter is people in the fishing industry, the tourism industry, who drive taxis around the place, they are already complaining about the low fares that they have because of the reduced number of tourists. The fault, ladies and gentlemen, lies in the answer of the Government. You are the Government, you can take the credit, you can take the blame. What happens is you have a situation where you have fishermen, as I said, who are now stretched to the limit. You have taxi drivers who are stretched to the limit. You have bus drivers who are stretched to the limit, and small business operators who are stretched to the limit. And what you do is you have imposed another tax on them. That was not what the people bargained for. What I would suggest is that the Honourable Member, Prime Minister do, is that put some measure of relief for people in the industries that are affected, such as the taxi drivers, you might consider reducing the import duties, giving a concession on those vehicles that are used for a commercial purpose. That would contribute tremendously to alleviation of poverty in this country. Because it will enhance the productive assets and allow people to use what they have to make a living, rather than waiting for the next hand out from the government.

Mr. Speaker, we have the issue of the school repair. Now this programme is essentially a make work programme. What has happened is that the Government has essentially created two months of employment to bolts their short term image, what happens in September when the children go back to school, what I would advise the Government as my civic duty, a responsible citizen, what I would advise is that in the execution of this programme, that you consider the real needs of the schools and the education system, rather than the needs of the Government. By that I mean that where the repairs are truly needed they are done, where they are not whereas in the primary school in Port Elizabeth Bequia where no end of repairs, no amount of repairs now can continue to salvage that building, that you pledge to replace the building as the NDP administration had made that a high priority of successful term of government. No amount of patching of the primary school and the harbour in Bequia will do the trick, so I asked and advise you to take the bold step and you adopt what was pledge by the NDP and build a new school, because you will be throwing good money after bad if you try to fix it. [Interruption] Rebuild it. I want you to fix it by rebuilding it.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: And if I don't rebuild it in September, don't fix it.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Mr. Speaker, could I have the last few minutes of my presentation uninterrupted?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I would definitely love that, but you are also responding to the questions. You are tempting them. Anyhow you have another 13 minutes to conclude.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: I want to change my approach then, ask that be allowed to make my presentation uninterrupted. I know when it cuts close to the bones the Honourable Members on the other side can't stay quiet.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Let us allow him to make his presentation uninterrupted.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: I would ask that I be allowed to finish because time is short.

The issue in the Supplementary Estimates again this is why, I say that there is no evidence emanating from the Government that they have a concerted strategy as to how to develop tourism in this country. There can be no development of tourism without quick work on airport development; nothing in this Supplementary Estimates deal with that. If you say you are going to build an international airport, go ahead and build the international airport. But do it very, very quickly because otherwise there would be great suffering in this country, waiting for this panacea to emerge. Our position of course is that, funds should be allocated to remedying the deficiencies in the Arnos Vale Airport; this is a priority, Mr. Speaker, how it cannot be recognized by the Members of the Government it bothers my mind. The Government is placing all of its emphasis on the cruise ship berth and totally ignoring the importance of the development of air transport. That is absolutely essential for tourism. It is absolutely essential for our economic development. And these Supplementary Estimates, while the spending of another \$20 million dollars of taxpayers' money, make no provision whatsoever for creating productive assets that will enhance the wealth of the country. You don't create wealth by handing out \$2,000.00 as the Deputy Prime Minister erroneously thinks. You don't create wealth by giving somebody \$2,000.00. You create wealth by giving them the means by which to create employment and to create their own income.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: We are righting a historic wrong. They could spend the money how we want.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister is making a habit of coming to the House now and complaining about the bad hand, and how come he didn't have any money and so on and so forth, to do the programmes that they want to do. As the Honourable Leader of the Opposition pointed out in his presentation, that is the nature of government in a country such as ours. It is not going to get any better. It is not a creation of the NDP, but the NDP functioned effectively and magnificently for 17 years under those problems. You are complaining about them

as if to say there is something better with which to work. But any government who pledges to make ex gratia payments as the Prime Minister says, who buys a luxury car for the Prime Minister. We all know that Mercedes Benz there is no symbol of luxury that is recognized more in the world than the symbol of a Mercedes Benz. The optics are terrible, no matter what the price. It looks bad in a situation where you have people cannot sell fish, they cannot catch fish, people are facing the bread lines in the banana industry, and the government allocates funds to buy not a car that is more in keeping with our means, but rather to show off with one of the most recognizable symbol of luxury anywhere in the world; that it seems to me, Mr. Speaker, [Interruption] I know I am interrupting the Leader, but it is not the Leader of the Opposition. I am not embarrassing the Leader of the Opposition, that I know. The Honourable Prime Minister has not made any real effort to defend it, he simply says that they needed a good car to drive, and fine. I would like to be able to afford a car like that myself too, but I think that in these times it sends the wrong message to the people of this country.

So, Mr. Speaker, in sum what we have in this Supplementary Estimates we have on the one hand a generous government handing out payments which we say thank God is a good thing because the people would use it well, but on the other hand you have a government who is imposing taxes and creating heavier burden on productive assets in this country. At some point those two contending forces will cause serious problems in this country. You have to be, as the Honourable Leader of the Opposition took pains to point out repeatedly during the election campaign, you have to be able to understand what is required to manage and economy effectively in this day and age and the evidence of that from Government is solely lacking. And yes, the people voted you into office, but don't think that that means, that you suddenly become emperors and kings. The people will hold you responsible, and when you impose new taxes through gasoline price increases, diesel price increase, hotel tax increases excise tax increases on vodka and various other means, all you are doing is taking money out of the hands of the people. And if you don't use that money responsibly then the people will make you pay. And it is my conclusion, Honourable Mr. Speaker, that in this exercise here as the Honourable Leader of the Opposition says, the Government is essentially trying as it has done in the past to push through measures quietly which will have a severe impact on the economy of this country. I will say it four times until it resonates in your brain.

Mr. Speaker, there are many other things that the Government could spend \$20 million on. I believe that there are some good initiatives that they have continued such as computerization of the schools; that is a productive investment, but that is inherited from the NDP administration. I am glad to see that it is being continued and hopefully it would be expanded. I think that's a good thing. In time the areas of this essentially what is a mini budget would become evident, and though you might snigger and laugh because you have the vast majority on your side, the people beyond this room are listening and they hear what you say, and they hear what sometimes what we say

when you are not speaking so loudly on the other side. [Interruption] And I hope you can continue to deliver those cheques later on in the year. You continue to give fish rather than teach people how to fish.

So, Mr. Speaker, like the Honourable Leader of the Opposition I have severe reservations about the Supplementary Estimates that are presented here, we do not believe that taxes should be imposed in this manner, that they should wait for a full budget. We also recognize the importance of the severance payments to the administration, and we ask the people who receive these funds to use them wisely as we know they will. It is an extension of the NDP programme, and it is one that we support. What we call on the Government to do however, is to extend the same even handed approach to those people who were recently purged from the Government's employment. All the people who were victimized, are waiting for their severance payments as well because we know they are not going to be rehired. [Interruption] Well I hope they haven't died from the pressure you are putting on them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker, this debate is comical in parts. Sometimes I have to laugh, because it appears that some persons on the other side do not understand fully what supplementary estimates are. The honourable representative for the Northern Grenadines spoke that he saw nothing for airport development. He fails to understand that measures that we are bringing is to the tune of some \$20 million additional to what was in the \$2001 Estimates. If we look, Mr. Speaker, he says there is no money there, but if we look on page 434 of the Estimates, Capital under project number, 559 806 you would see that was approved in this House for this year a sum \$100,000.00 as counter part funding for airport development. So that sum is there, I must admit and agree that it is in the Estimates, whether funds are there to do this is another matter. If we go to page 438 and project number 55013 airport development for reconstruction of ET Joshua that's the remark given, you would see that there is a sum of \$5 million for airport development ET Joshua. And a little further down the page, if we go to page 55013 from the Republic of China the other one above was also from the Republic of China which was grants the \$5 million you would see here that under external loans the sum of another \$5 million, so in total we have \$10,100,000.00 estimated here for airport development for the reconstruction of ET Joshua Airport. The Supplementary Estimates had to come about because there were things that needed to be done. That had to be done for which there were no provisions. We could have gone along, the Honourable Minister of Finance/Prime Minister could have done it as it was done in the past, right out special warrants and nobody would know about it until you bring it to the House here next year. By then the money would have been spent, but we don't work like that. We want transparency and so we had the option that we can either do it by special warrants or we can do it by Supplementary Estimates and that is what we chose to do so that the people can hear it, they can come to this House and be approved before it is spent.

In Special Warrants, Mr. Speaker, the monies are spent and you can't do anything about it. When you bring Special Warrants to this House, those monies are spent already, they are faith compelling and so you have to approve them because they would have been spent. In this case we feel that it was necessary and in the best interest of transparency and good governance to bring the Supplementary Estimates here for approval before the monies are spent, like we do with the annual estimates. So all the song and dance is either, it is not understood or someone is trying to throw a fly in the ointment.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister spoke about the historic rights of the wrongs that we have done to the people, you heard the members of the Opposition say that this historic wrong was righted when we gave out the lands at Orange Hill to the people, in 1982 or there about, we had land reform in Wallilabou, we had land reform in Richmond, we had land reform at Colonaire, we had land reform in San Souci, we had land reform at Grand Sable, we had land reform in Langley Park. What are you telling me, and not only that we had land reform with a difference, the same people whom we are going to pay the severance pay for in Richmond and Wallilabou Estates they got lands, they were entitled to their severance, it was not a trade off, but our land reform had a difference, major difference in that you can't just take peasant workers, take them out of employment say here is a track of land work it, when we did our land reform we gave a total package that the persons who were deprived because they were not working, of employment and got lands they were given income support, and they were given loans to work the lands. This never happened in Orange Hill, and if you look back now, and I am leaving it for the Honourable Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture to deal with it, if you should take an account now, you would see, and I don't know what percentage it is, but a very large percentage of the persons from that area, from Orange Hill, Sandy Bay who got lands there, have sold over their leases, and you know who they have sold them over to, not people within the area you know, people from south of the Dry River, because those were people who were working lands had the knowledge, the expertise, we do not even give those persons who we gave land to in Sandy Bay technological assistance. We didn't like we did at Richmond, we did not assign Extension Officers to help them, and they were left on their own. So don't talk about you gave lands and therefore you don't have to pay the severance payments.

I have no brief for the Danes. When the Danes took over the estate they raised the labourer, workers pay above the minimum wage, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition speak about some people getting -- one woman who worked for 20 years she is getting \$4,000.00. Of course she is getting \$4,000.00. When you work it out, over 20 years it is working out at a hundred dollars per week, \$20.00 per day, 5 days per week and that is how the severance pay is calculated. But you are saying now they are getting \$4,000.00 therefore you shouldn't pay them because it is a little bit of

money. But that is what the formula represents. [Interruption] No, I am not saying that you say that, it is implied, if you want to say that the formulation in the Protection of Employment Act should be amended and made better is another matter. But as the law stands now, Mr. Speaker, the basis on which we calculate severance pay it is set out there, two weeks pay per every year.

Now the question arose, Mr. Speaker, about whether we are paying the Danes debt. Well let me just read a couple of sections here from the Protection of Employment Act, Cap. 1590, section 14, states quite clearly,

“That where in the event of an employee subsequently become eligible for severance pay by reason of termination of service by the successor/employer the severance pay payable to him by the successor employer shall be calculated taking into account his earlier service under the previous employer.”

Do you understand? So you can't tell me that you take over the employment and you are not entitled to pay the severance pay. You should have known that when you were taking it over. When you went to arbitration you should have worked all of this out in front of the judge and the panel and arbitrators to say well, we are paying less, work it out, and say we are paying so much less because I have to pay severance to these people. [Interjection] That is the whole matter. It goes on further, Mr. Speaker, that in Section 15,

“Where the service of an employee has been terminated by an employer with no date or recall given him or a date of recall which in the period of six months such termination and within that period the employer transfers his establishment to another person the previous employer and the subsequent employer shall both be jointly and severally liable to discharge severance pay that may be due to the employee in accordance with the provisions of this Act.”

So we acquire and we took no notice of all of this, so we don't pay. And we give certain persons lands to work, what about those who didn't get lands, not one Daniel, not one, from Sandy Bay who work on the estate (and you can check the record), got one piece of land, even though they were qualified to work the land and had the qualifications to get lands. So what we are talking about, Mr. Speaker, we have felt that it is an injustice not to pay these people their severance and now we are going to pay it, we have 'ifs' and 'buts'.

Mr. Speaker, the lands that were given to the workers at Rabacca Farms when had land reform in Richmond and Wallilabou we lease the lands to the people at \$120.00 per acre per year, for the good lands, do you know what the terms and conditions of

the lands in Rabacca Farms was granted that what we did was a few years earlier, they have the first year free, the second year they were \$750.00 per section, and I am coming to that and after that, it went to \$1520.00 every year per section. Now let me show you the slipshod way in which the NDP administration did their work. A section in this case did not matter whether they had half an acre, or five acres, so if you had two acres you still had to pay \$1520.00 per year for the two acres, but if you had five, and you know what that means Mr. Speaker, you had your friends and those who you were partial to and you give them 10 acres of land and they would only pay \$1520.00 but the other persons who got two acres still had to pay \$1520.00. That is the way they did it. So when we talk [Interruption] \$1520.00 per section, yes, as a matter of fact if I remember rightly, because somebody had brought the copy of the lease to me when it started, it was supposed to be \$1500 per acre per year and people started to rebel; and then they came to a compromise and bring this to \$1520.00 per section. So people who have 20 including, I am told, in other names of former Minister of Agriculture in the last government, at Orange Hill, acres upon acres, still only pay \$1520.00. Those who have 30 acres and let them tell me that this isn't the truth, and those who have 10 and 20 where is the equity and this is what is happening.

So you see, Mr. Speaker, we understand what is happening. We have one, I am not going to say comfort, but you know what the defacto leader of the NDP says, it is only two people can run this country. Dr. the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves and himself. And this is no joke, that's what he said, there are only two people who can run this country Dr. the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves and himself, so at least we know we have a good leader, because even the defacto leader of the Opposition has conceded that point. This is not Nancy story, check it out, when I come here to speak, you know, I don't tell lies. I am telling you exactly what happens and people know me for this; check it out. All right. So we know, what is happening. I agree that it is unfortunate that increases and the price of fuel, gasoline and diesel, had to go up.

But you see, Mr. Speaker, for years I came here and I stated under the bonus malus system, when the price goes down the consumer must benefit and when the price goes up then we would have an increase, for years, and it is in Hansard here. I have been saying regularize the situation, we have collected up to 3,4,5 and some times \$6 million excess revenue on oil that is not really legal. So we got in the good times all these excess funds which we squandered, and it is true now with the high price in crude oil that petroleum product, the price to us is very high. And cannot sustain itself. I have not worked out the price, and I don't know if the Honourable Prime Minister did, but I am not even sure that in diesel that the 15 cents per gallon that you are going to break even. We are hoping anyhow that the price of crude will be reduced, would be at a reducing stage, so we are trying all to try to get things going and to ease the burden on the people. We have wasted tones, Mr. Speaker, of monies. If we go back, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for Northern Grenadines spoke about the fishermen. And I am sympathetic to the fishermen. We didn't get St. Vincent on the

black list, the IMO's black list. We had to fight hard to get off, we didn't get St. Vincent on the ICATT black list, we had to fight hard, and that is not even finished yet. We are told about the great contribution that the NDP government made to this country, we are saddled with a debt of over \$2 million on Ottley Hall. \$7.5 million per year in interest payments. You understand, Mr. Speaker, not \$750,000, \$7.5 million per year in interest alone. And we have not started to pay back the principal yet. But we have it there; we have the cruise shipbirth up there. We were told that our entire tourism thing is on the cruise shipbirth. Do you know how ashamed I was, Mr. Speaker, when I'm told by people when I go out, your country is dirty. Princess lines say they not coming here because your country dirty. That is true. That was not under us. We have beautified the place, and we are getting criticisms for it. We try to clean up Kingstown and we are getting criticism for it. We are cleaning up the airport and we are getting criticisms for it. We put an extension at the airport there under the NDP where the hotel bar is upstairs, and they forgot to put in washrooms. So you go up there to eat and you can't wash your hands, as an after thought they came down back where you should have places for the airlines you had to make do and put a washroom downstairs. All this is under the NDP administration, not under us.

We have the Campden Park Container Port, I just got a letter from a firm called Interbetton that we were owing them US \$575,000. I don't know for what. We wrote back to them and asked them to give us a break down, and what we owing them for on the Campden Park Container Port. Another 6.7 on the cruise ship berth,, but that's not all, we were told that the damage there on the cruise ship pier was little or nothing, we never got any money from the World Bank or the United Nations or CDB for Hurricane Lenny's destruction because we said our damage was small, but you had Dark View and all the others, but because we did not insure the cruise ship pier we are now saddled with a debt to repair it of over \$10 million, first they say it was \$5 million. When I say we, I am talking about the NDP administration, and all this is the administration that is so good. When we stated here that the reasons given for building an airport in Bequia did not justify building an airport, we even went so far to say it might be better to get a helicopter ambulance, because that was the reason given that people who were sick want to come over. It is a white elephant. You see that is the problem. The NDP administration has done its dirty jobs, and we are saddled with it, and we have to now turn around to make the thing work. We have to turn around to make it work. But we will make Ottley Hall work, not for what it was conceptualized. The debt is there, the job is done. The monstrosity we have out there we will make work, but we can't move it as the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines say. So you have to make do with what you have. We spent \$16 million without the interest on the Union Island Marina, borrowed from the National Commercial Bank, poor people's money that is gone, Rolla rolled away with it. All of this we are speaking about. You have seen, Mr. Speaker, the receivables in the Marketing Corporation, over \$1.6 million people has been using it as if it were their personal thing, you go up and you get their credit and they never pay, \$1.6 million

dollars. We say you must take them to Court and we would do that. But for years this is what has been happening, a free for all. You heard what happened the Minister of Social Development told you about the social welfare, I am not going into that. Prime Minister Mitchell was engineer, architect and everything for Union Island Airport; Environmentalist and everything. Remember when that question came up about that rock that they had out there, what they call it, what is the rock at Union Island? Red rock, he said he knew it was dead area, no marine life there, and he wanted the Marine there, so he put there, the next thing you can't get airlines going there of a certain size. He has killed the whole economy of Union Island because they say it unsafe. The same thing happened with ET Joshua, we talk about it, insufficient apron space, they say, plus other factors that the FAA says make the airport unsafe. I am not saying that I am agreeing with what the FAA says. But all these didn't come under the ULP's watch, all these came under the NDP's watch for 17 years. We inherited a situation over at the Prisons here, and you told all here that within two weeks you will never see another person upon the roof. So we have to clean up the mess. We did it in 1974 under old labour, and it is a whole lot of mess this time, Mr. Speaker, but we are capable and we are willing and we will clean up the mess. But we have the public to understand that you can't do it all overnight. Because every time we clean up one set of mess and you think well, boy I am getting somewhere, you find another big set of mess coming up. That's what is happening.

So, Mr. Speaker, I can't see that anyone could have any objection to the little increase \$20 million including the current expenditure and capital expenditure out of a total of some \$400 and something million, let me see what percentage is that, I don't know but, very small. I haven't work it out.

The question came up, Mr. Speaker, about surplus, and I did speak about surplus and I would do it and I hope that we wouldn't do the same thing, and I can't say that we are going to do the same thing. I am not saying that there should not be surplus, but the point I was making at the time, and I will give you one figure, let us take 1998, [interjection] wait, you would understand that I can't win it. Wait. We had estimated revenue, recurrent I am talking about of \$242 million, and we had estimated expenditure of \$241 million, leaving a surplus of \$1.1 million. I don't have a problem with that. But where I have problem, Mr. Speaker, is that we collected in revenue, \$241.5 million a little less than what we estimated. As a matter we collected \$200,000.00 more than what we had estimated to spend, but we only spent \$205 million. So despite the fact we collected the revenue as we have said, and said we would have spent \$242 million, we only spent \$205 million which meant that we spent \$35.9 million less, that is my concern, and my thing is that you are collecting the revenue and you say you are going to have a level of surplus but deliberately keep the expenditure down, I'll give way if you want; keep the expenditure down so that you can have greater surplus, those are my concerns. Do you want me to give way? I don't mind giving way.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, that is precisely the point that the Honourable Prime Minister was making this evening, when he made his presentation, because in the presentation if one were to look at the Supplementary Estimates and add them to the existing Estimates for 2001 you would find that in fact we have a deficit budget on the current account. And what he said that savings will be made, during the course of the year to ensure that it is a current surplus. So what he is going to do is spend less. So what you are saying is inconsistent with what your leader is saying, because if you add those you would have a current account deficit.

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: You see, Mr. Speaker, there is no problem with spending less, you know, it depends on what you spend the less on. That is the thing, if you are selective, and we know for instance that the \$10 million for the improvement of the ET Joshua airport that you are not going to spend \$10 million, I am only just drawing that example here. If you know that you are not going to just send money out just willy nilly without being accounted for to the Missions in Washington and New York and so on, is another thing completely. So these are some of the problems, I am not going to deal very much with the programmes we have going with the schools and so on, and with the road programme. But the Honourable Leader of the Opposition himself says he knows what is happening in the Service, and what is happening in the Ministry of Transport and Works, but if people who are not performing, or are incapable of performing, or dishonest you get rid of them, then that is victimization according to them. That is victimization because it is my [Interruption] Exactly. You see there is the culture in the Civil Service that if somebody is bad you move them from Ministry A to Ministry B and then to Ministry C and then he goes the round circle and he comes back to Ministry A. that person still is not going to perform. Still is not going to perform and we have to understand this and understand, and I agree with the Leader of the Opposition that people have to work as he said in the tribute to Smiles Gonsalves, this morning, that the breed is dying out, but if you nurture, and by cross pollination or whatever it is, you can breed even a more resistance, train, and at least get a better product, and that is exactly what we intend to do. So, Mr. Speaker, I don't see that anybody should have any problem with giving this bill, Estimate and easy passage and so I support it, Mr. Speaker, and I think it was an excellent feat by the Honourable Minister of Finance and the other civil servants who worked hard. I know how difficult it was to get funds. I went with him to Taiwan and I knew how difficult it is but if people see you are honest, and you mean well, and you will work hard and you have a vision they are usually prepared to take and trust and to assist you. I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE CONRAD SAYERS: Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I too, like my colleagues, rise to make my contribution to the debate. And I hate to call it a debate because an effort to have the passage of the Supplementary Estimates of this nature, should not call for too much of a debate, that

is to say, if we feel ourselves indebted to the progress of this country. Nevertheless, it seems to be developing into quiet a keen level of debate. Before I proceed however, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to preface my contribution by making observation to the presentation of the Honourable Member for Northern Grenadines. There are number of these which he said, first and foremost, I am a bit surprised that he took offence to the statement by the Minister of Tourism and Culture that he was passing through. I think if he understands the nature of life, he would agree with Shakespeare that life is stage and we all are actors, some have their entrances and their exits.

Mr. Speaker, I know that there is time, in fact, you look on the wall and you see several Governor Generals who have passed through, nevertheless I understand the thinking of the Member and would then pass on to something else.

The other statement I found strange from the Member is a reference to the Prime Minister's Mercedes. Let us understand this is not a vehicle for Dr. the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves, it is motor car or vehicle for the Office of the Prime Minister, and so as Vincentians we should feel proud, Mr. Speaker, that we can give our Prime Minister a vehicle that is decent to drive around in, rather than have something that is broken down. In fact the Member himself said that he wished he could have one, so I don't know if it is an attempt to elevate himself above the office of that of the Prime Minister. Nevertheless we shall also over look that, faltering.

The third thing, and perhaps the last is my surprise at hearing him say that putting money in the hands of the people who have been severed from their jobs in the form of severance payments is like giving them a fish rather than teaching them how to fish. You, see, Mr. Speaker, thank you Honourable Prime Minister. The disguise is coming to the surface. Mr. Chairman, sorry, Mr. Speaker, all of us know that, and you must understand my newness to the House, would put me back into some former manner of addresses, so I would continue to pay attention to the fact that we are talking to the Speaker. Now, Mr. Speaker, you must understand that workers who have been given access to lands are in need of very valuable important resources and in economics we know that the primary resources for any enterprise are land, labour and capital. They may have the land, but many of them cannot approach the bank for money, and they very much welcome that gesture, keeping that promise made by the Honourable Prime Minister to provide that long awaited and overdue money that belongs to them. And so we all should feel proud that we have a government that is so forth right and keen in making its promises good to these people. So I am sure that when the people of the Northern part of this island get their money, many of them would be glad to perhaps build some livestock houses, or to do something on their farms, maybe acquire some irrigation, or something that would enable them to farm in a more productive manner, hence I applaud the effort, Mr. Speaker, and I am pleased to be associated with such a move.

I want to turn now to the debate of the Supplementary Estimates of \$20,570,365.00 or \$20.57 million thereabout. Mr. Speaker, if you take the question of Diamond Dairy and my colleague, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Trade, the Deputy Prime Minister run out of time when he wanted to comment on the Diamond Dairy, but if we consider that the Diamond Dairy has been in a state of liquidation for about 8 or so years now, that there has been no production going on there, that people have been sitting there, day in and day out, and being paid from the Consolidated Fund each month from tax payers money, and not producing anything, and month after month, year after year this thing was perpetuated by the former administration. And none of my colleagues over there who are so concerned about the tax payers money seem to have thought that that was a serious problem, nevertheless Mr. Chairman we have a government, that has moved speedily, Mr. Speaker, to resolve the liquidation problem and so has allocated a sum of just over \$2 million, in fact \$2,154,000.00 to bring to a closure the liquidation of Diamond Dairy, this would make, clear the way for new owners to take over the company and to have the company running again, contributing to the productive life of this country, or the GDP of this country. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Speaker, I seem to have a fixation there, I apologize, Mr. Speaker, I move now to the question of education to which from a Capital Estimate of \$13.79 million provided \$9.07 million of that Mr. Speaker, is allocated to education, this is indeed a good indication that my government is totally committed to the development of the education of our people in this country, because we are aware, Mr. Speaker that if our country is going to take its rightful place among the developed nations of this world in this 21st century then our people must indeed be properly and roundly educated, that education, Mr. Speaker, will provide the development of relevant skills, useful knowledge and the right kinds of attitude. Skills like computer technology skills, and informatics, in other forms of telecommunications, skills that would promote the development of this country and enhance the competitiveness of St. Vincent and the Grenadines among other nations of the world, skills that would help our people to live with a higher degree of tolerance, help our people to embrace democracy, help our people to change work ethics and hence become assets rather than liabilities to this country. So once again, Mr. Speaker, I applaud the effort of this government in putting such great emphasis on education.

The question of employment, Mr. Speaker, you would recall, that this government promised, prior to being elected that our aim to secure 1500 jobs in the first year, many people have sought to misrepresent this statement, but we are pleased that we are rising to the challenge, we are on track, Mr. Speaker, we are on track, very much, and the people who are aware, the people who are following the development of this country, are pleased, Mr. Speaker, you would be surprised to know the number of intelligent persons who would meet me on the road and say, I am pleased with the way this government is performing. And I indeed think that the Honourable Members of the Opposition are somehow quietly admiring the performance of this government. But as it is said it is politics, and somehow they think it would not be the right thing to do to

come out and say, I agree. I think the absent Member, Senator Burns Bonadie comes out many times and say, 'I agree', I support, and I think we are reading something there, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in a nation that has some 40 or so percent unemployment you could well understand why reducing that level has such a high priority on the agenda of this ULP Government. This government is concerned with the alleviation of poverty, and we know that putting out people to work is one way of doing so, but as the Honourable Prime Minister said we have been dealt a bad hand, and no wonder, Mr. Speaker, many thought that this government would not be able to make it through the first three or so months, because we have been put to the test, with a serious financial deficit, and to come out in such flying colours in just over a hundred days after being elected is a great tribute to the positive, incisive and determine leadership of our Honourable Prime Minister, and the commitment of the other members of this Government. Mr. Speaker, I believe that the people of this country would at the end of this year turn around and pay glowing tribute to the performance of this ULP Government, because of the greater achievements which would be achieving in the next few months.

The YES, programme is very much on track as we heard from the Ministry of Education and Sports, and I am particularly happy for this, because many of the young people in Central Kingstown they don't have lands, many are without skills, a tribute to the legacy of the last administration, they do not have resources on which to live, therefore, Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to know that this of course gives an opportunity to many of our young people in Central Kingstown to be in on the YES programme and have a chance to have some hope in life and to better their position.

I move now, Mr. Chairman it is an oversight and I should have link this with the education, nevertheless it can stand alone, the question of the library, \$800,000.00 allocated to that. You know the library is currently located in Central Kingstown, well, what the NDP calls a library. It doesn't look like a library, reading habits of our people, have deteriorated over the years that that library, the old Carnegie Library was closed and relegated to a spot in the heart of Kingstown, and the environment that is in no way conducive to reading, that exposes our young people to a lot of vices as they pass through the area that distract them from the purpose of going to the library and reading books, and so it is a glowing tribute to this government and particularly to, and I must say especially too, Mr. Speaker, the draftsmen in the Ministry of Works,, because I have seen the plan for that library, and it would make a very impressive edifice befitting a people as a proud nation of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. It is an edifice that would return the pride of our people. It is an edifice that would call you to come and occupy it, to read and to study and to develop your mind. So, Mr. Chairman again, the ULP Government is on the right track. I am awaiting the day in September when the soil will be turn signaling the commencement that honourable project.

Mr. Speaker, phase three, of the Kingstown General Hospital, I am not so sure if we should call it the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital, because I am not so sure the Honourable departed Leader is pleased. He has always been so modest he has never wanted any particular thing in his name, and you must always give a man what he desires. He desires more than that. Nevertheless, Mr. Chairman, I know I am safer if I call it the Kingstown General Hospital. Phase three of that Mr. Speaker, is coming very, very soon. When one considers that it took the NDP 16 years, to build the second phase of that hospital having inherited the first phase one wonders what really was wrong with that administration that it took 16 years to build the second phase of the hospital. Mr. Speaker, this third phase is expected to be built, okay, this fourth phase Mr. Speaker, is expected to be built [Interjection] It doesn't really add anything to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. This upcoming phase, Mr. Speaker, is going to be built speedily by the ULP Government, and it is also going to be a very beautiful structure befitting the people of this nation.

I want to round up by referring to the allocation of \$633,344.00 for overseas missions. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs just about a week ago convened a two - day symposium on Foreign Affairs mission, because indeed, Mr. Speaker, many of the people in our nation are so clear what the mission of the overseas mission in this country. We are not aware of any great accomplishment, except for the latter on the closing months of this Administration when we see some struggling to give significance to those missions, nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, it appears that many who occupy the consulates and the embassies and the mission offices and the high commissions are not so clear as to why they are there, and hence it has become easy for them to be distracted and diverted into selfish occupations, running them into a lot of trouble, \$10,000.00 for telephones and liquor, the disappearance of 200 passports, with no account, no money to show where they went. As they say the devil find work for idle hands to do. And hence Mr. Speaker, this Government has seen it fit to call overseas mission representative together and say to them we are sending you out on a mission, we want you to concentrate on employment for our people. We want you to concentrate on investment. We want you to concentrate on international trade opportunities, we want you to concentrate on improving the relationship with other nations of the world, bi-lateral relationships so that we can benefit and we can have cultural and economic exchange programmes that will benefit this country. Hence, Mr. Speaker, this government has gone about, and is going about the business of this nation in a very forthright and business like way, and I must warn or caution our listeners not at all to be misled by our tendency to make a little pekan and to throw in a little humour because that indeed is a signature of this ULP Government. We understand the dichotomy of life, and we know how to play hard and we know how to work hard, and we know when to be serious and when to be professional. [Interjection] That's another matter, Mr. Speaker, nevertheless we can see that the Government here realizing the need to have funds, to run this Government to carry out the various services of this country and wisely set about to raise, supplementary funds to enable it

to carry out the programme of development. And I am sure that members of the Opposition realize that that is the right thing to do. If we take the question of the gasoline tax, 15 cents per gallon, on gasoline and 25 cents per gallon on diesel is not in any way excessive and cannot in any way cause any hardship. When one considers that a mini-bus driver might use five or so gallons of gasoline a day, that's just about 75 cents what are you going to do, put that on, you are going to put on a \$1.00. If it takes you 75 cents more to run your transport are you going to say that that a hardship. I doubt that, Mr. Speaker. So 15 cents per gallon for the people with private vehicles. If you use two gallons of gasoline per day, you are only paying 30 cents more. This is not too much considering that this Government is subsidizing gasoline at the tune of \$600,000.00. This is just a measure to save the taxpayers and also to help us be in a position to provide the necessary services to run this government.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines. I am saying this, that he didn't want any interruption but he understands when he sits there, but what I am saying Mr. Speaker, is fact, we are not distorting anything. No one who is listening to us can say we are distorting the facts. We are giving the facts, we are not distorting anything, either, so Mr. Speaker, I have great privilege, in fact, let's look at another move of this Government in the Overseas missions. We have move the office from Dallas, Texas to Miami, Florida and this we are told Mr. Speaker, would save us \$425,000.00 per annum, I would repeat it, this move by the ULP Government to move the office from Dallas to Miami, the tourism office to Miami would save us \$425,000.00 not to include the benefits we will get from the effort that the Consul will bring to this country of occupying that office. It really has this programme on the agenda and he knows what he has to do when he gets in that office.

Mr. Speaker, I close my maiden presentation by wishing, and knowing fully well, I don't have to wish, I know fully well that there is enough sensible patriotic people in this House to see to it that this bill is passed successfully in this Honourable House. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I thank you.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, like the Deputy Prime Minister, I may not have many words, but unlike the Deputy Prime Minister, I have no one in the gallery who is very close to my heart. So I might not be able to trumpet my call like the Deputy. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I stand to support a government to correct a historic wrong. I want to say Mr. Speaker, on 19th day of July, 2001 that the representative of North Windward stand to support a Government to correct a historic wrong. I stand to support the Supplementary Estimates that have been laid in this House today. I also stand, Mr. Speaker, to support the Prime Minister who just after three months would be able to bring to this Parliament Supplementary Estimates of just over \$20 million. Mr. Speaker, many, many years ago as a matter of fact, my parents, our parents, our grandparents all have worked on the estate system that we have harvested at Orange Hill. Life on the estate

has been difficult. Life has been hard but, Mr. Speaker, what is wrong for a Government to return to workers for their blood, for sweat and for their tears what is theirs. What is wrong, Mr. Speaker? If I can recall quite well, when the NDP government sometime in 1984 in their first three months, Mr. Speaker, what did they do, they close all the stone mills down, all of the stone mills, some 70. All of the stone mills they closed, Mr. Speaker. One year after Mr. Speaker, what happened? The same NDP administration closed the Sugar Industry in this county; 4000 persons were sent home, Mr. Speaker. Is this the government for poor people? Let us think, Mr. Speaker, no I don't think that these fellows are serious in terms of talking about poor people.

In 1986, Mr. Speaker, the NDP administration took over the Orange Hill Estate, they took over one of the most diverse estate in the Caribbean, you name it, the estate had coconuts, bananas, citrus, arrowroot, you name all the crops, today, what is happening today? Mr. Speaker, and yet members on the other side are coming to this House and saying and indicating positions that the estate they give it to the people, and the people should be well off with it, no Mr. Speaker I would not stand for it. The NDP administration at that time indicated that they would have put some \$60 million to reform the estate. Well, if I can recall quite well, Mr. Speaker, we would have seen quite a lot of heavy duty equipment, quite a lot of land rovers, you talking about front end loaders, graders and what have you, we would have seen massive rebuilding of some of the houses that are there for persons who are well paid of \$10, and \$12 and \$15,000.00 per month at that time, how much were they getting \$18.00 per day. Mr. Speaker, having taken over the estate, what was the result? Although it was indicated by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition that lands were given to the workers, what I can say here, it would seem to me that the NDP administration thought they were operating in the 16th and 17th centuries under the feudal system where when the people would have worked on the estates you give them a parcel of land and tell them that's it. No, Mr. Speaker, we are now in the 21st century and we have to be treating people better than this.

Mr. Speaker, the workers were given lands with the intention that would have finance to support their agricultural enterprises. They were given lands with the intention to have extension services. They were given lands with the intention to have markets. They were given lands with the intention to have training, Mr. Speaker, not one of these were put in place under the NDP administration. How could you in a land reform, give land and that's nothing whatsoever, nothing else. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Vincent Beache alluded to the situation where the workers who became farmers they were given the lands and in the very first year, they had no repayment. In the second year, they were asked to pay \$720.00. The third year they were asked to pay \$1520.00 and for every year continuously \$1520.00 regardless of the size of the parcel of land. Some farmers got 1.5 plus acres. Some got 6.5 acres yet your repayment was the same, what sort of conscience existed when such a

condition was put in place. Mr. Speaker, no wonder the total agriculture is in such a mess.

Mr. speaker this document it has some 557 persons who will get their severance. Mr. Speaker, in the very near future, 557 persons will be getting severance payment, but of this 557 persons, Mr. Speaker, how much of these have lands on the Orange Hill estate? The list that I have here Mr. Speaker, out of 557 names 227 persons have lands, therefore what should happen to 330 persons? Mr. Speaker, at the moment there are just over 700 parcels of lands that were distributed under the land reform system and people who were compensated are 227, so we are talking approximately 500 persons who still have lands on the Orange Hill Estates. The majority of persons who now occupy lands on the Orange Hill Estate is not on this list, you tell me Mr. Speaker, where are we going? When the Government took over the estate in 1996 there approximately 450 workers still working on the estate, how many of them got lands, Mr. Speaker, and how many of them got the better lands, Mr. Speaker? Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the situation arose where there began to be social disorder. What has the NDP put in place instead? Who knows the area can look at the area and see.

I know for sure one, that the NDP has put a very nice corrupt public assistance programme of North Windward, and as the Honourable Sister Girlyn mentioned here this morning, Honourable Member for Marriacqua, who indicated that there are dead persons who are still collecting public assistance in North Windward. There are persons who are residing overseas for over two years and they have been collecting public assistance. The Community Development Officer's wife, is a member of the public assistance. It is a shame Mr. Speaker. The Community Development Officer his wife is on the public assistance list. And I can go on naming and naming names. Mr. Speaker, what has happened since then, tremendous unemployment in the area. There has been total reduction in the agricultural sector.

In Fancy an area that was one of the top areas for producing sweet potatoes has now reduce to maybe the last on the ladder, there is no market, they have given nothing to the people in that area. I sat here and heard the Honourable Member for East Kingstown, the Opposition Leader indicating the position that there is wanton victimization in this country. And he has gone on a platform indicating 164 workers has been victimized in North Windward. I challenge him to name me five. Name me five workers who have been victimized in the constituency of North Windward, name me five, you name me five. But I can tell you, since we got into office I have given five workers work in the constituency of North Windward who have never, ever seen work for the last 17 years. Mr. Speaker, after three months in office what has the ULP done, if we are to make a comparative assessment what has the ULP done in the estimates that has been provided here today, \$5.5 million will go into school repairs of which approximately \$0.4 million would be spent in the constituency of North Windward, on

school repairs. Mr. Speaker, in the not too distant future \$2 million dollars would be given out as severance payment, and I would wish to see that first in the history of this country that estate workers will get severance pay at the tune of \$2 million. \$1.6 million would go into the constituency of North Windward. Mr. Speaker, we are a Labour Party and I am not sure whether or not if members on the Opposite side are grudge full of what would be put into the constituency of North Windward. I would really would like to thank the Honourable Prime Minister Dr. the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves for supporting the people of North Windward in such a great way within only a matter of three months, Mr. Speaker. And I think he should be applauded for it.

Mr. Speaker, emancipation week will be history. Emancipation week, Mr. Speaker, is not far from here, and I am sure, Mr. Speaker, not only the constituency of North Windward but through the length and breath of this country will be pleased on the week of emancipation. Mr. Speaker, I cannot understand truthfully the reason or reasons why, the NDP administration over the years have indicate a position that they are for poor people yet when you look at the result there is nothing of comparison.

Earlier on last year a poverty alleviation survey was done through out this country and it was appalling to note, Mr. Speaker that particularly in the constituency of North Windward that over 50% of the people in North Windward do not earn \$400.00 per month, despite the fact that he would have said that he would have given lands to the people to make them better off. Over 50% of the people living in that constituency do not get \$400.00 per month, tell me, is that the way you want to upgrade and to ensure poor people, upgrade their standard of living? No, Mr. Speaker, \$400.00 per month is less than subsistent wage. [Interjection] Thank you, very much.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am sure that the ordinary man would give support to the estimates that has been laid in the House here today. I would also like to say, Mr. Speaker, that another area of concern within the agriculture sector is the Diamond Dairy and \$154,000.00 is being built in into the Estimates to make payments to the shareholders so that further development can take place at the Diamond Dairy. When the NDP administration took office again, in 1984 they met the Diamond Dairy in full swing. There were cattle that provided milk, although there was some importation of milk. There was also juice that was produced. The Diamond Dairy industry made profits and was something well for the economy of this country, today it is not so any more. The ULP,, Mr. Speaker, wants to revive the Diamond Dairy. There are too many mangoes out there wasting, too many sour sops, too many fruits, too many vegetables, Mr. Speaker, and we want to make sure that we restore the Diamond Dairy. Equally, Mr. Speaker, we are working on the Marketing Board. The Marketing Board was set up to buy the farmers produce and we will return the marketing board to buy the farmers produce, Mr. Speaker. [Interjection] That too Mr. Speaker, has started already. We know for a fact that there has been total decline in the agricultural sector and further compounded the situation, Mr. Speaker, is when the NDP

administration on the day of 27th of March 2001 went and sold the assets of the arrowroot industry in this country, and turn around and tell me, that you are for poor people. There is an industry at this point in time without any assets; the farmers are like 'Alice in Wonderland'. There are rhizomes in the ground, the building has been sold the, pulverization plant would be dismantled, what is there for the farmers? Mr. Speaker, as the Representative for North Windward I intend to restore and to bring back the arrowroot industry that can mean something to the people of the constituency and to the country as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, there are great plans for the development of the North Windward constituency. As you can see in the Estimates some \$40,000.00 is allocated for a clinic at Orange Hill/Overland, but I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, this is only in the initial phase to get things going. There is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that the Estimates laid here today, will have an easy passage through this House, and I want to ask my colleagues that an easy passage be given to the Estimates of 2001 and do it now. Thank you, very much.

HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, the Supplementary Estimates, as was pointed out earlier, should be taken in conjunction with the 2001 Estimates, and I want to advise Honourable Members accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, this week, at a function to pay tribute to the cleaners of Kingstown, the sanitation workers, for their wonderful clean up contribution after Carnival, at that function one of our calypso finalist, 'I-Pa' made some comments, he said in relation to our political leader, the Prime Minister who has a favourite statement, he likes to say I don't consider myself better, just different. And 'I-Pa' said he is different, that is why he is better. He is different, that is why he is better. And I believe that statement applies to some degree to us, the Government of the day. I have listened to the comments from the other side, and I must say I'm patently disappointed with the level of the contribution. I want to address primarily the issues of education, but will touch some other issues, Mr. Speaker, and I want to start with what I think we are both different and better. Mr. Speaker, I draw the attention of Honourable Members to the Recurrent Expenditure under the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports to item 35360350 which has as an explanation, to me the cost of materials for consultation and early childhood education. Honourable Members the last count I had indicated that we had a hundred and fourteen pre schools in this country. All of them privately run, since we have taken office, 2nd of April and we have been mentioning that we have completed our 100 days in office, but if we were to count the working days, Mr. Speaker, in fact it is less than 80, so we probably have another month and a half to go, in terms of actual working days, but within that space of time we have done much which is both in my view different and better.

We have held two consultations already and we are making provision for another one and early childhood education. I recall on one of those consultations, Minister of State in Education and myself left a meeting of Parliament on our break and attended one of those consultations, and the pre school operators were indeed very happy to see us at that consultation. We had promised to go another time when they had a follow up, but that day we had to drop everything in the Ministry and head to Campden Park to literally put out a fire at one of the schools, because the teachers had encountered an incident the day before, and they were protesting and saying they must see the two Ministers because they were not going back into the classrooms, and it had to do with an irate parent and an assault on our teachers and some students there, and we had to go and spend an entire morning addressing that issue, and we promised them protection or security. An issue which they had been dealing with for years and were not getting any response from the Government. We left down there at about 1:00 p.m. It was too late to go back to the consultation and Mr. Speaker, before the afternoon was out we had security on the compound, and it lasted for the rest of the school term. And the teachers were utterly amazed they couldn't understand why it took us only a couple of hours, less than two hours to get security there and the previous NDP government couldn't do it over the years.

Since 1995 the Government had some draft regulations dealing with education, up to this day those draft regulations have not been formally accepted and they remain in that format and we have been disaggregating those regulations into sections, including a section on early childhood education and upgrading it, and this is why Mr. Speaker, this allocation is so very important for advancement of our work in early childhood education.

Much has been said about the school maintenance programme and it was significant in the question from the Honourable Member for the Southern Grenadines that he seemed unaware that there was an existing school maintenance programme, and that is understandable, because that programme was really a token programme and that is why the school buildings have been running down to such an extent, and that is why the impact of this \$5.5 million programme is almost mind buckling to the members of the Opposition. Mr. Speaker, I draw your attention to the Estimates 2001 and I draw your attention to page 426 under the Capital Estimates, and I want you to look at line item project number 359610, improvement to school buildings and the approved expenditure for the year 2000 was \$10.00. The approved expenditure for the year 2001, this is for improvement for school buildings that is to say to upgrade school buildings according to the remarks, for the year 2001 the allocation is \$10.00, so when faced with \$5.5 million one could understand how their minds would boggle on the other side.

The Leader of the Opposition was quite ambivalent, vacillatory in his position on this aspect. I want to remind him that the following schools are either in his constituency or

ring his constituency, the following educational buildings. The Sion Hill School, the Technical College, the Teachers College, Richmond Hill Multi Purpose Centre, Richmond Hill School, CW Prescott School, Kingstown Preparatory School, all of these buildings, Dorsetshire Hill schools, which geographically are in East Kingstown, all of these buildings, I believe some eight or so are receiving substantial inputs under this programme. In his constituency, is he going to tell his constituents that he ought not to repair the buildings in his constituency?

Mr. Speaker, comments were made about rural poverty, about poverty, and members on this side reminded the House of the closing of the stone crushers, the sugar industry, the boxing plants et cetera, the truth is, Mr. Speaker, that poverty has increased, or did increase under the New Democratic Party Government. I have repeatedly said in this Parliament that their own poverty report of 1996 contained that statement in it, that poverty is increasing, that's under NDP government. On my drive on Sunday to the funeral of Smiles, I took my teenaged daughter who is visiting from Canada, and as we are driving along she remarked on the country side, she said 'Why is it so depressed, Dad, why does it look so run down,' so I had to go into the history of what was happening about bananas, the current debate, and the issues, and so on. But what this is meant, Mr. Speaker, is that there is a hemorrhaging, there is a human hemorrhaging from the rural areas and it is having an impact on us in Kingstown, such that for example, we have to find almost 300 additional spaces for the little ones, for the five year olds who are going into grade one. It has our heads in a tussle to create that space to put in roughly 300 extra little ones because of this movement to Kingstown. The previous government had made a recommendation, to put a primary school in Kingstown, they had estimated a project cost of \$5.8 million to put a school call the Edinboro Primary School, they allocated \$10.00 in 2000, and zero dollars in 2001 but the project should have been completed in the year 2000. So we now are left with that kind of legacy and we have to correct it and correct it quickly, so we put some pressure on our poor Minister of Works in terms of the work load, which he has to carry as a result of the NDP incompetence, the extra work load.

Mr. Speaker, reference was made to the school in Port Elizabeth. Since being in the Ministry of Education, we have been receiving these reports how the cracks are getting wider at the Port Elizabeth Primary School, wider and wider, the thing is falling apart. But Mr. Speaker, listen to this, I urge members to turn to page 424 of the 2001 Estimates, they had estimated a project to rebuild the Port Elizabeth Primary School, the previous government for \$4.5 million as of the 30th of September 2000, that's last year, zero dollars was spent on the Port Elizabeth Primary School, project, for this year they have approved zero dollars under their budget for the Port Elizabeth School and the project is suppose to finish in the year 2003. I think it is time that we stop making a mockery and fools of our people, and this is the difference with the Unity Labour Party Government and that's why 'I-Pa' say we are not only different, we are better. We will certainly have to build it, we are looking at it, we have the project in the Ministry but in

the interim we have to do some adjustments to at least have the children in the school next year but it is under consideration at the Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, we intend, and I draw your attention to the Supplementary Estimates which addresses the issue of generally speaking, language teachers, the foreign language programme that's contained in the Supplementary Estimates presented here today. Mr. Speaker, we are pressing ahead with the Primary School language programme on a pilot basis, that was said already, what was not said is that since we have been there we had discussions with the Venezuelan Ambassador and the Professor, that's what we call them, who has worked out a number of modules for teaching Spanish, for Spanish teachers and has been in discussions with the principal of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Teacher's college for the implementation of these modules to teach Spanish teachers by next term. We are moving, Mr. Speaker. I have had discussions with Madam Jellibear of the French Embassy, based in St. Lucia on the question of a proposal which this NDP Government has been sitting on since 1996, five years they have been offering to give us a language lab with computers and earphones and the whole works, they asking for simply two things, give us the space and the teacher. Mr. Speaker we have found the space, the principal of the so called A' Level College, Community College has found a room, we have found a French teacher who is having some difficulty, as a number of teachers have in the classroom, because of the effects of dust, but want to remain in teaching French, and there are some others overseas currently who are currently, who can function as instructors, and we have written them to tell them we have found the space and therefore we could proceed with the project. Because they were going to close it off, you know, but they said they should make a last ditch effort to hang on to this project which has been five years with the NDP.

Mr. Speaker, the Sandy Bay School project under the NDP administration is in near disaster, we are trying to salvage that project. We have to try to pull in the people, the Minister of Works, had to pull in the people and try and resolve the difficulties around that project. By comparison, Mr. Speaker, the Byrea School project which is under our watch has been flowing very smoothly, no problems. I spoke with Mike Gibson, the contractor, and said Mike any problems, no problems, any problems at all, you contact me. We are different, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure we all would agree by now we are better.

The Common Entrance last year was a disaster. Children, especially in Maths, the children were in tatters, many of them after that Maths exam. We came in this Parliament and 'oh, road block, road block, road block, that was the cry, protest, that is why the children did so badly. I brought the Common Entrance Maths paper in here when I was in the Opposition, and when I started to go through that paper, item by item, Members on this side which was the NDP government they had to hang down their heads. The paper was such, they couldn't pass it. In fact the Leader of the

Opposition would remember I gave him one to take home and to do on his own time and he never returned it. I would still like to see his answers. [Interjection] Of course, a copy of the paper. I would send another one to you, Mr. Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Speaker, the Common Entrance, came and went this year, not a murmur about the Common Entrance, not a murmur. We even invited the Teacher's Union in to monitor and work along the monitor it, no problems with the Common Entrance. Even School Leavings have improved, but Mr. Speaker, we are not sitting on our laurels, you know, we are not sitting on our laurels, because still, far from good enough, we have plenty, plenty ways to go, but inherited a low quality education system, and we have a lot to do, Mr. Speaker, one of the things I have found since being in the Ministry is the inordinate amount of managerial time spent on what I called the irritants. The school roof's leaking, I am talking about top quality, management time in the Ministry of Education; toilets not working, every day you are bombarded with these. What this labour intensive programme means, to us Mr. Speaker, is that by putting these things out of the way, we can focus on the true mandate of the Ministry of Education, namely the education development of our children. And I guarantee you with the programme we are putting in place, and I do not share the cynicism of the Leader of the Opposition because we have faith in our people, when we give our 71 contracts, we don't put them in the hands of people and between them and the Ministry of Works, we are confident that they are going to carry through a very good programme. And once that is in place, Mr. Speaker, we are working on a maintenance programme that not only will tap into existing maintenance funds, but we have a programme of community mobilization. In fact, in April in the constituency of West St. George, I can tell you as a fact, three of the councils we set up did a lot of work on Dorsetshire Hill School, Belair School and Belmont School, and I think some work was done on the Biabou School.

Mr. Speaker, the reference to our manifesto, the last item on the education sector deals with question of the school buildings, it had three elements, 1. maintenance, 2. setting up workshops at the schools, and 3. adoption of the schools by private sector, and already to a dozen people have come forward, ranging from construction company to business people in town, to people overseas, off shore banks adopting schools. It is not merely from their standpoints some manifestation of the altruism that they just want to do something, they just want to do something for the schools and our children. It is testimony of the confidence that they have in this new ULP administration, and I dear say that the New Democratic Party could not have attracted that kind of sponsorship and support, and we intend to extend it and build on it; so we have another total problem that's going to be addressed that we are insistent in the Ministry that we are going to focus on our mandate. We have already taken a decision in the Government that Ministry of Education shouldn't be hurting their head about works, we are a specialized Ministry for that, focus on your mandate and we intend to do that.

Mr. Speaker, only recently, and belatedly and that's why we are different and better, 49 QATs were appointed. Belatedly, 49 QATs, the issue of the computerization which is a

big item on the agenda, and Mr. Speaker, let me just indicate with reference to the two Estimates, the Supplementary and the 2001, that the educational project allocation under the 2001 Estimates represents just under 20% of the budget but significantly in the Supplementary Estimates, a clear indication of the direction of this Government when you tort up the figures it comes to over \$11 million out of just \$20.5 million, representing about 55% of the Supplementary Estimates that are presented here. Now, that is in keeping, Mr. Speaker, with our declared position, and I want to refer to a document which would celebrate one year, not a hundred days, and I want everybody to resurrect this very profound document, the discussion papers on constitutional reform and ideas towards a social contract between the ULP and civic society, very, very profound documents. July 31st is coming up, and maybe we may want to consider some activity to commemorate it because I think it is a significant milestone in the politics of this country, and we said, we indicated, that the most important resources in our country is its people, accordingly, the greatest efforts must be made to develop their skills, training and education, to enhance their possibilities and to create an abundant opportunities for them to employ their skills and talents, therefore, we hold that the commanding height of the economy and the society is the education of the people. The commanding height of the economy and the society is the education of its people. And that is why the new administration has injected 55% of the Supplementary Estimates more than half of it, strictly to education. The issue of the computerization of the schools, 3500023275 to continue the computerization programme by the Taiwanese grant.

Mr. Speaker, it is really utterly amazing, you know, this term is the busiest term in the Ministry of Education generally, and it is really a difficult time for us to take office, after the elections, to run the Ministry with all its work to be done, this being a crunch muck period, implement the 100 days programme. But what makes it worse is that literally everything you touched in that Ministry, you had first of all to back up and clean up a mess, and then you try to move forward. The computerization project is a case in point, and we have already done a litany in terms of the school buildings and all those things, the French project and so on. This project is funded by the Republic of China on Taiwan, they have allocated, Mr. Speaker, \$2 million US over a three year period, 1999, 2000, 2001, this project should have come under the allocation since 1999, and should have been completed by an large by the end of the year 1999, its spilled over into 2000, that is when it got started, and its still is not completed. Not only is that the case, you have a situation where having spent money from the Consolidated Fund, and requiring a request the NDP administration sending a one page letter to the Embassy of the Republic of China demanding repayment, refund of \$1.2 million of money they spent, the Republic of China naturally, these are now files in the Ministry, that is why I could tell you and I could bring the documentation here tomorrow if you want them. They had to write back and say, but you can't send me a one page document demanding \$1.5 million, where are your bills, where are your receipts, where are all those things? They sent back another page and this time they would say

something warrant \$800,000.00 that's one line item you know, \$800,000.00 and they break it down and it end up \$1.2 million, that's a letter dated February 2000. Obviously there was some urgency to pay this before the elections, obviously an experienced official you have at the Embassy will obviously raise certain queries, so you have a situation where they were not satisfied, in fact, Mr. Speaker, we had a whole set of problems with that phase one, the teachers were not trained, so you had computer labs set up and nobody basically to operate them, and the children have not benefited from the labs. A number of the computers are not working, and importantly the matching furniture, which should have come for those furniture more than half, and I would probably bring the list, maybe Minister Burgin could remind me so I could bring it to Parliament, because I am sure he would like to address Parliament tomorrow. [Interjection] Yes, he did sent the vote book, yea. And the furniture is missing, we have had to send our files up to be audited, the police have had to be called in to investigate the missing furniture. Now, here we are inheriting this mess, wanting to push forward with our computerization programme because it crucial for our work, and now we had to renegotiate with the Embassy, literally to plea with them, to say well, don't punish us for the sins of the NDP, give us a chance with phase two, but you had to clean up all of that mess and it is still not clean up, in order to move forward. And it is pretty much known, Mr. Speaker, that we have 27 schools lined up, we have to do some assessments on some, but we are pretty much more than half ready to be done, and the Ministry of Works is going to address this over the next six weeks, because we want them ready for the beginning of term. The Embassy is willing and I believe they have already sent off the order or about to do so for the computers because we do not want them sitting here when they come in about 40 days or so time. I think tomorrow's newspaper is going to have an advertisement dealing with a consultancy for the project, we should be starting the training of our computer teachers, with a very high level, high power course, hopefully in the middle of next week, to run for several weeks. We are going beyond that Mr. Speaker, we are also trying to get in some scanners, in that project to assist the various schools, like in the preparation of their exams, some 14 inch flat bed scanners that could produce exam papers to store them in the computes and reproduce them and so on. In the meantime we still have to address what is going to happen the computer teachers, because nothing like that was worked out you know. We had to put our attention and energies and time towards that. There is no policy in terms of how these computer labs, and computers are going to be used you know, we now had to put our heads to all of that. After this project been around for over two years. We are setting up an IT Unit at the Ministry of Education. Mr. Speaker, advice me about time please, because I could use two days.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You have another 15 minutes.

HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE: Thank you Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the book loan scheme, another mess that we have inherited. Would you believe, Honourable Members that some people who ordered books last year have only recently receive their monies from last year June, July, August, they got it from the ULP administration. What that has done, Mr. Speaker, is that these people, some of them have lost their credit facility with the publishers. And it has created some difficulty in addition to that instead of them bringing in the suppliers and having the meeting early in the year, we have had to do that since we have gotten into office, so the programme is behind to some extent. Minister Burgin, Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, we have set up like a command centre in the Ministry headed by Minister of State. Which is going to address these things with urgency, and we have had directions from the Cabinet in terms of how to approach this if there seems to be snag, because the Government is insistent that we get our books early and we are going to turn our attention fully to make sure that our books are in place. From the information that we have a percentage of the books have already reached but some are coming, some as late as the middle of August, we are going to look at all of that. I think Minister Burgin is more on top of that and has some information. The fact of the matter is this, Mr. Speaker, that after the June 1998 elections, the NDP administration literally ambushed the teaching profession and the educational system with this project, they gave it very little thought. Their in fact, it came as a shock to many people, because remember that was one of our proposals, in the election, and they had not conceptualized it very clearly, they have not thought it through, they had not thought it through clearly, and then they dropped it on the book handlers, they promised the teachers who are going to work on it, what you call the book handlers, they promised them that they would give them a honorarium, help us out here we are going to fix you up, they did it the first year, they did it the second year, no delivery on their promises, and the teachers are very frustrated. We have inherited that, but we are asking those teachers in the interest, and all else that we are doing and we want to remind everybody out there that is 55% of the Supplementary Estimates we are putting in education, and we are asking them to rally with the Government and address this project. Don't blame us for the sins of the NDP's, it is not all of the broken promises we could fulfill and clean up, and we are appealing publicly to our teachers to help us with this project because we can't find every little cent to pay for everything. And we want them to understand that there are a lot of things that we have in store for our teachers including training, but they need to give us their support in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, we have made a commitment to upgrading tertiary education. There is a programme moving fairly faster pace towards an integrated community college which is going to give associated degrees, in other words we are going to upgrade that and we have been very busy at the Ministry address this. We have had meeting with the registrar of CXC in relation to some aspects of that, with Dr. Williams who is the consultant in the programme, a gentleman from Trinidad who is working quite steadily on that project and we have given him our time line, obviously we can't get it done for September, but it is a crucial element in our educational plank, indeed we consider the

integrated Community College as a flag ship institution to literally pull the rest of the system upward and forward.

We have had to address a very crucial situation in relation to University training and loans for such a situation, Mr. Speaker, in the six years between 1994 and 2000 the Training Division and more specifically the student loans advisory committee received 546 applications for loans totally about \$17 million between that period. They approved 358 for about \$13 million so roughly about 200 student loan applications were not approved running into about \$4 million. We have taken a decision to have the NIS input converted into a student revolving loan, and thereby able to increase to an extra \$2.8 million in the kitty for the students for disbursement for the new academic year. In addition we have been examining the possibility of having the financial institutions in the country fund a percentage of the scheme, and with this \$2.8 million it will allow us to approve approximately \$7 million in loans during the current year, and we are going beyond that this year alone, 2001 and in order to finance the scheme for the next year 2002 and beyond, this ULP administration is approaching the Caribbean Development Bank and other financial institutions for further funding, that's the way we are approaching this thing, Mr. Speaker. So all levels, regardless of what you take it, what level you take it at, we have been proving ourselves to be very different and much better. We have been able to mobilize some 40 scholarships for the University of Plaxburg, partial scholarships in New York, and we have had literally hundreds of applications, in speaking with the Training Division they expect a number of these applications to go to Service Commissions soon, and they are going by whether Quick Pack or Fed Ex. or however they do these things and they send them straight to the university in a bulk and they should make the deadline for August the 1st.

Mr. Speaker, while we are doing all of that, our work continues in a lot of ways, we have done at the level of the Ministry a staff audit, because we have restructuring the Ministry of Education for the first time, since I know the Ministry of Education it was the one this shape, and since we have been there we have been able to extend physically and I want to publicly thank the staff, because they had to work with all the noise, the hampering, the dust, the cement for nearly a month. I had to abandon my office and go and borrow some space over in the Financial complex to allow staff office to find some space to work, and we had to do all of this work under those adverse conditions, and I want to thank those members of the Ministry of Education staff.

Mr. Speaker, since February of 1999 the NDP administration had a copy of the education sector strategic plan. Now this is a very significant document. Members of the House who were here before would know that we have raised from the Opposition benches this mysterious document that they refused to bring to the public. They had promised to bring it for national discussion; it never came, it is only when we got there that we were able to touch the document for the first time. That document is important for a number of reasons, it is going to plot the strategic directions for the country

educationally for the next year or so, and also its going to allow external funders to tap in at very exact and precise places, because the external funders are saying no longer are they going to do any bandage funding for education in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, no sticking plaster funding, they want to see a total plan and see where they could fit into that, so not only has this been holding us back educationally in terms of the direction, but it has been holding us back in terms of major funding for education in the country. Yet by the end of June, after nearly a dozen consultations through out this nation from Union Island, Bequia, Georgetown, Petit Bordel or Chateaubelair, I cannot remember which one, Kingstown, Barrouallie, all over the place, on the radio, Mr. Speaker, I can show this House the second draft. April, May and June we have been working, Mr. Speaker, relentlessly, we have been working very hard.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important just quickly to point out on the Youth Programme, I don't have time to touch sports this evening, but we have reactivated the Youth commission, we have submitted a programme for the YES programme, the meat of it in terms of the execution still has to be worked out with the Youth Department in terms of how we place the 350 people that we have receive funding for, but I need to point out that along with all the other debts that we have incurred, there is a debt of 12,000 plus pounds which the previous government has left for us for the Commonwealth Youth Foundation, and we are saddled with that one, one of the negative legacies from the NDP. We are addressing the question of the NYC, they have submitted a draft policy which we are addressing and we hope we could have some resolution of that in the not too distant future.

Mr. Speaker, it has indeed been an extremely, intense and hectic period for the Ministry of Education and particularly the two Ministers. We have had a new PS and we want to thank her for swimming into the deep end of the pool, because we had to dive her straight in that deep end because so much is happening. Many people do not realize it Mr. Speaker, but we have to deal with almost 500 institutions in the Ministry of Education, we have 67 primary schools, 61 plus, 6 or so private ones. We have 114 so pre schools, we have 25 or so secondary schools, 5 multi-purpose centres, 3 tertiary institutions, when you add the PTA's and they are very demanding as well, I have to spend a lot of time with the PTA's they almost doubling that. Then you talking about the subject associations and the education advisory board which we activated. It has been dormant for years, you talking about the Principals Association, secondary and primary, you talking about the national sporting bodies, about 20 something of them, the NYC, the youth commission, UNESCO, UWI and the other regional bodies, you talking about us having to deal with 500 or so institutions, Mr. Speaker, it has been quite a hectic period for us, and I believe in the context of what we have been doing and what we have been faced with even if I say so Mr. Speaker, I think we have done a reasonably good job, and you know our Prime Minister never lets up, he always believes there is more in us than we are putting out, and I believe that is the quality of a true leader. What is interesting and I should say this publicly, is he never push us

unless he pushes himself. He himself leads by example, and I think with that kind of leadership we have no hesitation to follow.

We intend, Mr. Speaker to focus on a number of things over the next few days, we have to make sure that the computer training programme gets going, we have to address in a more focus and urgent way what is happening with the book loan scheme, we are going to put out a statement by next week, but we are going to get a bigger handle on it. We are dealing with staffing through out the schools, a number of head teaches applications for schools, so a lot of that has to be done, Mr. Speaker. But I think by and large with the support of the Government, of our colleagues in Cabinet and certainly the staff at the Ministry of Education, we feel very confident that we can meet the challenges. There will obviously be some hiccups here and there, but I think we can address them in a fairly energetic manner towards a solution of whenever the problems we may encounter. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I insist that we are both different and better, thank you.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, perhaps this is an appropriate time for us to take the adjournment until tomorrow morning at 9:00 a.m. 9:00 a.m. not 10:00 a.m. and I so move Mr. Speaker.

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

***Question put and agreed to
House adjourned at 9:30 p.m.***