

**No. 1**

**MONDAY**

**Second Session**

**3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2001**

**Seventh Parliament**

**SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

**THE**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**ADVANCE COPY**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

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**THE**

**THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

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

**FIFTH SITTING**

**3<sup>rd</sup> December, 2001**

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

The Honourable House of Assembly met at 9:10 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 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

## **OTHER MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE**

|                                     |  |
|-------------------------------------|--|
| Honourable Arnhim Eustace           | Member for East Kingstown/<br>Leader of the Opposition |
| Honourable Terrance Ollivierre      | Member for Southern Grenadines                         |
| Honourable Juliet George            | Government Senator                                     |
| Honourable Andrea Young             | Government Senator/Deputy Speaker                      |
| Honourable Gerard Shallow           | Opposition Senator                                     |
| Honourable Major St. Claire Leacock | Opposition Senator                                     |

## **ABSENT**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Minister of Telecommunications, Science<br>Technology and Industry<br>Honourable Dr. Jerrol Thompson | Member for North Leeward   |
| Honourable Edwin Snagg   | Government Senator, Parliamentary<br>Prime Minister's Office, Special<br>Responsibility for Labour and<br>Grenadines Affairs |
| Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday   | Member for Northern Grenadines   |

# **SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

## **HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**MONDAY 3<sup>RD</sup> DECEMBER 2001**

### **PRAYERS**

The prayers were read by the Honourable Speaker of the House.

### **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

#### **APPROPRIATION BILL 2001- CONTINUATION OF DEBATE**

#### **MOTION**

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

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

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, may I please with your own indulgence and the Leader of the House be permitted to leave perhaps for an hour and a half this morning I have an address to deliver at the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Offshore Finance Sector. I will leave close to 9:30 a.m. Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Very well, Mr. Prime Minister. I think I heard that on the radio. Are we still on live television, Channel 45? Continuation of Debate, Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs, Commerce and Trade, Deputy Prime Minister. You have 1-¼ hours.

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members let me begin as I always begun by first of all giving thanks to Almighty God for bringing us around to another cycle, engaging in the exercises that we are here debating the budget. I thank God that for the

past year, we have been spared these ravishes of any man made or natural disaster, that our land is preserved and all of us are here enjoying a good measure of health. I thank God for my family that has been so supportive of me, even during our separation, our absence from one another. And for every blessing that has come our way.

I am sorry the Prime Minister has left but I want to thank him publicly for what he has done last Friday in adjourning the House, or suspending the sitting, taking into consideration those of us in this House as Seventh Day Adventist and observed the Sabbath from sunset to sunset. I do not think that this has ever been done by a previous Prime Minister. I thank the Prime Minister for his sensitivity and for the acknowledgement that there are those of us who will never violate our conscience, we would stick true to our religious beliefs and in recognition of those of us who are here and the Adventist community at large, I want to thank him for this tremendous gesture in not carrying the House through the hours of the Sabbath.

Mr. Speaker, I was not quite ready to speak this morning but since this is the 8<sup>th</sup> person on this side I did not want to disappoint the Leader of the Opposition. [Laughter]. In batting in my true form; the 8<sup>th</sup> position as he has said. I want to thank him for his solicitude, his concern for me, he has been doing a count, telling me when I am number 5, and when I slip down to number 7, number 8, probably before the end of this session he might have me as number 12. I try to find out, Mr. Speaker, what is the basis on which the Leader of the Opposition makes his count and he has intimated to me, that it has to do with some mutterings he said he heard and he put it in the rank of the ULP that when the Prime Minister and I were in Cuba there was some folks, and I do not know who these folks are who were thinking of deposing the Prime Minister, the Honourable Dr. Ralph Gonsalves as the Prime Minister and Leader of this party and my name was mentioned way down as number 8 to succeed him.

The truth is I am very disappointed because I would have rather been mentioned as number 12, the last one at the bottom of the pole because the truth is Mr. Speaker, I would never indulge in such foolishness. {Applause}

And I would say for my colleagues here that I do not think a single person here ever entertained any such thought for we have a special way of choosing our leaders, an open democratic way, unlike the NDP and I think that the Prime Minister enjoys the full confidence. Those of us on this side of the House and there is no deviation from our commitment to him and our

confidence in as the leader of our party and the leader of our government. [Applause].

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, I was elected unanimously at a party convention to be deputy leader and of course my position as Deputy Prime is one which the Prime Minister chooses to place upon me and I thank him for it. Those of us who are on this side of the House have a very tight teamwork, cordial relationship and there is nothing that can be done or said by the Opposition that can jar us apart. Mr. Speaker, I am indulging a little bit and I hope, I crave your indulgence that when I sat in the Opposition I had received secret messages from the then Prime Minister James Mitchell, begging me to join him, with promises of being foreign minister and when St. Claire Thomas resigned of being Minister of Health. I could not be bribed by that. When that failed I received the big arm around me by those within our party that I was closest to, who were doing the bidding of the NDP that if I were to leave my side and join them, the Prime Minister would be pleased to demit office, that is Prime Minister Mitchell and one of us would become Prime Minister and I would not be persuaded by entreaty and because these two tactics failed, I think the Leader of the Opposition is trying something that is artful, something that is cunning and using the sophistry of politics to try to see if he can sow some seeds of doubt and dissention in my mind to have this trust of my colleagues or the leader that I have just sitting here as the number 2 man in the party but in effect I am number 8, that would not work.

I have said time and time again, I am not a man out for position. I am not insecure in my position, when I sit here and realize that I am Deputy Prime Minister in my heart of hearts, I say praise God from whom all blessings flow. When I realize that I am the grandson and son of estate workers, never thought that I would be sitting in such a high position, I tell you that I would rather be number 8 and still thank God for what he has done, because being here is a tremendous honour, a privilege, and a blessing to serve. And I would rather serve as number 12 in a ULP government than serve as number 1 in an NDP Opposition.

Seven years Mr. Speaker, I sat in the Opposition this is my eighth budget. I sat there Mr. Speaker, when there were three elected members, and two senators, we were five strong but we were confident and competent in the execution of our duties as members of the opposition. We may not have been numerically strong but qualitatively we were strong. We kept the Government on its toes. As a matter of fact, during the exercise of the estimates, Mr. Speaker, the government presented the estimates in about five or ten minutes and they sat down dumb, never said a word. And we carry the battle one after

the other. We got up and we spoke and we had the Government in disarray. We struck terror in their hearts because we were capable and we knew what we were doing.

Mr. Speaker, what I saw recently I looked on with dismay. The Opposition sat there, the Speaker begged them to debate once, twice, three times, nobody wanted to get up and speak. Low and behold, Mr. Speaker, when I looked they were making a hasty retreat for the door. Apparently they had nothing to say and somebody told me downstairs they start crying saying the Speaker did not allow us to speak. That is not true. The Speaker, gave them all the chance in the world, but they had nothing to say and it was far easier for them to run out of the House than face us here as the Government and debate the estimates. They did not want to do that. [Applause]. And when I look in amazement at the few people making their exit through the door I say, we did not scare them; we did not hit them, why are they running? Then I recall the words of the wise man Solomon in Proverbs 28:1. He said the wicked flee when no man pursueth. [Applause]. But the righteous are as bold as the lion.

So when we sat there, it was five of us we were as bold as a lion but when these five sat here we see them fleeing because they are wicked creatures and they deserve to flee. Mr. Speaker, I well recall that when we were even five there we were debating a bill and the Government for the first time in the history of this country and this Parliament, the Government ran out of this Chamber and left the Opposition there sitting. The Speaker, Monty Maule just had to call for an adjournment. Because the NDP Government could not stand before the righteous five of us who were sitting there. They are five now, and the only difference between our five and their five is like the parable of the ten virgins. We in 1994, the five of us were wise, these in 2001, they are otherwise.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know why they ran out of this Chamber. They could not stand and debate the Estimates here with us.

Mr. Speaker, we must thank the Prime Minister for presenting such an admirable budget in these difficult times and I support it whole-heartedly, and had it not been for the fact, that some members are sitting on the other side and must indulge in some partisanship in order to show their loyalty to their party, I am sure in their hearts of hearts of hearts they would say that this is an excellent budget. And if there is any objection to the budget in some quarters on the other side it is because they know that this is a poor people's budget. And when the poor people reap the benefits of this budget they know

they are in for a lot of trouble in the whole country. We can speak because we have a mandate from the people. We have been elected in March of this year to represent the interest of the country. We have a mandate.

I hear the Opposition speaking about this for the country, that for the country, they must realize that they are a rejected group. And if anybody speaks for the country it is this government. And the Prime Minister, and I must say Mr. Speaker, that one of our great assets in this country is our Prime Minister, and one of his great virtues is his humility. Mr. Speaker, I say his humility, because this is a different Prime Minister, this is the first Prime Minister that can go out, throughout the length and breath of this country and the smallest child can meet him and say 'Comrade, or Comrade Ralph'. This is the first Prime Minister that can go and tell them that this is Ralph man, he does not try to pull ranks, he does not try to indulge in any vain vanity or any pride, he is a humble man that can mix with the ordinary citizens, eat what they eat, hug them and embrace them.

What we saw Mr. Speaker, not too long ago, I saw Senator Leacock made a display here that really embarrasses me. The Senator came here in order to impress us here in the Government of his intellectual ability, and indulge in a whole set of highfalutin language that the Minister of Telecommunications had to ask what did he say. Trying to speak over the heads of the people and trying to use some words to impress us here and probably the public at large, pretending to be wise, he made himself a fool. He pulled down his few little wooden plaques in his office... [Interruption]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, I hope that that is not being used in an insulted manner?

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** No, it is not. I am just quoting the Bible. Pull down a few little plaques in his office and brought them here in order to impress on us the plaques he has received. Mr. Speaker, all of us here in the course of our lifetime, must have received some plaques or what not, but we would not indulge in any ostentatious display of vanity and pride of saying we are bringing a package with our plaques here in order to impress anybody here, because that would be childish of us to do that. If we are trying to impress anybody as to who we are, let people discover it, let them see it from our character. Let them see it from our actions. Let them see it from our deportment, so that they can have respect for us as we are and do not try to impress upon them what we are by presenting some things to them as if to say, do you know who I am? Here I am. Here is my plaque and here is my badge that I have, in order to distinguish myself. This is not the kind of Prime

Minister we have and this is not the kind of people we have on this side of the House. I mixed here with people who are humble and accept their lot, and whatever they are they will thank God for it and accept it humbly not making a display of whatever they are.

And so the Prime Minister has presented this budget, Mr. Speaker, and indeed he has given a full account of how our Government operates. A Government of transparency, a government that works in the interest of the people. Never in the history of this country have we seen a government so open to the public. Setting up different committees as the Prime Minister says in his budget address. Four functional institutional mechanisms to assist with the macro economic management of the country. Two of these mechanisms deeply involve civil society which is the national economic and social development council and the tripartite committee on the economy. These are committees composed of civil society in the case of the National, Economic and Social Council and the Tripartite Committee representing labour, representing employers and civic groups, so that they can make an input in the workings of the economy. As part of our openness and transparency, Mr. Speaker, we have had legislation open to the public so that interest groups can make an input into the legislation and they can amend the legislation; make suggestions so that when we come in Parliament, so that when we come in Parliament with pieces of legislation, we would have had full benefit of the wisdom and the expertise of those in the public sector who can make an input.

Mr. Speaker, we have as I said a budget that caters for poor people. A poor people's budget. When you look at what we have done from the time we have been in office, it is quite obvious to everyone that this government looks out for the interest of those who are poor and vulnerable. We have had a \$5 million renovation job in order to renovate the schools in this country so that poor people can find job. We have spent \$2 million in severance pay for poor people.

We have had the institution of a no charge regime for one pool extension by VINLEC to enable four persons to access electricity. We have had a reduction in the electricity bill for poor people. A reduction in the water bill for poor people. We have set up the financing of micro enterprises through the National Commercial Bank for poor people and Mr. Speaker; we have had a tremendous gift to poor people in presenting to them a Christmas bonus with the free of custom charges, the barrels that would be coming in.

When you look at what we have done and when you compare what the previous government has done, it is as different as night to day. And I do not know for the life of me, where the Opposition has the effrontery, the barefacedness in coming here and trying to criticize a budget that is presented in the interest of the people of this country, whether it is business, labour or poor people. I would like them to consider for one moment the legacy which they have left to us in this country. I would like to ask them certain questions, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to ask them as though they were in the dock as defendants. I have about 100 questions as to their stewardship that I would like to ask them. But in the interest of time, I would ask them a few questions, and let them answer. Let the public out there be the judge. So that we can see the difference between a budget presented by the Unity Labour Party Government and what the stewardship of the NDP has been.

No.1 Isn't it true that the NDP administration for 17 long years, refused to permit live broadcast of the proceedings of this Parliament? [Applause].

Mr. Speaker, if they do not answer I would have to adjudge them as hostile witnesses. [Laughter].

No. 2 Isn't it true that the NDP administration, by its greed, introduced a pension and gratuity bill to line their own pockets while at the same time denying a decent increase to public servants? [Applause]

No. 3 Isn't it true that the NDP administration did not listen to Vincentians in all walk of life to withdraw the same pensions and gratuity's bill thus bringing about their own downfall? [Applause.]

No. 4 Isn't it true that the NDP administration by their greed and corruption bought public lands and other properties from themselves as the Government, at rates as low as 40 cents per square foot, while charging poor people in this country rates per square foot much higher than that?

No. 5 Isn't it true that the NDP promised the people of this country that they will bring back local government. Institute constitutional reform, enact integrity legislation and set up an electoral commission and for the past 17 years that they have been in power they have refused to fulfill their promise and do any of these things. [Applause].

No. 6 Isn't it true that because of rampant corruption in the NDP administration they refused for years to sign the Inter American Convention Against Corruption?

No. 7 Isn't it true that the NDP administration brought Dr. Rolla to this country to plunder and steal hundreds of millions of dollars from the Ottley Hall project which has now been evaluated by Government Auditors to be no more than \$5 to \$10 million?

And No. 8 and isn't it true that at least three senior government ministers, include two Attorneys General had to resign from their offices because of corruption?

No. 9 Isn't true that the NDP administration was responsible for one Bencasome Adames to enter this country and in one day deprived fraudulently the NCB bank of \$1 million.

No. 10 Isn't it true for 17 long years the NDP administration refused to pay poor people who worked on the estates of Rabbacca, Wallillabou and Richmond their severance pay?

No. 11, isn't it true the NDP administration kept the country in such a state of dirtiness and stinkedness that the Princess Cruise line discontinued its regular visit to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. [Applause].

No. 12 Isn't it true that for many years the NDP administration said it had no interest in cruise tourism because says the Prime Minister 'all they do is to buy a Pepsi, buy a post card and pee in the country'?

No. 13 Isn't it true that the NDP administration wasted millions of the taxpayers dollars to purchase traffic lights which they left in an unworkable condition?

No. 14 Isn't it true that under the NDP administration thousands of people lost their jobs by the closing down of the sugar factory, closing down of the stone crushers, the closing down of the coconut oil factory, the closing down of the Diamond Dairy, the closing down of PICO and Children's Wear at Campden Park and the closing down of the Richmond Vale Academy?

No. 15 Isn't it true that the NDP administration despite the warnings from the ULP, then in Opposition, wasted taxpayers money on Colonial Homes project, Carib Star, loan to Dr. Rolla from NCB, Shrewsbury House, a two bedroom house repaired for over \$750,000.00? And the pavilion, wasted hundreds of thousand of dollars there. Are these things true?

No. 16 Isn't it true that the NDP administration lied time and time again to the people of this country on the presence of the pink mealy bug and our guarantee on the Ottley Hall loan?

No. 17 Isn't it true that the CDB and CARICOM through its publication "Perspective" says that under the NDP administration, St. Vincent and the Grenadines has the highest rate of unemployment, the lowest per capita income, and the highest incident of poverty of all the countries in the OECS?

This is your legacy, now how do you plead. What can you say to the people of this country? Are you humble enough to acknowledge your errors and your transgressions and beg for pardon or are you still stubborn, obdurate, obstinate and unrepentant? Well, the verdict has been passed since March 28<sup>th</sup>, by the people and what you come here and say, I listened to you, have rejected you. There is hardly anything you can say to dent the solidness of this budget. [Applause] When I listened to you frankly I recall the words that you sound no more than a sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.

Mr. Speaker, this government is a government of action. This government has been in action for over eight months and the people can rest assured that if this country is to move forward it would move forward because of the dedicated men and women in this government. I, Mr. Speaker, represent the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Commerce, Trade and Consumer Affairs. This has been a very active ministry. Mr. Speaker, following our coming into power we have had to sign several conventions in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to set out this governments' strong position in various areas. In the international sphere, labour conventions; we have had to sign the convention on discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. We have signed conventions concerning Freedom of Association and the protection of the right to organize.

We have signed the Convention of Equal Remuneration for men and women for work of equal value. We have signed minimum wage convention concerning the abolition of child labour. We have signed convention concerning the worse form of child labour including child prostitution. We have signed the Inter American Child convention against corruption. Last year I went to Costa Rico to sign that convention on behalf of this Government.

Mr. Speaker, we have signed the single convention on narcotics drugs, 1961, and the protocol of 1972. Convention on psychotropic substances. Convention on statute of freedom of transit. Convention on statute on the

regime of navigable waterways of international concerns. And the protocol thereto. Declaration recognizing the rights of a flag of state having no seacoast. Convention of political rights of women. Convention on the consent of marriage. Convention of early notification of a nuclear accident. Convention of assistance in case of a nuclear radiology emergency. Convention of civil liberty on nuclear damage, and several other conventions, Mr. Speaker, we have signed by the time we have been here.

Mr. Speaker, we have certain missions abroad that are working overtime in order to promote the interest of country and we too in the ministry, here have been working hard with the rest of the government in order to promote the welfare of our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this year, or a couple months ago the Prime Minister made a trip to Libya. He did this with the express purpose of seeking assistance for our poor country. Mr. Speaker, all serious minded people would applaud such a move because as a poor country we have to make sure that we keep our traditional friends, as we launch out in seeking aid wherever we can get it.

And Mr. Speaker it was a little disappointing, and when I go to New York my friends asked me what is the matter with the Leader of the Opposition and I had to make excuses for him, that really he is under a lot of pressure. It might very well be that the former Prime Minister comes back and take away the leadership of his party. Or it might well be that he has pressure from the defacto leader, because many of the things he comes here and say, I know he knows better, but probably he is prompted by someone who is a convicted felon that he takes his orders from and he comes here and says things that are not in keeping with what he ought to know and what he ought to say. [Applause].

And so the Leader of the Opposition criticized the Prime Minister for making the Libyan trip. Criticize him for collecting over \$4 million for helping this country to build a sports stadium. Could you imagine that? Could you believe that the Leader of the Opposition is saying the Prime Minister should not take \$4 million to help us build a stadium here for poor people? I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition knows better, and had it not been for the fact that he is taking his advise from someone who is less wise than he, I am sure he would not make such foolish remarks.

Mr. Speaker, we went to Cuba in order to seek an abundance of help for our country and again the Leader of the Opposition was saying that the Prime

Minister should not have gone to Cuba, he should have been sitting down here at home watching CNN and the September 11<sup>th</sup> disaster there, and we should not have gone to Cuba. And when you observe Mr. Speaker the bounties that we have received from Cuba, I do not know how he can speak so foolishly. It has to be that he knows better but he is under tremendous pressure to say what he is told to say and that is very unfortunate for the Leader of the Opposition.

So we have gone to Cuba, we have gone to Libya and we have not come back empty handed. The country is the better for it. The Prime Minister earlier invited the Premier of Taiwan to be here, after he himself had made a trip to Taiwan. I did not hear that the Leader of the Opposition criticize that trip and indeed he has pledged his solidarity and his support for the continuing relationship with the Republic of China on Taiwan. But the Prime Minister came back home with a cornucopia of things for this country and the visit was worth the while. The Prime Minister invited Hugo Chavez and indeed we have abundance.

When I took office, Mr. Speaker, I went over there and I saw on my desk that there was the Caracas Energy Accord that was here in the NDP government for months and not single thing was done about it. And the Leader of the Opposition ought to say why. You are given energy at a reduced price and you sit down there in government and not doing a single thing about it.

The first thing I did was to call the Venezuelan Ambassador and she said yes it is still good. I called my cousin Leonard Edwards who has given tremendous service and he has been able to work out things and he has been able to become subsequently a consultant to the government in enabling us to get the cheaper energy which we are going to get from Venezuela. Had it been for the NDP we would have never been able to realize that. We are the first country in the OECS to experience this tremendous boon that we would get cheaper oil from Venezuela. But if it were left for the NDP government when they in government not a single thing would have been done because they had it there and for months they did absolutely nothing about it.

Mr. Speaker, our missions are working hard. They are seeking to chorale. They are seeking to bring together Vincentians from all walks of life, and bring the Vincentians in the Diaspora, whether they are in New York, in London, in Miami. It is their duty to tap into those resources. –Their skills, their energy, their financial ability to help build their country, and I must say that they are doing an excellent job in trying to bring Vincentians in the Diaspora as part of our Government and people here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, I must pay high tribute to the High Commissioner in London, who has been working untiringly in order to create additional employment for Vincentians in the British Army and the British Navy. This was an initiative that the former Ambassador Dougan started, but I would dare say because of the efforts of His Excellency Cenio Lewis that in the coming year we are likely to experience as low as 500 young people leaving these shores to join the British Army and the British Navy.

We have had several pieces of correspondence from the British Army and the British Army and they have indicated their willingness to come here some time in the new year to do some recruiting. Within a matter of days we have 950 responses. To those have indicated their willingness to join the British Navy, those responses will be coming back through the High Commissioner and they will be picked up by these people in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs so that they can complete the application process, return to England before the recruitment begins down here. I think all of us owe a debt of gratitude to the hard work of the High Commissioner in England in doing whatever is necessary to create employment for our young people here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, not only that, efforts are being made with regards to further employment in Canada, not only to increase the farm workers programme there but for us to get some construction jobs, we are in constant touch with the Canadians to see exactly what we can do in order to promote them. The ambassador and the Consul General, the Ambassador to the United Nations and the Consul General in New York are working overtime to see what they can do. The United Nations Ambassador has informed me that he has already made representation on behalf of our country to have some of our people become clerical people, staff people in the United Nations, we are grossly under represented in the United Nations and not only that in the peace keeping forces of the United Nation. We hope that those efforts would bear fruits.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have been working hard in the Ministry and our people have been working overtime, because we are not fully staffed. We can do with some institutional strengthening but I must commend the staff for what they have been doing. Not only inside of the region but also in the region. As you know we face three major negotiations. The negotiations dealing with the free trade of the Americas, the negotiations dealing with the CARICOM single market and economy and the WTO, which my colleague the Minister of State in Foreign Affairs and Trade has spoken about. All these things we have to do

and sometimes there are several conferences involving negotiations because we approach these things on a regional basis, so it might be the OECS meeting. It might be the CARICOM meeting; you have to go to these meetings, and it appears we have to travel very often, because to miss some of these meeting would be to prevent ourselves from making an input into representing our interest at these important meetings.

We have had to do our best in widening of our sphere of influence and interest in the Caribbean. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have been involved in the decision on the recent CARICOM mission to the Dominican Republic which we succeeded in receiving financial contributions due to the regional negotiating machinery from the Dominican Republic and a renewed effort for the conclusion of the CARICOM Dominican Republic free trade agreement. We have also bilateral agreements with Venezuela and we need to work on the CARICOM/Venezuela bilateral relations. So that we can deepen our relationships with not only the Dominican Republic and Venezuela but with the other areas in this region.

Mr. Speaker, we have been doing all we can, I know through our regional effort to make sure that our interest as a small country represented in all the negotiations with free trade area of the Americas. At the third free trade area of the Americas in Quebec, it has been agreed that negotiations for the FTAA agreement would be concluded no later than January 2005, and would come into effect December 2005. The work of the nine negotiating groups was endorsed and the trade negotiating committee was mandated to thoroughly investigate and evaluate the progress of the negotiating groups. It is of critical importance Mr. Speaker, therefore that St. Vincent and the Grenadines becomes more involved in these negotiations through our joint participation in OECS and CARICOM, to ensure that our interests are represented in these negotiations.

Mr. Speaker, one other area that the Ministry covers is the area of consumer affairs. Mr. Speaker, all of us are consumers. And because of this all of us have an interest in consumer affairs. My ministry receives many consumer complaints, on a daily basis, however the absence of a body of consumer protection legislation in order to give teeth to the consumer affairs and of course, to assist the National Consumers' Association, this legislation is long overdue. In 1995, Mr. Speaker, the former government initiated public consultation on a draft consumer protection bill. Discussions were held throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Recommendations were presented to improve the bill and after spending thousands of dollars the NDP administration simply refused to precede any further. Since then Caricom

have included provisions for consumer protection in the revised treaty for the single market and economy and draft legislation for the adoption of a harmonization law for the region. The Consumer Affairs Department in the Ministry of Trade, Mr. Speaker, has been working closely with the National Consumer Association to address complaints and assist the aggrieved consumers to get redress, there is much that needs to be done and I hope, Mr. Speaker, that a new draft consumers protection bill will be prepared alongside the harmonized draft for CARICOM to be considered for our 2002 legislative year.

Mr. Speaker, I for one would like to see stiff consumer legislation. Our people must not be left to the mercy of those who sell them shoddy goods and those who would take advantage of them because they have no recourse. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I am hoping and I have not discussed this with any of my colleagues, but I am hoping that one day we will get consumer regulation to regulate the funeral industry. Because I feel that a person is most vulnerable when he or she is in grief. And I believe that the funeral home should have a price list of all their services stuck up there so that when you go in they do not look on you and figure that you have relatives in America and charge what the market can bear. You must be able to see in a standardized way what their charges are. Every casket should have a price tag, so that when you go in they may not look on you and see that well, he can pay \$10,000 for a casket therefore I would charge him \$10,000 when the price should only be \$5,000. And this is to protect our people, and help them to do comparative shopping. If they go to one funeral parlour and they know what prices for that service they can go to another and they do not have to just surrender themselves in their grief to those who have the advantage over them.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased with what we have been doing in our Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Commerce, Trade and Consumer Affairs and I look forward to a prosperous year, a productive year for our people and country, as we continue to serve them in this particular area. Mr. Speaker, we have shown that we are in one on this side when it comes to meeting our commitments as stated in our manifesto towards helping people in this country, whether it is in the area of unemployment, in the area of education or what have you.

Mr. Speaker, the members in the Opposition may try their best to denigrate our attempt to help the people with their barrels coming in for Christmas but they were in government not too long ago, and they did absolutely nothing to listen to the cries of the people in giving them a break. Now that we have decided to that, they are saying well, you are not doing enough. You should

not put on the handling charge but you should let the barrels come in free. They should be ashamed to speak like that. If you are now advocating that, why did you do it when you were in Government?

You did not do that, you did not have any compassion for poor people, so you now want to make it appear that you are on the side of the people, you are their advocate in saying that we are not to put on the handling charge, we are to give free, but the people can see through your hypocrisy, because you did nothing for them when you could have done something for them. And it is only because there is ULP Government. And if they have to pay \$25 for super jumbo barrel they should be happy because that is the price that they would ordinarily pay to the broker in order to have their documents processed. So if they have to use that \$25 now as a handling fee they do not have to go through a broker any more, then they are way ahead. As a matter of fact, I would dare say, Mr. Speaker, as quietly as they might want to do it, many of them might have barrels coming in and they might be ashamed to go and collect it, so they may send their relatives to collect it but if I had one coming I would walk with pride because this is something that the Government is doing for the people of this country.

Mr. Speaker, when it comes to the severance pay, the Leader of the Opposition had said in no uncertain terms that the Government should not have paid the people. He should wait until December, should not give it to the people. Mr. Speaker, the people have been waiting for 17 years and he did not do it, and now he wants us to wait until December so that if times are hard, he can say well we cannot do it anymore and then blame us for doing that, but we were committed to doing it for the poor people and we have said that we would do it before any parliamentarian got their severance pay, and the people of this country are happy that the ULP has honoured its commitment. Many of them were able to put on some addition to their homes, buy nice things for themselves and can spend a better Christmas because of the severance pay that they have received. If we were to listen to NDP opposition we would have never proceeded with that. As I traveled along this morning, Mr. Speaker, I saw – please Mr. Speaker, tell me when I have 15 more minutes left. I saw more people working on the roads than I have ever seen in the history of this country. [Applause]. I have had sometimes to quarrel with my colleague with the colleague the Minister of Transport and Works because my area is an area of high unemployment and sometimes, I have to come and quarrel because it looks like no matter how many gangs you put out you can spend the whole budget for Central Leeward and still you have people who are unemployed, but I am pleased to say from last month and this month that what I have seen this morning, that the people of this country and the million dollars increase that

the Prime Minister has granted we have more people working on the roads. Don't you see it Leader of the Opposition? I am sure you have seen it. I am sure Senator Shallow has seen it. I am sure that the others in the Opposition have seen hundreds of people on the roadside working. And thanks to this Government, if they spend a better Christmas it is because of what we are doing and if we had listened to the Opposition we would not be able to do these things for the people.

Mr. Speaker, in the area of education we have done more for the eight months we have been here than the NDP administration has done for the years it has been in power. No, when the NDP was in power and tell me the truth, I want the Opposition now to tell me the truth. Is it a fact that every time school opens you had demonstrations that children do not have benches to sit on, no desk to write on. The toilet in every single school was in disarray, leaky schools, isn't it true opposition members? Thank you for nodding your head. [Applause]. You know it is the truth. Well, they are not sleeping. They cannot face the daylight of truth, and if they close their eyes it is because they are ashamed to watch me in my eyes.

Mr. Speaker, we have been able to repair all the government owned schools. Some in the districts of the members of the opposition, and they are smiling and they are happy because they must be saying to themselves, boy if these fellas had not gone there what would have become of the schools in our districts. We have offered more scholarships, this government has offered in the eight months we have been here than they have offered. We have provided quality education. We have appointed qualified teachers. We have done a lot for education for the eight months that we have been in power. And they have to applaud the effort of the Unity Labour Party government, because we have met our needs and we have made the people happy. Create an environment that they can learn and the teachers can feel far better because they have better facilities in which to operate.

Mr. Speaker, we have been moving along with agriculture, moving along with the manufacturing sector. What we are going to experience is to stem the slide that the manufacturing sector has been encountering. For years, year after year the manufacturing sector has been going down and down as the percentage of the GDP. What we have in our plans, would stem that slide and would give us a chance to begin to rebuild our manufacturing sector and create employment for our young people and those who are older. In agriculture, Mr. Speaker, the NDP administration met a very much diversified agriculture and I dare them to say otherwise. We plant onion, carrots, many things that we are importing now we were able to produce, not eddoes, we had

market abroad for many of our agricultural products. People in the country could tell you that they could put their pots on the fire and knowing that when they come to town they would get their produce sold at the Marketing Board and go back with their pocket full of money. But the past NDP administration has destroyed agriculture and we are seeking with the reorganization of the Marketing Board and with the bringing in of a new era, enhancing the agricultural non-banana sector of our agriculture would produce another vibrant area in our economy, making agriculture take its rightful place and show them how we can do things on this side and not allow the country to slide from one sector to the other.

In the area of tourism Mr. Speaker, we could have been further advanced in tourism, but the NDP government neglected tourism. I could recall when I was in the United States that Burton Williams was then the Minister of Tourism, and he came to my church and as one who has always had interest in my country I asked him why can't we try to get into mass tourism, get the cruise ships to come here. He said that the NDP administration is not interested in mass tourism, because all they do is to bring a lot of hippies in the country and they are not interested in bringing hippies here to pollute the culture of St. Vincent. So, and the former Prime Minister made it clear also, the only three p's that we were getting were a post card, a Pepsi and a pee, and therefore the NDP were not interesting in tourist.

So by the time they woke up and started to move forward in tourism what has happened is that we are behind. We are behind most of the countries, in the Caribbean, except for maybe Montserrat, and Anguilla, in terms of the number of arrivals coming to our shore. And that is very unfortunate that we have to play catch up game because the boat has almost left and we are far behind, whereas we could have had a vibrant tourism sector and we could have been having higher standard of living. The Leader of the Opposition, Senator Leacock and others who have spoken, talked about allocation, we have not allocated enough to tourism because of the condition we are in. I would like to ask these gentlemen on the other side where was the allocation to clean up Kingstown, in order to prevent Princess Cruise line from stopping their cruise tour here. If you know what is necessary, if you know that we need the cruise ship line to come here why didn't you allocate the money to have the country clean up, rather than have the cruise ship stop coming here. You did not do that, but now you stop there and trying to fool the public into thinking that you have a genuine interest in greater allocations when you did not do it when you were there.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You are within 15 minutes now.

**HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER:** Mr. Speaker, since the Leader of the Opposition did not use the full time, he had four hours he just used three, and he is my very good friend, I wonder if I can borrow his other hour, so that I can. Mr. Speaker, I can't hear the Opposition too well, but whatever I say I do not say it with any malice, either to the Senator Leacock or to the Opposition Leader. As I told him I have high regard for him, if even for the name he carries, because of my tremendous respect, reverence, awe I have of a similar man who has had his name JP Eustace, and his father who was a stalwart in the old labour party [applause] and because of that I would spare him some of the trust that I probably would have had for him.

Mr. Speaker, I must look to my constituency now. First of all I want to thank the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I want to thank the staff of the Ministry of Trade and Commerce and Consumer Affairs for the work that they have been doing. I want to thank the people of East Kingstown, since the representative did not see it fit to thank them after having an hour left but I leave that for my colleague who is covering that area. But Mr. Speaker, I thank the staff of my ministry for the work that they have done and I look forward to a year of productive work with them again. We are doing some revamping of the consumer affairs because we want to be a little bit more vibrant in that area and I hope that they would understand what we are doing in trying to make it more effective.

Mr. Speaker, I have been honoured and privileged to represent the decent and dignified people in Central Leeward. When I came back here in 1993, the NDP said that there is no way I could unseat the incumbent Minister of Foreign Affairs and Tourism. They said I was away for 31 years I could not do it. But I came back with a mission and a vision. I came back because the people in my constituency, they knew very well that I did not go abroad to seek out my own interest, they know of my kindness, they knew I have always taken care of the poor in my constituency. I have sent for more people in the United States than any single person here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, I have housed them in my own house, provided for them. I have sent things for people here more than anybody, whether it is for football teams or the poor people, so when I came back, I came back at their invitation to represent their interest and they have been very kind and gentle to me. I was elected in 1994 Mr. Speaker, by a slim majority, but compared to the Leader of the Opposition carries his seat I would call that a landslide. In 1998 the people again were kind to me, they brought somebody who had campaigned for me in 1994 and they tried to divide the constituency by saying if they have somebody from Barrouallie, Barrouallie people would not vote for a Layou man. But it did not

work. I told them it did not work because the people are not voting for me because I am from Layou or from Barrouallie, they are voting for me because they are voting for their own interest and representation so that did not work.

In 2001 they came back with the same old story, and they were fooled into thinking well, Straker is getting unpopular down there, the people would not vote for him, and I came back with an even larger majority, and I challenge them to come again, I am waiting on them. I rest confident in the confidence of the people of Central Leeward, that they know that I am capably and ably representing them, yet they are my bosses, when they say go, I would go graciously, but I know that they are pleased with what I am doing. Not everybody. Because you know you cannot please everybody, not even Jesus himself could do that. But the people have been kind to me and I thank them for what they have done.

There is much work for us to do in Central Leeward, Mr. Speaker, for years I have been asking that the road in Mt. Wayne be paved so that you can get have easy access down to some of the beaches there, some of the best beaches we have had. I have asked for toilet facilities until Senator Douglas then and Minister of Health now, joined me in this call that we need toilet facilities in Mt. Wayne, the NDP government turned a completely deaf ear to that request. They could not care less; the thousand of people going down to Mt. Wayne and there was no facility for them to use. They were not interested in that. But thank God that with the Estimates we have seen here we are going to have facilities down there for the decency of the people down in that area.

For years Mr. Speaker, the wharf in Barroullie was broken down, the NDP administration sat there for years and did nothing about it. Mr. Speaker, I want to give the people of Barrouallie the assurance that we are going to start on their wharf because there is a new government in place that would look out for their interest. Since, 1995 Mr. Speaker, the Layou waterfront was decimated by Iris, Marilyn, and I forgot the name of the third hurricane. Prime Minister Mitchell came down there, stood right there and said to the people that they are going to do something soon to rehabilitate the Layou waterfront, with the coming of Lenny it was further decimated, not a thing was done by that NDP administration. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to let the people of Layou know that within the coming year, work would begin on the Layou waterfront that would provide a lot of jobs for the people in that area.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know what the search committee would decide about the Prison location but if I were to have my way, just for the jobs involved and because of the high rate of unemployment in Central Leeward it would be

placed in Central Leeward and the few people who have thought that they would oppose it are seeing the light now, they would realize that I get no bonus on building a prison in Central Leeward. The prison would not be built as the propagandists have said at Peter's Hope. It would not be built at Mt. Wayne, it would be built within an area called Boisdén and hundreds of people would be able to get jobs there. I have said in no uncertain terms that the people who are going to build a road, more than a mile would find jobs. The prison would be phasing for over 4 years, you have the main prison, prison for female, prison for juveniles, officers quarters, that is a lot of jobs, investment for 20 million dollars which I could not let go. And if I grab at it, it is because I want the people to find the jobs there in Central Leeward and I do hope that Minister of National Security would listen to my plea and erect it there.

Mr. Speaker, we have the Lammie Mountain road, as well as the Laurly Mountain road that we are hoping that these feeder roads would be looked after in the coming years. For years they have been asking to be repaired and I hope that something would be done. One of my promises to the people of Buccament Bay, one is to try and change the river so that the people living near the school would not be flooded. Thank God that I have sent the crew working there now, I thank the Minister of Transport and Works, working there to divert the river to prevent the flooding of the people who live in the area of the Buccament Bay school from being flooded again. Two other promises I gave them was to put a bridge, an over pass to cross into the playing field, since 1992 the bridge that they had there was broken down, washed away, I have been pleading here to the NDP administration to please put an over walk or bridge because when I have to go there for the opening ceremonies when they have football, I have to roll up my pants foot and jump stones, and other people have to do that. If you do not want to put a full bridge, you can put an overpass so that people can walk. They have not listened; they have no interest for doing that for the people of Buccament Bay. Only election time they go back there and try to get votes when the people of Buccament Bay spoke in no uncertain terms. I got over 250 vote, compared to the 98 votes that the NDP administration because the people have lost faith, and confidence in their failed promises.

Mr. Speaker we need to have sustained employment in Central Leeward. We look forward to the day when we will have the facilities that we can have call centres down in that area. I have been speaking to the Minister of Telecommunications and we must have some employment there on the Leeward end but just because we do not have the building to facilitate such enterprises we are not like those who are in the front, in starting off with this

project. But there is much that we would be working on, enough roads to be cleared. I have complained time and time again, I am ashamed of the NDP administration about the Post Office in Layou that does not have any lights, water, no toilet facilities, for 17 long years they have kept the women there in the National Commercial Bank and the post office and for 17 long years they have done nothing to alleviate the plight of the people there in Layou who have to be in a facility where when nature calls they have to go in the bushes and they did not even have the decency or the shame to do something to help the women, for 17 long years, I am hoping that at least you would begin to do something by the year 2002 to alleviate that plight for the people in the Post Office and the National Commercial Bank in Layou.

So, Mr. Speaker, right through the constituency, we are going to do the best we can and if we can get the things that I have mentioned here, including the sporting facilities, for three years now they had no sporting events in Layou because they were digging up the playing field. I am hoping that with the year 2002 cricket football what have you would come back to Layou sporting field because that project would be completed. The change room in Kertons would be completed and young would find the required facilities in which to exercise themselves.

Mr. Speaker, I thank again all the people in Central Leeward for their confidence in me and I want to wish everyone from Belle Isle Hill to Wallilabou, to Keartons, to Kearton Hill, to Bamboo Square, Morgan Square, Bottle and Glass, the people up in Virgin and Three Akers, Glebe Hill, Green Hill, particularly Tisher Road. The people in Cowdrey Village, Layou, the people over Plan and the Ruthland Village Estate. The people in Buccament Bay, wherever they are throughout Central Leeward I thank you. I love you. I want to wish you a Merry Christmas and a bright and prosperous New Year. I am always there at your beck and call. I live among you. I bathe with your youngsters. I walk in your midst. And you can approach me at any time. I pray that God will keep me humble as I walk among you, to realize that I am your servant. I need not exalt myself. I need not display vanity and pride in order to keep you from me, I am part of you. Those of you who are the children of estate workers, I am the same as you are and thank God that you have exalted me. I sit quietly, you have asked me to serve and it's an honour and a privilege to serve you. I want to wish all the people in Central Leeward, the public officials, the teachers, wherever they are, the fishermen, the farmers, men and women, boys and girls. All the students in all walks of life, I want to thank them and wish them Merry Christmas and prosperous New Year.

Mr. Speaker, I thank you for your indulgence and wish you too, a Merry Christmas and prosperous new year. Merry Christmas, prosperous New Year to my dear friends on the opposite side. Leader of the Opposition, the other members, I want to thank you for your indulgence and please accept my criticisms in the spirit. You know that open rebuke is better than secret love and I hope that you would have an enjoyable Christmas that we can all have the same measure of cordiality we have when we are outside the cut and thrust of politics and we can do the best we can to promote the interest of our country. But do not forget what you have done. Because I would not let you forget. Let us work together with this new government and if you are satisfied with what we are doing which is evident by the support you have been giving every piece of legislation, let us work together because you know our heart is in the right place. You know what we are doing is right, otherwise you would not support us with all the legislations we brought here. And I hope you would support the appropriation bill brought here. I want to wish all of you a merry Christmas and a prosperous new year.

To my colleagues on this side, I want to thank them for the honour they have placed in me. The confidence they have placed in me. I love every one of them and I hope we will continue to work together, so that I would move back from no. 8 to no. 2, as I should be. [Laughter]. No, I am not interested, really. But I hope that we can continue to work together, not for our own interest, not for self-praise and vainglory, but because there are poor people in this country. I have joined you, every one of you here because I know you have the interest of poor people at heart. And I cannot turn my back on poor people. If we do not forget what we are up to, if we keep the light and the vision before our eyes and see that those who are vulnerable, unfortunate, in need, that we become their voice and act on their behalf, I tell you we will be here for the next 15 years at least. [Applause]. And the people would be happy for the representation. To the Clerk and the other rest members of the House; the Sergeant-at-Arms, I thank all of you. Wish all of you, the Attorney General, everyone, Merry Christmas, bright and prosperous New Year. God bless every one of you, thank you Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise here this morning in support of the Appropriation Bill that is before us, over the past four or five days, we have been having substantial debate on this Bill and the supporting Estimates. I want before I start in full, Mr. Speaker, to pay compliments to the other members on this side of the House, who have very eloquently given support to this budget debate. [Applause]. I am very pleased in particular Mr. Speaker, with the performances of the previous senators on this side of the House. I will deal with the senators on the other side of the

House a little bit later on. But, Mr. Speaker, the bill that is before us today and the Estimates they are going to be what I could call our Bible and our rod of direction for the next financial year up to the end of December 2002.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I rise as a man full of pride but yet humbled by the level of responsibility given to me and this great party of ours the Unity Labour Party. Mr. Speaker, I am a proud man today because after a long time in the political vineyards our party is now the government of this wonderful multi island state called St. Vincent and the Grenadines. And our party being in government is now in the position to set the policies and to give the direction for development of our wonderful Vincentian people. I know; Mr. Speaker, how long our people have longed for this day. I know, Mr. Speaker, how they have prayed for this day. Mr. Speaker, I also know how much they have laboured for this day, and today, Mr. Speaker, they now have the government that they need and the government that they want. The government, Mr. Speaker, selected by the people, of the people and the government for the people, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in particular I feel a great sense of humility and this is because I am not an elected member of this House, I am only a nominated member of this House but the leadership of our great party in their collective wisdom and with the fulsome support of the majority of Vincentians, have seen it fit to place me as a Minister. And even more given to me were the more people oriented and therefore important Ministries in the Government, the Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing.

Mr. Speaker, I am indeed humbled and wish to expressed on this important occasion my gratitude to our political leader, Dr. the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves, our Deputy Political Leader, Honourable Louis Straker, Honourable Vincent Ian Beache and the other elected members on this side of the House, the leadership and more importantly, the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, I wish to assure you, the Leadership and the people that I will carry out my duties diligently and once more restore the good name of the Ministry of Works. Mr. Speaker, if you will permit me on a day like this to be a little bit immodest, I promised you, Sir that I will strive, and I know I will succeed to be the most effective Minister of Works this country has seen in the past 20 years. Such an achievement Mr. Speaker, will not be difficult considering the lack of performance of the incumbents over the last 17 years in particular. Mr. Speaker, I make no apologies for starting off my presentation in this manner because, Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important. It is important to remind the supporters of this party that their party is the government of the country. It is still in its youthful stage of development.

They must remember that the NDP was the Government and when the NDP was the Government there was massive and wholesale victimization of Labour Party supporters, throughout the length and breath of this country. So much so, Mr. Speaker, that for 17 years, some persons were unable to get one days work from the Government. Mr. Speaker, in our campaign to remove the NDP from office which was finally decreed at 7:20 p.m. on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March 2001. We criticize them for the level of victimization and promised to be a government of all the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I want to urge the supporters of this wonderful party to allow your government to carry out its promise, you will get work, they will get work, we will all get work for the total development of the people and the country.

Mr. Speaker, this budget we are debating here today, is well put together. I heard the Leader of the Opposition saying it is fundamentally flawed. I heard the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines describing it as a timid budget. I heard the Honourable Senator Major St. Claire Leacock describing it as a bikini budget, with a bandage and mascara. But, Mr. Speaker, I am very much in support of this budget, it is a poor people's budget. [Applause]. I am not surprise Mr. Speaker, that we are presenting a budget like this today. I expect nothing less from our political leader. Our Prime Minister has a history of looking after and protecting the poor and the dispossessed. I have been with him in the trenches. We have all these members who now rightly occupy the government seats, spent years putting this programme together and what you have here today, Mr. Speaker, is a reflection, the thoughts, commitment and dedication of the years we are now bringing as our first budget in this House. Our manifestoes and other writings are reflected in this budget, after all what else could you expect from a people's party, a people's government, a people's Prime Minister, but a people's budget. [applause]. Aptly described by the Prime Minister and I see it one of the newspapers as headlines, poor people's budget.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn now after that fairly long preamble, to go into a little bit in the area of this budget that addresses my Ministry. The Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing, Mr. Speaker, replaces, although it still contains a substantial part of the former ministry, which was known then as Communications and Works, this change Transport was added, housing was added and telecommunications taken away, Mr. Speaker. The post office, air and seaport development were also taken from this ministry as part of our manifesto commitment to the people of this country. And Mr. Speaker, I must compliment the Honourable Senator Andrea Young on her presentation to this Parliament because she used the base of her presentation the two major documents of this party, the Fist 100 Days, in office Mr. Speaker, and the

Manifesto of the Unity Labour Party. We are living up to our promises to the people of this country, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the components of works have always existed and are well established as a major component of the ministerial system in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Housing existed as a component in the portfolio in the past but was neglected and particular in the 90's by the New Democratic Party administration. And perhaps it is this neglect, which has resulted in the Gibson Corner housing fiasco and the Colonial Homes fiasco at Diamond. Mr. Speaker, I will deal a little bit more with those two matters later on in my presentation.

Mr. Speaker, under the Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing. There are six divisions within this Ministry Mr. Speaker. There is the office of the Chief Engineer, there is the maintenance of roads and buildings, there are the architectural engineering services, and there is the construction division project management and electrical inspectorate. Mr. Speaker, what I inherited in that Ministry I am sure that if the NDP did not commit a sin before, they committed a sin, the way they treated the Ministry of Communications and Works in the past.

There is a severe shortage, Mr. Speaker, of technical personnel within the Ministry of Transport. And I want to go through them Mr. Speaker. In the office of the Chief Engineer, Mr. Speaker, this country has been without a chief engineer, the last person who was there as a chief engineer was in an acting position. From the time Jeffery Cato demitted that office there was an acting chief engineer who himself was not an engineer but an architect. I do not know if it was sheer coincidence, Mr. Speaker, but the last day he worked was the 28<sup>th</sup> of March, 2001. I do not know if it was a significant day, or planned otherwise but from the time I took up the Ministry on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April, Mr. Speaker, there was nobody in the position of chief engineer. There was a deputy chief engineer who is acting, not officially but he has taken on the duties, Mr. Speaker.

In the areas of maintenance of buildings and roads, Mr. Speaker, the senior technical officer, there are two engineers position in that; one post is filled, Mr. Speaker. Operation and maintenance officer, in the electrical area of buildings, Mr. Speaker, is vacant. Under the architectural engineering Mr. Speaker, the senior technical officer, that position is also vacant. Two engineer positions, Mr. Speaker, one is empty. Draftsman, four, one is empty. Draftsman four, one is empty. Assistant draftsmen, three vacancies, Mr.

Speaker. Surveyor assistants, post vacant, an assistant laboratory technician post vacant, Mr. Speaker.

Under construction the senior technical officer the post is vacant, Mr. Speaker, engineers two, both are empty, Mr. Speaker. Under quantity surveyors under the project management quantity surveyors assistants, two vacancies out of three, and student quantity surveyors, two positions, both are empty. One of the senior members, Mr. Speaker, and particularly the engineers. Seven out of 11 positions of the top technical persons in the Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing is empty. And one out of these is outside of the mainstream of the Ministry of Transport, being in charge of the Labour, Intensive Road Maintenance and Repairs. Mr. Speaker, this is what I inherited in the Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing. I have been trying since then to get replacement for these positions within the local market, Mr. Speaker, there are not many qualified engineers who are prepared to come within the public service to work. You see them coming spending a year, Mr. Speaker, and gravitating to greener pastures. They either go overseas or they get more attracted to statutory bodies, that is VINLEC, water, telephone, because the pay there is better. But, Mr. Speaker, considering that this Government and this Minister intends to have a functioning Ministry of Works, Mr. Speaker, this government has decided to go abroad for assistance and I wish to state that out of the visit of Cuba earlier this year, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was able to get a commitment from the Government and people of Cuba to send us 5 engineers. [Applause]. Mr. Speaker, we are hoping to have these persons in here by the end of the year, so that come January 2002 we can kick off on our works programme. The Prime Minister has already made it clear what he wants. This is one of the reasons, Mr. Speaker, that we are bringing this budget so early, normally budget comes at the end of the first or beginning of the second week in December but we have decided that we will come at this time, so that the Ministries will have the whole month of December to prepare their work plan to start on implementing works from January, Mr. Speaker. Normally, I understand that under the NDP administration, Mr. Speaker that works never got started, particularly within the Ministry of Communications and Works before February and sometimes March.

Mr. Speaker, I promised the people of this country, the contractors, the workers, members on the roads, road gangs, that works will start immediately, following the old years new year holidays. Minister of Finance has made a commitment and the Ministry of Finance I know they will follow that they would make their disbursements very early in the New Year. We have some monies going over. There is spare money, there is money in the bank, we have

loans we have made but we have not drawn down on, so there is money to start the New Year. We do not have to wait until July, like we did in 2001 when the NDP Government prepared a budget, put in a capital programme but made no arrangements to borrow the money or to get the money to carry out their programme. We are not going to do that in 2002 and we are going to have a full year of works in 2002, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, housing as part of my ministry has been a headache for me. You would have heard in the budget speech of the Prime Minister that he gave the people of this country a commitment, to put into place a commission of inquiry to deal with the problems that exist, mainly three areas are linked, Mr. Speaker, Gibson Corner, Diamond that is the Colonial Homes and the Pembroke Lands that were obtained from the Pembroke Estates. Mr. Speaker, I have spent considerable time with one other member of my staff in the Ministry to come up with a picture on this housing situation, Mr. Speaker, because as you know housing was formally under a different ministry. It took us a while to get the files over from that ministry, Mr. Speaker, but we have worked diligently and hard to come up with a picture, Mr. Speaker. But a picture that I as a layman I am not prepared to sort out. I spoke to the Prime Minister and I brought a memo to the Cabinet, asking the Cabinet to authorize and approve the setting up of a commissioner of inquiry, to enquire into the affairs of Gibson Corner, Colonial Homes and Pembroke.

Mr. Speaker, why I do not want to go into too much details on it because they have already announced the Commissioner of Inquiry. But persons at Gibson Corner, some persons were given land, far more valued than the land that they owned at Gibson Corner, some were given land and money because I understand and I have seen on the files where some \$10,000 compensation were supposed to be given to some. So some got land and cash, some persons and in particular one person got two pieces of land for one piece of land at Gibson Corner. Lots at Diamond that were exchanged for owners at Gibson Corner, Mr. Speaker, or persons at Gibson Corner were given lands at Diamond that were already allocated to other persons, and on which other persons have already paid down monies, Mr. Speaker, it has gone to the stage, where some of those persons who got lands at Diamond in replacement for their Gibson corner property has already sold the lands at Diamond and still living at Gibson Corner, Mr. Speaker, having already been compensated for it. There are persons who have been given refund for land at Diamond and they still occupy the land at Diamond and still occupy the house at Diamond, Mr. Speaker. In fact, one person from my recollection of the stats and my information one person from Gibson Corner got a piece of land at Diamond and a piece of land at Pembroke. Mr. Speaker, I want to apologize to the

members of the public who having been suffering long to get this matter settled.

This matter with Gibson Corner started since 1998, the former government dragged its feet and only at election time did they pull it together and started giving people benefits for what has happened with them at Gibson Corner. They were told that the lands at Gibson Corner were not suitable for housing, Mr. Speaker, but in desperation and I will deal a little bit more. But with the deluding of the Housing and Land Development Corporation, Mr. Speaker, by this former administration. Oh, totally deluded Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Housing Development at Diamond, you would recall in 1998 that prompted the election, because this great party of ours put on a rally, a protest rally in the middle of nowhere, nobody lives in Diamond at that time and we ended up with close to 10,000.00 people at that protest rally. In fact, the Commissioner of Police who was supposed to be appointed at that time was demoted because he gave us permission to hold a rally at Diamond in 1998. But when the then Prime Minister James Mitchell saw the reaction of the people, he decided no, we are going to call fresh elections. They came in 1998, Mr. Speaker, they scrape home with one seat and the man who helped them scrape home he is still here today, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, winning his seat by a mere 27 votes but was able to hold on to the coat of his government. But he is still here with us here today, second time around in 2001, he moved it from 27 to 41. But I want to leave that part for the last, at the end of the presentation today, Mr. Speaker, for the people of East Kingstown. I will leave that for last, I will not deal with that right now. [Interjection.] Do you want me to come and run against you? Do you want me to come? No, man. Wait for the announcement.

Mr. Speaker, I want to assure the people of this country them that the commission of inquiry would be held very soon. I would suspect, the Commissioner has been named, I think the Prime Minister announced the name, Honourable Monica Joseph; former judge here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines will be back to head the commission of inquiry. All persons having interest in Gibson Corner, Diamond, not the squatters, the Colonial Homes fiasco that they have out there, and the Pembroke matter, all those persons who have interest would be allowed time before the commission of inquiry to present their case. On the ruling Mr. Speaker, the Ministry and the Government will then carry out the wishes and the directives of the Commission of Inquiry, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Housing and Land Development Corporation again, we inherited from the NDP a dilapidated building if that is the worst part of it, but that is

not the worst part. The staff was totally demotivated, they did not have a manager in place, that manager resigned a couple of years ago out of frustration. Some severed employees are still awaiting their severance pay. And over the 90's Mr. Speaker, the corporation received absolutely no support from Government, while they struggled with overdraft at the National Commercial Bank to try and keep them going. Mr. Speaker, the corporation was systematically undermined, starved of cash and was not given any direction in which to go. Mr. Speaker, this Government is a caring government, a government who promised to invest in the housing stock of this country, Mr. Speaker, particularly for the low income people. We want to place great emphasis on rebuilding and restructuring the statutory body, Housing and Land Development Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, over the past months I have put together a team an inter Ministerial team Mr. Speaker, including some other members of the private sector who have interest in low housing Mr. Speaker, and we have been discussing and going through and planning our approach to the 1,000 homes that we intend to build in this country; low income homes over the next five years, Mr. Speaker. You will see in the Estimates allocation there for the start of that, and I will deal with that when I get to the capital later on. But, Mr. Speaker, we intend to use the Housing and Land Development Corporation as a unit to carry our housing programme forward. And we are getting there. We have visited this country, the length and breath of it, to see exactly where we can put these different houses, Mr. Speaker. We have been on the leeward side and on the windward side, Mr. Speaker. We have gone through all the lands that government owned and we have picked some, we have decided on some areas. We will be starting off, in two different areas, one on the leeward side and one on the windward side. Mr. Speaker, I will prefer not to announce the exact locations at this time, but that as we come closer to the implementation stage I will let the people know exactly where we will be starting our houses, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, to show you, how much the NDP thought of the Housing and Land Development Corporation, after telling you how they deluded it. You would recall as part of this debate, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition was criticizing this government for wanting to merge the New Development Bank and the National Commercial Bank, Mr. Speaker, but in an act of desperation, Mr. Speaker, to get this project for a New Development Bank going, because I am still convinced in my mind that this New Development Bank was not properly thought out.

I have a letter here that was written on the 29<sup>th</sup> of June, 2000, to the manager of the Housing and Land Corporation. They have already not repaired the building. They already reduced the staff. They had no interest in establishing any housing in this country for poor people. No wonder we have so much squatting in this country. Transfer of lands to New Development Bank. Hear who they are taking lands from to give equity to a New Development;-- Bank. Housing and Land Development Corporation, Mr. Speaker. Imagine that. All these lands that government owned they do not want to use it as equity, they gone and take eight acres of land from Housing and Land Development Corporation, leaving them with no more lands to build houses or to sell to make money and to get some money into running the affairs of the Housing and Land Development Corporation. They intended to cripple it and that they did Mr. Speaker. But this Unity Labour Party Government will resurrect the Housing and Land Development Corporation. [Applause]. The letter reads as follows:

The Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines has made a decision to establish a New Development Bank. Funding is now sought to capitalize the Bank. The proposed capital injection over a five-year period, is approximately \$19.1 million. (That is what they want to use to capitalize the bank.) The legislation to establish the bank has had its second reading and it is expected to be passed at the next sitting of the House. It has been proposed that certain portions of land owned by the Corporation, would be transferred to the bank. This transfer would provide the bank with equity of \$1.6 million in land that would be used in proposing housing development in collaboration with the private sector.”

Do you hear how they are coming around to housing, Mr. Speaker? They are moving lands from Housing and Land Development Corporation putting it into a new development bank to start housing in collaboration with the private sector. This was in the year 2000, Mr. Speaker. They have been in power since 1984. Nineteen, Eighty-Four, Mr. Speaker, 16 years later, you now coming with this underhand, roundabout fashion to say you are going to get into housing.

**“To this end, the bank wishes to enter into discussions with you for approval of transfer and to discuss the terms and conditions of the transfer of these assets.”**

Mr. Speaker, that was the last piece of decent land that the Housing and Land Development Corporation owned, that the Government took away from them, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, GESCO. General Equipment Service Corporation, Mr. Speaker; do you remember when Carib Express was created, when Carib Expressed was brought in here, the Prime Minister said that was his baby? The General Equipment Services Corporation, Mr. Speaker, is child of the NDP. Again they abandon it. They met what was then called the Government Funding Scheme, but they thought that that was not running good enough, so they will set up GESCO to carry out the crushing works, and quarrying operations down at Arnos Vale and to be responsible for heavy-duty equipment rentals and so on for government operations.

Mr. Speaker, not long after GESCO was created that the Government realized that they had made a mistake with GESCO. Over the years, Mr. Speaker, again GESCO was neglected. What did this government do, Mr. Speaker, the NDP government? They took all the assets of GESCO and gave it to a private sector firm from Trinidad. They close down every single stone crusher that GESCO was responsible for. I do not know what has happened to some of the stone crushing plants. I am still trying to find out. But the operations at Lowmans Bay headed by Dipcon Engineering, Mr. Speaker, benefited from a loan, Mr. Speaker, and I want to deal with that in conjunction with a report I got from the Quarry Development Board, Mr. Speaker. Everything GESCO earns money from at that time was taken away, and they were left with the matter of just hiring equipment and trucks and running a garage where they did not have the tools to deal with modern day repairs. And that is what is at GESCO, Mr. Speaker. GESCO was supposed to be the one taking care of all the stone crushers.

Mr. Speaker, do you remember in 1984 when the NDP formed government, you had over 12 crushing operations in this country, from Windward to Leeward. One was down at Richmond Beach and one was out at Rabacca. From end to end of the country, Mr. Speaker. Again, they deluded GESCO and said they are going to take it over and give it to private sector. But they did not give it to the private sector in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, they gave it to some people overseas. I do not have a problem with our regional friends getting work here in this country, Mr. Speaker, but when you give them work they must be efficient. I want to read a report from the Quarry Development Board, Mr. Speaker, because it kills two birds. It kills the idea and the point I was developing or helps me to develop the point I was making with GESCO and it also addresses the matter of quarry development in this country. The report was done on August 2001.

Mr. Speaker, the report said:

Background: Quarry was an operation undertaken through Government by GESCO. On the 10<sup>th</sup> of June, 1987, St. Vincent Quarry Company Limited was formed. All quarry work in St. Vincent and the Grenadines was then vested in this Company. (So, after they did that they formed this company called the Quarry Development Board) The company then entered into a lease with DIPCON for the operation of the Lowmans Bay Quarry. The quarry was outfitted with all necessary equipment and there was an agreement between DIPCON and the Quarry Development Board which is a limited liability company, between DIPCON and them. The quarrying was done at Arnos Vale, and involved moving operations from Arnos Vale to Lowands Leeward. Lease agreements between the company and DIPCON were entered into on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, 1991 and secondly on the 1<sup>st</sup> of July, 1995. The lease agreement expired on the 30<sup>th</sup> of June 2000. None of these lease agreement were formally signed and registered, Mr. Speaker, since 1991 you had a company benefiting from monies of the taxpayers of this country and they have not formalized their agreement with the government, Mr. Speaker. But they are still operating, they still in operation. But Mr. Speaker, I must say a very inefficient operation. I want to say that Mr. Speaker, because a very good friend of mine Mr. John Thompson, has spent a lot of time in this country trying to convince people that we do not have to import stones in this country. I have seen just this week, Mr. Speaker, evidence of a deliberate attempt by this administration to allow the importation of stones from outside of this country.

Mr. Speaker, when you mash up the Housing and Land Development Corporation and you mash up GESCO and you take away the earning power of both of those organizations; Mr. Speaker, GESCO which is a part of the Ministry of Transportation and Works, they are responsible for providing work for poor people in this country. I have heard former Prime Minister James Mitchell talk about the engine of growth in this country being the private sector. He had lived on that myth, on that fallacy for the last 17 years. If the government does not put infrastructural development in place, if the government does not start projects in this country, risk capital, Mr. Speaker, I am afraid to say that the private sector is not going to do it.

But what are we doing here, Mr. Speaker, with GESCO? I saw this week, there is a Grenadines multi-project in Bequia in the Grenadines, \$16.5 million; I spoke about it in this House already, where the former Minister of Works secured the consultancy, so that shortly there after, -- the project was

approved in March and got started right after the elections. The former Minister of Works is very much involved in that operation down there. Well, they know how to work their thing, Mr. Speaker. But this week I saw this approval going through from my ministry to Customs, indicating that DIPCON will be importing aggregate from outside, to do works in Bequia, in the Southern Grenadines. How could we invest so much in DIPCON, have poor people crushing close down, but they have been given \$5.5 million contract in the Southern Grenadines which they have subcontracted, and they who run and operate government quarry cannot produce the stones to go in the roads, Mr. Speaker, they have to import it from outside? But, you see Mr. Speaker, it is part of the contract, it is part of the bidding, that is how they work in the past. Nobody thought of these things, Mr. Speaker, because everybody was busy making money in the last five years, because they know that the government was going to change. I have to deal with these matters very hard, Mr. Speaker and I make no apologies for the statements I made this morning. I am not going to sit as Minister of Works and allow any new contracts coming on stream to be used or with foreign imported aggregate to be used on that project. I am not going to allow it. [Applause]. I would prefer to give up the Ministry of Transport and Works before I allowed that, Mr. Speaker.

Let me tell you what is involved in the finances. The Lowmans quarry came into operation in 1991 with a Caribbean Development Bank Loan of \$3.19 million US, Mr. Speaker, poor people paid for it you know, we are paying back that loan, that is \$10.6 million EC; and the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines put in \$2.5 million. So the investment down there was \$13.23 million of poor people money that we borrowed from CDB, most of it, and Government input. The cost of servicing the loan, Mr. Speaker, was \$750,000 per annum. And you can look in the details here; but what happened DIPCON has been operating a quarry down there now for so long. We are paying \$750,000 a year on this loan but the only monies we are getting back from DIPCON is \$375,000 a year. So they have the whole thing, they have all the crushers, that come from Arnos Vale, they have the new crushers that Government bought but their royalties which was supposed to be \$750,000 was cut down to half, \$375,000, Mr. Speaker. I am saying that over the years this government has not obtained its value for the operation at Lowmans Hill; and changes must be made, Mr. Speaker. I make no apologies for it. Changes must be made. The only problem is that they seemed to have already mined out most of the quarry. So there is a conflict right now within the Government circles to decide what we are going to do with Lowmans Bay, because VINLEC also has interest in Lowmans Bay. And Mr. Speaker, you see all these things tie up you know. All these things are tied up. The government did not provide lands for poor people to build houses over the years, so you have squatters

now encouraging on the quarrying operations down there at Lowmans. The same thing happened at Mala Village and Roseau. Same thing; Government did not provide land for people to build their houses and people see government land and took government lands. They are Vincentians they are entitled to houses. DIPCON is in arrears, Mr. Speaker as at this report, by \$731,000. At the date of this report, although they only have \$375,000 they are supposed to pay a year Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we are going to have to make a decision soon on down there. I do not know which way it is going to turn out yet, but discussions are on going, as I said VINLEC is in need of land. So lands down there have already been allocated to them but I have been told Mr. Speaker, by the technical persons that the dust from the quarry operations is going to affect the engine of VINLEC in the long term and it might not be compatible to have the generating operations and quarrying operations going on at the same time location; so I have asked Quarry Development Company which is basically a board, to investigate, go through country and see where else government has quarrying operations and see if we have to move that quarrying operation from Lowmans Bay.

Mr. Speaker, how far have I gone?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You have another half an hour.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Half an hour. Mr. Speaker, VINLEC is not too bad a story, I would say, but Mr. Speaker, there are aspects of VINLEC operations that I will wish to have addressed. And I have asked the management of VINLEC to address the matter. I attended an Annual General Meeting, Mr. Speaker, of VINLEC and I gave them certain guidelines how we should be having the company run. I observed from the financial statements of VINLEC, Mr. Speaker, that VINLEC seemed to have gone more profit oriented than service oriented. I know, that I might be treading on dangerous grounds here with regards to the contribution made to the consolidation fund, Mr. Speaker, but I feel that sometimes we are a little bit too hard on our people, just to make the bottom line of VINLEC look very good.

The Leader of the Opposition, former Minister of Finance might not agree with this, the present Minister of Finance might also not agree with this, but I feel that we have to strike a middle road with VINLEC, and I have asked them to look at certain matters. I wrote them sometime in August, and I said to them, that maybe very wrong on the matter that I wish to bring to them but I want to discuss it, I want to have positive considerations to these matters. It is the

matter of the cost of connection for people houses. I have seen some ridiculous figures, and I know, I would not read the whole letter. I have seen some quotations from VINLEC for connections, Mr. Speaker, that I have questioned. As the Minister of Energy I cannot really support a monopoly, Mr. Speaker. And here I am supposed, I am tended to agree with the Honourable Major St. Claire Leacock, with his presentation earlier on, on monopolies. But while we have to maintain surpluses, Mr. Speaker, and we have to provide money into the Consolidated Fund, Mr. Speaker, we also have to provide a service to our people, I have sat on places, Mr. Speaker, where I have seen quotations from VINLEC for close to \$30,000 for a private home connection, but, when I look around, I see electricity poles with wires on it, I am not trained in electrical but common sense will tell me, it must be cheaper than that to bring that connection across. One of the policies seems to be that they run their lines along main roads and not along boundaries.

So I asked the company if they need to look at their back up legal support that they have in their Act, because I know Water Authority can basically give two notices, run a water line across your property. Well, I am told that VINLEC does not run along boundary lines, I am saying Mr. Speaker, that if I am here and there are four poles around me but you have to take it out to the end of the road and bring it back along the main road, it must cost me \$30,000. I am saying run the poles along the boundary lines. And if you need legal support for it, I will have the Attorney General provide the legal support for you and the back up, because we have to reduce these costs. So Mr. Speaker, I do not want to say that it is because of my intervention why we have changes, but I was assured that the matter was under consideration in the past and shortly after my meeting and my discussions with them on this subject matter the company has announced that they will be giving the one pole free.

So Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the people out there that your government is thinking in the quarters. We are looking after your interest and at the same time protecting the investment that we have with VINLEC. Mr. Speaker, VINLEC is a very technical matter. The operations of VINLEC; they need a lot money to invest over the next couple of years to maintain us, over the years, and I know that they have to have some money, they have some surpluses, they have some money in the bank, but the money in the bank is not to be used willy nilly, Mr. Speaker, it is for investment. And Government will continue to give the support to VINLEC, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on a matter that is again very close to my heart and it is something that we campaign on for very many years in this country,

the use of government owned vehicles, Mr. Speaker. Shortly after we took power I suggested that all the vehicles of Government be put under the Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing and that we stop this matter of public servants and ministers utilizing government vehicles to run their errands. Mr. Speaker, I implemented it in my Ministry. I got the list of the vehicles that belong to my ministry and I think it was two weeks after I got into office I sent out a memo to the Permanent Secretaries to stop it. It has been stopped within my Ministry, and Mr. Speaker, I can assure you if this done through out all the Ministries, and I see some Ministries are still guilty about it, I want to ask the Ministers here to make sure that we pull the reigns on the use of government vehicles.

Mr. Speaker, I remember early in the NDP administration, and we must do some investigations on it, a former Minister learnt to drive on government vehicle, and mash it up on Mt. Young long stretch, brand new vehicle, I do not know what happened if he ever paid for it. Early in the administrations, so the records may be burnt, because I understand that some records of the NDP may have been burnt. So my Permanent Secretary told me. But it is not one vehicle he mashed up , it is two vehicles he mashed up. I want to know if when the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance paying him for his gratuity that he deduct the cost of those two vehicles, because I understand the first one, because he did not have the experience, he just got his license, but you know when you just get your license you still cannot drive, you just start to learn to drive after you get your license, so he coming down Mt. Young long stretch from Fancy, I do not know how he got the nerve to drive to Fancy you know, turn it over at Mt. Young long stretch and mashed it up, right it off completely, Mr. Speaker. So I still intend to have the Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing take control of all Ministries vehicles and we will allocate them. The individual ministries will say what they need and we do regular maintenance of government vehicles and make sure that we treat vehicles the same way that we treat our Lexuses, our Nissans, our Toyotas and all the other vehicles that belong to us, Mr. Speaker. We must wash them down and polish them. Be they jeeps, tractors, front end loaders, bulldozers, whatever they be, government trucks, wash them down and take care of them, the same way, Mr. Speaker, the same way we take care of our own.

Mr. Speaker, I am running short on time and I want to address some other matters.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Twenty-two minutes.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Still have 22 minutes, Mr. Speaker. [Interjection] All right I will leave that for last, do not worry. I am not letting that one get away at all, Mr. Speaker. The East Kingstown I have to deal with and I would let you why I am dealing with it, Mr. Speaker. Other people have other things on their mind but I tell them why I will deal with that. Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport, Works and Housing, have been very active despite the fact that we got money late we have been doing a lot of work. Mr. Speaker, we have continuation of the former administration programmes under the BNTF, Basic Needs Trust Fund. We have a new project coming up BNTF 5 which will create in the next year 15 projects. One for each constituency that is running about \$8 million. Mr. Speaker, we have the labour intensive road programme the first phase is just about complete and we are on to the second phase and the following roads are being done. Calder Estate Road, Clunnis Road, Georgetown, Cuffy Road Spring Village, Leeward, that has not started yet. French Chapel Road Yambou, Byera Valley Road, Gummer Road, Biabou, Arie French Road, Diamonds, Malata Village Road, Dickson, Mt. William Road, and Over River Road, Langley Park. Mr. Speaker, we have about six contractors for each of these roads. So we have ten roads, six contractors, Mr. Speaker, each about 10 or 12 persons, so you have 60 by 12; 720 persons employed on labour intensive roads repair programme. Similarly, with the BNTF programme, basically, is a labour intensive programme as well, funded from the CDB, and we will be continuing that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch a little bit here, on a matter with regards to the Leader of the Opposition contribution to this debate. I know I still want to touch on some of the capital projects and I still want to touch on East Kingstown. But, Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition sort of attempted to ridicule. Said it was not sustainable, he said it was fundamentally flawed. Mr. Speaker, he criticized the fact that we have reduced our capital budget. Mr. Speaker, I took some time and did some comparatives, from 1995 until now, on the capital estimates in this country, Mr. Speaker, we are down to \$109 million this year. Mr. Speaker, in 1995 the NDP administration budgeted \$79.8 million, they spent \$26.5 million. In 1996 they budgeted \$108.8 million they spent \$35.4 million. In 1997 they budgeted \$170 million they spent \$81.8 million. In 1998 Mr. Speaker they budgeted \$150 million, their best performance, election year naturally, \$102 million they spent. That was banana rehabilitation and the ferry berth. The year before that was Canouan Airport and some transfers among the accounts within the capital estimates that created that matter in 1997. But we are coming on to 1999, Mr. Speaker, they budgeted \$150 million they spent \$68.3 million. And in the year 2000 they went up even higher they budgeted \$153 million, and they spent \$41.5 million, that is the track record of the NDP Mr. Speaker, so I do

not think that base on that track record that the leader of the Opposition has any justification to come here and criticize the presentation of this budget and the formulation of this budget, Mr. Speaker.

I want to go into a couple ministries because I heard him attacking education and tourism. The most money that the NDP has ever budgeted in the Capital for tourism is \$1.8 million in any one year, in 1996 and they have never more than \$0.9 million, \$900,000 in any one year. In 1995 they budgeted \$1.4 they spent \$100,000. This is capital budget I am talking about. \$1.8 in 1996, they spent \$300,000; 1.3 in 1997, they spent \$100,000. In the year 2000 \$1.7 million they only spent \$400,000, Mr. Speaker, Education Mr. Speaker, I want to go through it because you see, when we come here and criticize and do not look in the 2002 Estimates they are not inside there, I had to go through from 1996 to put this together, because every year, because every two years there were changes in the presentation of the budget and I think it was deliberate, Mr. Speaker. I think it was deliberate.

Education, Mr. Speaker, in the last three years, 1998 they budgeted \$19.1 million, they only budgeted \$7.6 million; 14.8 million in 1999, they only spent \$1.8; in 2000 Mr. Speaker, they budgeted \$19.4 they only spent \$4.7. Health, Mr. Speaker, I will give you the last three years for speed, 1998, \$8.4 million budgeted, they spent \$3.9; 1999 budgeted \$15.6 million spent \$3.8 million and in 2000 the worst year I would say, they budgeted \$17.1 million but they only spent \$2.7 million. Mr. Speaker, you can criticize, I do not mind you criticizing but you must have something to back it up. You cannot use the figures that I have here, Mr. Speaker. And hear, there is another comparison that I would like to make, you know, Mr. Speaker, the capital revenue, and the Leader of the Opposition knows that I am correct, and he would love to have a rebuttal on it, but unfortunately he forfeited half an hour of his time, which I will deal with just now.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member has 15 minutes.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Fifteen minutes left. Thank you Mr. Speaker. So Mr. Speaker, that is sufficient to make the point on it. I wanted to make some other points on it, with regards to the capital revenue budgeted \$169 million and only collected \$63 million. In the year 2000 Mr. Speaker, you would not believe it, he budgeted \$137 million in income and only collected \$12 million. So, Mr. Speaker, that is not anything. Do not pound my leader when your track record is not so hot. It is all right so you are not going to get another chance at the thing. You had the last two elections, how long you were the Minister of Finance? I must admit that I saw some changes in the

Estimates presentation when you became Minister of Finance. There was never the presentation of national debt, you brought it in. You show people what the country is owing, and Comrades, ladies and gentlemen of this country, this country, this government is owing in excess of \$640 million, that is what is in the Estimates, \$640 million, Mr. Speaker. Over the last six years Mr. Speaker, this government, the NDP government has had \$1.4 billion dollars available to it. Do you hear what I am saying? If you look outside there Mr. Speaker, that is on recurrent alone. Between recurrent and capital, Mr. Speaker, the NDP government over the last six years had \$2.2 billion available to it, spent \$1.6 billion and look at the state of our infrastructure. Look at the state of our schools, look at the state of our roads, God, Mr. Speaker, if they gave me \$1.6 billion, oh, I tell you. I only want half of that. I wish sometimes that you were my Minister of Finance, and you did not cut back on the capital budget and you give me \$137 million in one year, I will show you how I spend it.

Mr. Speaker, the borrowings at the National Bank gives me great concern as well, and I want to tie it in as well, but I do not have the time, but I want to say this Mr. Speaker, that the Government of the NDP has what they call a consolidated overdraft loan, and an overdraft. I do not know what is a consolidated overdraft loan, but my interpretation of it is this that they carried up their overdraft to the maximum because they could not achieve their capital budget, they did not have enough surplus in their recurrent expenditure, they had to borrow from the NCB on the current account down there. They run up their limit, they could not reduce it, in fact they increased it by Treasury Bills \$27 million which was supposed to pay off the consolidated overdraft loan, they did not pay it off, reduced the current overdraft of \$14 million but has already built it back up to \$27 million when we took office. Mr. Speaker, after spending \$1.7 billion in six years, Mr. Speaker, I am saying we need to examine and I am calling on the Ministries; I am doing it in mine, investigate the spending of the NDP administration. [Applause] The Finances of this country are in a mess. And I have nobody to blame, Mr. Speaker, unfortunately we took over late in the NDP administration, and the Leader of the Opposition was the last Prime Minister. Very passionate on some of these matters Mr. Speaker.

The Commission of Inquiry that is taking place within my Ministry did not come by chance, it came by hard work and dedication and commitment to the figures and the investigations of what went on at Gibson Corner and out there at Diamond. And Mr. Speaker, somebody will pay the price, after Monica Joseph finished with him or her.

Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of projects to spend money on. We have the cross-country road; we are doing a lot of work on the cross-country road, Mr. Speaker. I have a team again like I have on Housing, and we have monies provided inside the Estimates for the cross-country road to start sometime with design. The Leader of the Opposition asked the matter of feasibility study, Mr. Leader of the Opposition let me say this, and there is no need for a feasibility study. Driving alone in this country is enough feasibility study, I do not want to drive Leeward and drive back town to go country, I want when I go country, I could drive Windward go over the mountain, go Leeward and come back town, best tour you could ever take; I love to drive around Barbados, I want cross country road in this country; the Government wants cross country road, it is a commitment in our manifesto, we are going to do it, albeit we are going straight into designs and construction. No feasibility study. I state it clear.

Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on a matter of capacity building within the Ministry. But I will deal with that another time. The project which I think again, I give some credit to the NDP just that they did not move fast on it, CPEC, that will be launched later on in the month of December, about the 10<sup>th</sup> or 12<sup>th</sup> and Mr. Speaker, you will hear more about it, I am running out of time.

Mr. Speaker, I want in this my final part of my presentation, Mr. Speaker, I want to dedicate it to Michael Hamlett. Do you know why, Mr. Speaker? Michael Hamlett slaved hard to see this party here in power. [Applause]. And I was astonished when the Leader of the Opposition had his response to the budget, he had half an hour left and said absolutely nothing about East Kingstown, Mr. Speaker. Has he abandoned the constituency of East Kingstown? And Mr. Leader of the Opposition I make no apologies. You have abandoned East Kingstown and I am dedicating this last ten minutes I have, ten minutes I have Mr. Speaker, since I am on the subject of Michael Hamlett you will give me more minutes. Michael Hamlett said one of his popular statement on the platform was the number one job of a ULP government is to create jobs. Very popular statement, Mr. Speaker. [Applause]. Mr. Speaker, this government was in power for eight months, only eight months, and when you see the work of this government you think it has been in government for eight years. The school repairs programme that we did Mr. Speaker, initially I told the Prime Minister that we created 1100 jobs. Mr. Speaker, the jobs created on the school repairs programme extended over 1300 jobs, by the time you put truckers and foot men, and painters and cleaner, cleaning up the schools and the yards, Mr. Speaker, it extended to over \$1300.

Mr. Speaker, the Yes Programme and the call centres jobs we created Mr. Speaker, 400 in each area, Mr. Speaker, that is 800; those are sustainable jobs. Members of the Opposition might say, that these are temporary jobs. But Mr. Speaker, if you do it often enough it become permanent. If I can continue this repair programme that we are doing on schools, because come next year, Mr. Speaker, we are going to be tackling all the police stations that the NDP has neglected and all clinics that the NDP has neglected, we are going to tackle them early in the new year. We are going to get more get more money from the European Union. They promised us and they would live up to their promise, because they were please of the school's repair and they said so. Mr. Callygurre had asked me if I would spend \$2 million in six weeks, I said give me the money, Sir, I will show you I could spend it. When he came back he said, I never thought you could do it. \$5 million in seven or eight weeks, Mr. Speaker, we spent and we got all the schools prepared. I am telling you Mr. Speaker, we will do the same for the police stations and for the clinics them. [Applause]. I do not know how you are going to win another election in this country, I cannot see it, with five of you over there, I do not know who is going to join the ranks to make the difference, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition has been on record criticizing this government and the Prime Minister for spending \$2 million to give the people their back pay, that they work hard for, Mr. Speaker, I do not understand why the Leader of the Opposition would want to do that. I believe Mr. Speaker, that it is because he did not want the people to get the back pay, their severance pay, Mr. Speaker, I cannot see any other reason to tell me that you do not spend it in August, you wait until Christmas. We spend it in August because we know, that more money coming for Christmas. We could spend \$2 million and give them their back pay because they could get Christmas in August and they could get Christmas in December. Mr. Speaker, Christmas work in the past has been, I have checked with my Ministry, I see my Permanent Secretary here, I do not like to drag them into the politics, you know, but I normally ask these questions when I am doing my presentation to find out how I should talk and protect them, they aren't running no politics, I am being professional in my Ministry. In the past Mr. Speaker, the NDP Government accustomed giving people \$300,000 for roadwork. I am told in the Roads Division that is the most money, they ever get for roadwork. Mr. Speaker, this year we have tripled it; 3.1 times, \$1 million in roadwork. The Leader of the Opposition in his wrap up forgot to mention anything about East Kingstown.

I want to give you a break down of what happen with a million dollars in this country, Mr. Speaker. I will give you a break down. \$1 million over Christmas

employs \$228.00 road gangs, 2443 people working in those road gangs, 117 time checkers, 692 jobbers, 52 truck men, and we have three small contracts that we have given out to patch some very needed roads, those in West St. George area, Honourable Mike Browne yours was very much neglected, we had to do a little thing there, and piece on the Windward Highway, from Mt. Young to Georgetown.

Mr. Speaker, this million dollars therefore has provided jobs for 3,468 persons in this Christmas season. [Applause]. You can tell me hold back \$2 million and pay it in December but I have seen the pride, Mr. Speaker, I have seen the commitment and the dedication with which these people are cleaning the roads, I do not know if you have driven out beyond Ratho Mill Mr. Leader of the Opposition, I know your brother never ventures beyond Prospect, Racquet Club gap. But I know that you drive out to the countryside sometimes. And you will see the kinds of works we are doing on the roads. In no time in living history, Mr. Speaker, has the roads of this country been in better condition. [Applause]. Particularly, drains and bank side, verges, Mr. Speaker, they have been abandoned and neglected for years, no wonder the surface is in such a mess, 3,468 that is in the million dollars only, I am not talking about the fourth quarter allocation, Mr. Speaker. There are still works going on in the fourth quarter allocation.

So on the roads, today, Mr. Speaker, there are persons, anywhere close to 5000 persons working on the roads of this country, through the Ministry of Transport Works and Housing. Mr. Speaker, that is part of the tribute to Michael Hamlett. I hope someday that this Government would see it fit to put his name on somewhere. Well, it is going in the library.

Mr. Speaker, again the Leader of the Opposition never mentioned a word about East Kingstown. He wished nobody in East Kingstown, Merry Christmas. I am wondering Mr. Speaker, if it is because that he is very annoyed to be in Opposition; in other words he was okay last year in government so he wished them Merry Christmas but this year he is in Opposition he is not Prime Minister and Minister of Finance anymore so all move, I am not wishing all you any Merry Christmas. Shame on the Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, you aren't getting anymore chance before Christmas you know, you have to drive around and say it. And I saying it before you today, so when you drive around, they will tell you Francis, already told us Merry Christmas. And I am doing it on behalf of Michael Hamlett. Because if Michael Hamlett was in this House he would not forget. Do you know why he would not forget Mr. Speaker? because he has a commitment to the people of East Kingstown, he has a dedication, he was dedicated and he

was committed to the people of East Kingstown, they did not vote him they voted Mr. Eustace, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. [Interjection] Hey, twice, yes; twenty-seven votes he won by 1998 and 41, in 2001, and at that time Mr. Mitchell had already given him the Prime Minister position so he only get, 27 from 41 is how much, 14 votes from becoming Prime Minister, that is all he got, 14 votes for becoming Prime Minister. I wonder, [Interjection]. Maybe well, that is why some of the technicians who work for you did not come back to work after the 28<sup>th</sup> of March they worked too much for you in East Kingstown. But I have spoken to them before you know and they know my position and his position, so it was not coincidence, I think it was well calculated.

Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity on behalf of the Unity Labour Party and in memory of Michael Hamlett and on behalf of the parents of Michael Hamlett to wish all the people of East Kingstown Mr. Speaker, a Merry Christmas. Our dear Michael was cut down in the Middle of his youth and Mr. Speaker, he would have won his seat the next time around. The party has to find somebody to go inside there to get rid of the present representative, the Leader of the Opposition because if the first time he got voted out of government he abandoned his constitutions I do not think he is the fit person to put back inside there to run again, Mr. Speaker. [Applause]. I would suggest to the de facto leader of the NDP that they get a new candidate for the East Kingstown constituency because the present candidate has a abandoned the people of East Kingstown, he did not even wish them Merry Christmas.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Could you wrap up?

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, and one final matter, well Senator Leacock in an error of judgment went on radio, I know they have this radio programme that is going on Mr. Speaker, did you hear about it Mr. Speaker? There is a radio programme going on, where the defacto leader of the NDP handles that programme, but it seems that if they are running into some financial problems because it took the Public Relations Officer of the Party the Honourable Senator Major St. Claire Leacock who went on public radio and said to the three supermarket owners in this country that they have enjoyed all the sweets over the last 17 years they must bring in the money now to help the programme go on. Mr. Speaker, I could not believe when somebody came and told me so. So I approached the Honourable Member, I said Honourable Member Leacock how could you do something like that, how could you go on radio and call people name and say they enjoy the sweet under NDP and they must now come and pay for the programme? He said to me Senator, Minister this is a serious error of judgment; and I called them and

I apologize. But Mr. Speaker, it goes to the heart of the NDP operations. It goes to the heart of how the NDP operates. They created government things for certain people to get certain things, how did you think the NDP got their head quarters, Mr. Speaker? How do you think they got it? I am trying now to find land for the ULP to have headquarters, I see a nice, attractive piece of land, do you know how much for the land, Mr. Speaker, 13,000 square feet at \$50.00 a square foot. But NDP found that overnight. They built the headquarters the same time; government was building the financial complex. I am not saying, all I am saying they built the NDP headquarters the same time that they were building the financial complex.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Minister could you wrap up please?

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, I want to wrap up and close off this session, I want to thank the general public out there, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the supporters of the Unity Labour Party, I want to thank the supporters of the NDP because since that radio programme has been on Mr. Speaker, we have gained a lot of them coming over to us, Mr. Speaker, they cannot stand the nonsense that is going on. And I want to wish all members of this Honourable House, you Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable elected members on the Opposition benches, Senators on the Opposition benches, members on this side of the House, Prime Minister all the members on this side of the House, the Clerk, the staff here, of the House of Assembly. Members in my ministry, the Permanent Secretary and other members of the staff of the Ministry of Transport, Works and Housing, Mr. Speaker, and in particular the people of East Kingstown, I want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas, thank you for listening to me.

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

**HONOURABLE JULIET GEORGE:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I too rise to give support to this budget and Estimates for 2002. First of all, Mr. Speaker, I must congratulate the Honourable Prime Minister, and the other members of the ULP Government on their presentation of this magnificent poor people's budget. [Applause]. It may not be perfect, Mr. Speaker, but perfection is only found in the Supremacy of God. This \$419,548,820 has my unequivocal support. Mr. Speaker, I sat here last week and listened to the contribution made by the members of the Opposition, and Mr. Speaker, I was aghast, shocked that I listened to four of the honourable members contributing and nothing came to any avail. They fumbled along for a very long period trying to find something to comment on but unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, nothing came out that was concrete and substantial. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Leader of

the Opposition said that this budget is flawed. Obviously Mr. Speaker, he does not walk along the streets of Kingstown, he does not mingle with the poor people because all those with whom I came into contact with say it is a very good budget; it is a poor people's budget. [Applause]. Even on my way out of St. Vincent today at the airport members working there commented what a good budget it is. So, Mr. Speaker, that goes without saying to confirm our belief that as usual the members of the Opposition are out of touch with the people.

When I look at this budget, Mr. Speaker, and listened to the comments outside, I am pleased because the people of this land need no longer look at our differences but rather at the commonalities that we share. The commonalities must surely be, Mr. Speaker, to see sustainable development, good governance and poverty alleviation in our land. Mr. Speaker, you know that this government believes very much in participatory governance, participatory approach, involving all the people's of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, as a people we need to examine the role of the State and while we examine that role we need to examine relentlessly our people's ideas and vision as they look to the State to provide their goals. We need to pursue relentlessly our vision and ideas of that goal as they fit in with the role of the State. And Mr. Speaker, part of that vision must surely be and must include defining ourselves as Vincentians and not as ULP or NDP. This budget, Mr. Speaker, contains sensible, balance fiscal policy, economic stimuli and I am sure with the hard working efforts of our people and the obvious renewed public confidence of this government, this budget will certainly show turn a around in our development. [Applause].

Mr. Speaker, I see this budget as meeting the economic stabilization, consolidation, recovery and renewal as stated in the Honourable Dr. Ralph Gonsalves' document presented on the 11<sup>th</sup> of October 2000. In that way he threw those measures into four categories, he looked at the physical stabilization and consolidation in the Central Government, Mr. Speaker, he also looked at those measures that are directed at increasing public sector investment. He also looked at the measures that are connected with the strengthening of the mechanism for policy formulation and implementation, and he also looked at those that focus on the economic restructuring, recovery and renewal.

However, Mr. Speaker, when this budget was presented I am sure the Honourable Dr. Ralph Gonsalves and his Cabinet members and his hard working people of the civil service had to come to terms with the fact that our development and objectives have always been influenced by external forces,

taken into our historical context, Mr. Speaker, we know our development over the years has been shaped by slavery, colonization and presently by globalization and liberalization. Mr. Speaker, the formation of the free trade such as the World Trade Organization, the North American Free Trade Agreement and CARICOM Single Market and economy have all contributed to our economic growth and I am sure it was with these agreements, I am sure it would have been extremely difficult to set our own developmental path in the light of these hostile economic climate. Only last week, Mr. Speaker, we heard in the media that United States of America declared the economic recession as official. So, Mr. Speaker, it is even more commendable that this government has found it in these times to present such a sensible practical realistic budget at this particular point in time. It has taken great thought, Mr. Speaker, and for that we as a people, we as Vincentians, we as a hard working people must be proud and Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be part of this Government that has had such sensible practical ideas.

Mr. Speaker, we need to look, like the Honourable Senator Andrea Young when I thought of this presentation, we are not involved in ministries so it was to no surprise to me when I listened to her contribution last week, that I realize that we are on the same path, our thinking was in tune, because as I said earlier, we do not have ministries, but as outsiders within the Government listening and thinking we came up with the same ideas. I listened to her, of looking at our manifesto and how carried over policies, principles that we thought of into the ministries and I thought of it and it was no surprise, Mr. Speaker, that our contribution to this debate are on very similar lines. We are able to look at our promises. It seems Mr. Speaker, that members of the Opposition need to be reminded as to what our policies and principles are, because maybe they have a history of promising and not delivering they cannot believe that we were able to take over all these promises into a workable environment.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Honourable Member of the Southern Grenadines said if we talk the talk, we must walk the walk. Honourable Member I am pleased to inform you that we are walking that walk. [Applause]. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Senator Young gave you our 10 policies last week how she felt that the government was shaping up ours with our promises. I am going to look at some particular aspects of our manifesto in terms of educating the Opposition, bringing it to light so that when they talk they will know that there is coloration between what we promised and what exactly is predicted for the year 2002. And Mr. Speaker, one of the first aspects of our manifesto I would like to bring to this Honourable House, is where we promised the people of this land good governance. Good governance to the

Opposition, Mr. Speaker, does not seem to mean the same thing as it does to us and the 34,000 people who elected us to serve on March the 28<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Speaker, the ULP believes and I am quoting from this document which has been tabled in this House, Mr. Speaker, and with regards to good governance, we promised the people that we believe that good governance is the active participation of people in and control over the institutions, which they cover in their day to day lives. We feel that good governance cannot exist amidst raging corruption in government; to ensure that the people are empowered to the fullest, their democratic consciousness has to be raised through appropriate education and a system of government has to be reformed. Mr. Speaker, if I just pause there for a while I am sure that no one on the Opposition can doubt that we are carrying out this promise. Mr. Speaker, we promised one of the first things to be brought to this Honourable House is our constitutional reform. I am not going to labour any more on that because it has been brought and it has been met with the approval of the Opposition. Mr. Speaker, we are walking that walk. We also promised the eradication of corruption in government, Mr. Speaker, and Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I need to elaborate on how we are eradicating and working towards that today. And in our manifesto we said that corruption undermines democracy and people's trust in government, corruption distributes wealth from the poor to the better off. The ULP will make Government clean and transparent. We will introduce integrity legislation in parliament. And Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether you are aware, but there is an integrity bill which comes before this Honourable House come next year. We also promised to strengthen the criminal laws against official corruption, criminalize illicit enrichment in high places. Mr. Speaker, you know, last week we spent time debating two bills, which have been passed in this Honourable House. The Bill of the Finance Intelligence Unit, and the Bill of the Prevention of Crime and Money Laundering, which of course, the Opposition supported also. In those bills, we had promised to confiscate illicit enrichment, those associated with drug trafficking and any such social ills. Mr. Speaker, this government is a government of its word. We also, Mr. Speaker, in our 2002 budget, we have said we are going to look at the conducting of Audits and strengthen the accountability of overseas missions. I am sure you would be aware, Mr. Speaker, that only last year, during the Public Accounts Committee meeting, there was great controversy surrounding a lot of those expenditure. Mr. Speaker, this government will not tolerate any such controversy. We are working now to make sure that does not become a problem. We also saw, Mr. Speaker, that we have dealt with the law associated with the Fugitive offenders, we have strengthened that so that it becomes more practicable and applicable.

Mr. Speaker, we have also increased the utilization of media in this House. I do not need to remind you of the problems that arose when media try to carry any of these broadcast live what happened. Mr. Speaker we are not only on air, we are also going out live on TV. Mr. Speaker, this is a government of transparency. These are positive steps by the Government to eradicate corruption and bring transparency in the workings of this Government.

Mr. Speaker, I like to turn to poverty. We have a Minister of Social Development and I am sure in her contribution today she will go into great depths. But however, Mr. Speaker, before she does that, I need to remind the Opposition because you see Mr. Speaker, they have this belief in us being unable to carry out our promises. They said we have made promises to this nation that we are unable to keep. So we need to remind them constantly of what our promises are and those we are working on carrying them out. We said in our manifesto with regard to war on poverty, we said that we would provide greater budgetary assistance to the poorest sections of our society. That we will put in place an amenities programme of collective action involving the government, the private sector, non-governmental organizations, international agencies, and individuals at home and abroad in the fight against poverty. We also set finance measures to assist the rural poor to stay on the land and raise their production. We also promised to restore an economic climate and pursue economic policies which favour strong economic growth. We made education and the empowerment of the family vital tools in the struggle against poverty. Surely, Mr. Speaker, you do not wish me to go into any great depth as to how we are carrying out these objectives.

We heard a lot spoken in the past by the then NDP administration of how much was done to eradicate poverty in this land. Mr. Speaker, I was one of those who was appalled, I went up and down this country and saw the poverty that existed in this land. Mr. Speaker, I went home at night and it haunted me as to how people actually survived. I am surprised Mr. Speaker, that many homes depicted places in Afghanistan where we saw people time and time again malnourished, dehydrated, waiting on death, because of the conditions I saw that existed in many homes.

Mr. Speaker, this Government is not sitting back. This Government is doing all in its power to eradicate poverty. The Government believes in taking the people out of poverty and put them in a position where they can work. Mr. Speaker, when you compare these times, to recently past times, as you walk along the streets of Kingstown the number of people begging for a dollar has significantly reduced. Instead as you walk along the streets Mr. Speaker,

what you are getting is I want a job, I want work, where can I go to get some work. People are now asking, Mr. Speaker, to teach them how to fish, and not to drop a fish in their hands but rather they are saying help me to be independent, help me to be self sufficient, help me to be a dignified citizen. Mr. Speaker, if that is not good then tell me what is. The dignity of man must be maintained at all cost. People are now seeing the light Mr. Speaker, hope has been restored in our nation, and Mr. Speaker, do not be fooled this did happen by a miracle, it is happening because of the confidence and the trust this nation is now putting in the government. The government policies are opening avenues, visions; the policies are empowering people of the possibilities of their capabilities. Mr. Speaker, we have seen over \$150 million directly or indirectly linked to poverty alleviation. And Mr. Speaker, why I am so impressed and pleased with this programme because the majority of the poverty stricken people out there are women and Mr. Speaker, you might say I am bias here to refer to women when there is a gender affairs department but I sit here and I hear contributions made with regards to the youth and although there is a gender affairs department women are likely to get lost in that department, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to speaking on a broad context, so I have to refer to the poor women out there, things are happening, your vision is coming closer, the vision of being able to look after your children, because we know the majority of homes in this country are run by single mothers, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I need to take a closer examination as we go along with the budget, I alluded earlier because of the economic climate, situations are becoming more competitive outside and certainly within St. Vincent, I said earlier that we have raised the people to an education and political consciousness. This government believes in development of the self, in development of the family, in the development of the nation. So if there is such great competitiveness, Mr. Speaker, how is this government going about, looking after the people and making sure that competitiveness stays.

Mr. Speaker, I have five points I wish to raise in terms of how this budget meets those needs. I see that there are measures put in place to enhance the human resource capacity, there are also more relevant systems of accountability, there is greater application of technology, Mr. Speaker, and there are also more and more focus investments and greater economic diversification. Now, Mr. Speaker, I will touch briefly on each of these, how I see the government meeting these measures. Mr. Speaker, you have heard the Honourable Prime Minister in his budget presentation last week, and I am sure if you can remember several of the honourable members referred to the micro enterprise activity. If we are to enhance the human resource capacity, we have got to prepare them to deal with these sorts of enterprises, so therefore, Mr. Speaker, you should be well aware that there is money available

at the National Commercial Bank between \$5 to \$15,000 for people who fall into this bracket. And Mr. Speaker, the only requirement is that you attend at least 50 hours of training session before you qualify.

Mr. Speaker, I want to compare this to the NDP government, when they gave out the land reform programme which they so often boast about. There was no preparation of these people, for the transition from being workers to managers, and we see what happened there, they failed, it failed miserably. So, Mr. Speaker, by increasing the education to enhance the capability of the individual this government is demonstrating the organized methodical manner in which it is going about the nation's business. This surely must be a better way, Mr. Speaker, than just giving them the money and expecting them to manage. We were not all born managers overnight, some are natural and some have acquired the ability. Those who are natural will benefit still from such courses; those who will acquire will certainly gain from this sort of venture.

Mr. Speaker, I now want to turn to which I refer to as more relevant systems of accountability. It is a known fact, Mr. Speaker, that the Marketing Corporation has been losing large sums of money, so what did this government do, did it leave it to carry on, hoping that maybe six, eight months time, it will be closed, and it would be sold to a particular enterprise in this country? No. Under Cabinet's approval the government has installed an integrated management information system to cost of \$1.5 million. And this will facilitate the modernization of this corporation and by facilitating the modernization, Mr. Speaker; it will promote the efficiency and accountability, therefore identifying leakages and enhance overall performance. Mr. Speaker, if this government is not a thoughtful thinking government then show me another, and it is certainly they did not exist in this state of ours.

I also want to turn to the great application of technology. Mr. Speaker, we are living and have to survive in a constantly advancing, evolving technological world. Not because we are a small nation, Mr. Speaker, that we have we have to think small. We have heard of a strategic plan by the Honourable Dr. Jerrol Thompson, of how his ministry intends to go about modernizing the government Ministries, where they will be computer linked. Ministries will be linked to Ministries, cabinet members abroad will be able to enter through tight security and find out about Cabinet meetings. Mr. Speaker, we are moving. Mr. Speaker, as far back as seven, eight years ago, what we are now trying to achieve has been in other world longer than us, as far back as seven, eight years as I said in England for example, when you took your advance level and apply to University there even before you got your results here in St.

Vincent there were able to notify you whether you had passed or what grade you got because of the technology, that we move this way, and I am pleased that this government has seen it fit. It has seen it fit even by the creation of such a ministry that did not exist.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but wonder how did the last administration manage. We heard a lot of talk about computers, but yet, Mr. Speaker, you go into the departments and there records, when you want to find anything, you have to turn page after page or go back day after day to find the records. Mr. Speaker, this is a government of the 21st century. Mr. Speaker, how this government instead plans to go about this programme? As I alluded to earlier, it is organized, it is methodical, and we see the transformation of the Development Corporation into a unit that is going to become a focal point for information technology services. We see through this corporation the technology of the call centres and I am sure that the Leader of the Opposition will say nothing new, we signed an agreement for the call centres but he does not need to be reminded that that agreement that we reviewed, that agreement was signed in haste to win a victory at the poles, this agreement is a functional agreement. We also see, Mr. Speaker, the creation of data entry services, telemedicine and the increased distance learning facilities under the development corporation, a corporation who all said was dead. Mr. Speaker, we are certainly turning things around, and this is good because Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, where there is such competition outside and all this international trade, we had to turn to inside in order to function. We also see, Mr. Speaker, coming out of this budget where there is planned and better focused investment, not willy nilly Mr. Speaker, but investment that have been planned on the way forward.

Mr. Speaker, also under the Development Corporation that there are plans afoot to build new factory buildings, to the point of \$3.5 million where the money is still to be sourced, but these are plans. They are also planning to increase the industrial state under the management of DEVCO. The Development Corporation's mandate is to include the pursuit of industries, which are competitive under sustainable basis. Mr. Speaker when I look at the final and fifth way, measure this government has in increasing the competitiveness by economic diversification. You see, Mr. Speaker, the extensive work done in the Ministry of tourism and culture by the Minister of Tourism and Mr. Speaker, in these hard times where we know tourism has taken a down turn after September 11<sup>th</sup>, that it is hard, but Mr. Speaker, it was hard even under the then government, because the former Prime Minister had always said, as our Deputy Prime Minister said all he believed there was to tourism that tourists came here to buy a Pepsi and a postcard. So do not

criticize us Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Tourism and Culture is certainly working day and night to make this industry a viable one.

I have already discussed the small business enterprises, Mr. Speaker, so I will not go into that any further. We also have in the Estimate carefully selected investment programmes from abroad, we are not just grabbing at any and everything that comes our way, Mr. Speaker, they are carefully investigated before they are brought here. We have heard of the setting up of a bakery, we have heard of furniture, manufacturing sector, to be brought here, and we know the Diamond Dairy has changed hands and I am excitedly looking forward to products that would be produced there. And also Mr. Speaker, you have heard from the Minister of Agriculture, Land and Fisheries where he went through great depths to explain the extension and upgrading of a marketing corporation so that it goes beyond just being a supermarket but that it can be an export market for products produced here. There is also the promotion of buy local Mr. Speaker. We are also looking at the agricultural diversification. The Opposition within this House seems to think that agriculture is only centred on bananas, Mr. Speaker, I am from an agricultural area in this country, and I know about agriculture and agriculture does not consist of bananas alone.

Mr. Speaker, I feel to touch briefly on education that this Government sees education as a vital tool in the empowerment of its nation. The empowerment has been placed from early childhood where learning is concrete, and it is beginning to take place and reflects later on in life where it can then be brought to fruition in adulthood. This confirms, my belief Mr. Speaker, that this government understands the human resource development. They have developed relevant education, and human resources strategies that reflect the nation's priorities. They intend to promote lifelong education and training and continuing education. There are also plans afoot, Mr. Speaker to build multipurpose centres across this nation of ours, so that they can be assessed by out of school youths, instead of seeing young people sitting on the block, they can go into these centres and make themselves constructive young men and young women. Satan always find work for idle hands to do Mr. Speaker. We spoke about the increase in crimes. We heard the government saying that they would try to eradicate crimes and be tough on the causes of crimes. We want to this, Mr. Speaker, so we have to make the idle hands find work to do.

Mr. Speaker, this aspect of the development of the human resource with regards to continued education is particularly important to me. And I just want to refer Mr. Speaker, that I hope that within this continued education, that plans would be afoot for those young women who have to vacate

organized school early because of teenage pregnancy. Too often, Mrs. Speaker, when girls become pregnant in schools that is the end of their formal education. Mr. Speaker, what a waste of developing minds. Mr. Speaker, not because you fall by the way side does not mean that you cannot pick up the pieces and move on. So I hope that within this policy Mr. Speaker, that there would be continued education after school, and I would like to commend a couple of those schools who give their students another chance. But I want to see more places available for these young women to continue. Because, Mr. Speaker, you know where poverty exists it is open to violence, discrimination, prostitution. And Mr. Speaker, if you are talking about the development of our women we cannot have them left by the way side. Mr. Speaker, to refer briefly, to one particular aspect of the fiscal measures to be brought into this government and I want to refer directly to the airport tax. I see Mr. Speaker, that the airport tax has been increased from \$30 to \$35. Mr. Speaker, having traveled the Caribbean fairly recently during this year, I think perhaps we are the laughing stock of the region because we only charge \$30 now \$35 where everywhere else they have to pay \$50. Mr. Speaker, even less than six hours in a country now you have to pay \$50, and Mr. Speaker, I would have like to have seen the Honourable Prime Minister increase this amount to \$50. It is not every day that you are traveling. And when you go abroad to Barbados, you go to Grenada, Trinidad, to name a few and you fork out the \$50. So why can't you fork it out here to help the development of our country.

Mr. Speaker, another area I do not feel that the extension of stay monies is enough. When a person applies for extension stay, I feel that this money can be more than \$25.00.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You have five minutes.

**HONOURABLE JULIET GEORGE:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just wish to touch specifically on how I see women, because very often you hear people saying that nothing has been done for women. Mr. Speaker, as I alluded earlier we have globalization and liberalization here. Globalization intensifies some of the existing inequalities and insecurities for the poor women but for the educated professional women it opens up new opportunities. And Mr. Speaker, globalization creates for the women and environment that allows her to achieve greater personal autonomy, but in an increasingly unequal and risky environment.

Mr. Speaker, I just like to briefly scan through a few measures that I see this government has got in this budget specifically directed to the development of women. First, the poverty alleviation programme, we know the majority of

persons who fall into this bracket as I said earlier are women. Mr. Speaker, I am proud to know that many of my sisters would be helped. Mr. Speaker, I also explained about continued education but I want to issue a point of warning here to you women I must appeal to you, make use of the available resources. The government can only make it available, you have to get up and go. We are in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we cannot no longer sit back, and we women have to be part of this evolving process. Mr. Speaker, there are also measures in this budget available through scholarship, and I am pleased to announced as I have been informed by the Prime Minister of this State a couple of Sundays ago that for all those increases scholarships made available to this State that the majority of the applicants have been young women. I also looked at the micro economic policies. Mr. Speaker, there would be no discrimination against women who apply to enter these micro enterprises. It will be no longer if you wish for money to borrow that you have to have your spouse or your other half to sign. The Government has recognized that we the women of St. Vincent are part of the Caribbean civilization entitled to our own rights and freedom.

Mr. Speaker, there is greater accessibility to low-income home scheme. I cannot go without mentioning Mr. Speaker, that 100% mortgage scheme which is available for civil servants, and I want to name particularly teachers and nurses as the majority of this working sector involving women and based on that it now means that the majority of the applications will be from women. There would be an increase of home owning women within our State. Mr. Speaker, the call centres, most employees are women. Mr. Speaker, the Government has kept its promises to assist in the development of women of this State.

And Mr. Speaker, before I go I must comment on the work in the constituency of the representative of the Honourable Girlyn Miguel. [Applause]. I see the difference from when she was in Opposition in 1998 to now where she is a functional member of this government. Mr. Speaker, as was said eight days ago that Marriaqua probably has placed the most people in employment since we have taken office. [Applause]. Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier it is not a miracle, it is the work of the representative and Mr. Speaker, I am proud to announce that Marriaqua will remain a part of this ULP Government for an awfully long time to come. [Applause].

Mr. Speaker, the budget is good. Mr. Speaker, the budget is what we promised the people of this State. Mr. Speaker, the taste of the pudding is in the eating and as we go through this budget this year, you would realize honourable member that we really walking that walk.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend all those who have already contributed to this budget. Mr. Speaker, as I listened to them, I wondered what on earth would I stand here and say, because they have delivered their contribution with such eloquence that I thought maybe I was a schoolgirl just entering school. And Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have made my small input into this budget. I wish the Prime Minister and all this ministers in their ministries success as they implement these policies. It is not going to be easy. It will be hard work because within your ministries you have got a lot who have come over from the last administration waiting to obstruct your policies, but move anyone aside who does not confirm.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you Mr. Speaker, a Merry Christmas, you and your family. I like to wish all the members of this Honourable House an enjoyable Christmas, a prosperous and a hardworking new year. The members of the House for accommodating me when I came here a novice, smiling at me they made me feel welcome. The Sergeant-at-Arms whom I am constantly filled with his movements. Mr. Speaker, the policemen who stand at the door working overtime, the stenographers who are there. Mr. Speaker, it has been a pleasure to have been a part of this government so far in this Honourable House. And Mr. Speaker, my women would kill me if I did not wish them well. All the members of the Unity Labour Party Women's Arms, I wish you all an enjoyable Christmas. I look forward to working with you all next year, and you are the women of the State of St. Vincent who meet me on the road, and I do not even know who you are but come up to me, say hello, Mrs. George, try and find me a job, try and do this for me; I promised you with the help of my ministers I will do what ever I can. [Applause].

Once again, Mr. Speaker, and I would like to indulge in small personal note. I would like to wish my family, especially my husband who has been extremely good throughout the campaign; he has not only been good to me, he has also been good to members of this party, as we went along the campaign trail.

Mr. Speaker, it certainly is together now in Christmas and the New Year, I thank you Mr. Speaker.

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I think this is an appropriate time for the luncheon adjournment. Perhaps if we return at 2:30

p.m. So I accordingly move the motion for the suspension of the House for lunch until 2:30 p.m.

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

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

**SUSPENSION 12:40 p.m. (Lunch)**

**RESUMPTION 2:40 p.m.**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** This Honourable House now resumes.

**HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE:** Mr. Speaker, this represents the seventh budget that I have witnessed in this House. The first on this side of the House, the other six while I was in Opposition. And I must say that this is the first budget since I have been in this Parliament since 1994 that I can describe as being honest, realistic and indeed optimistic. [Applause]. It is honest in that it is devoid of padding. And the Minister of Transport, Works and Housing, did an excellent job in exposing the small percentages of the capital budget over the years of NDP reign which was actually spent, sometimes as low as one quarter of the capital allocation. We have avoided that and in that sense, we are indeed honest in dealing with the people where budgetary allocation are concerned. It is realistic, in that it is grounded in our realities, notwithstanding the bad hand which we got from the NDP, and as somebody said it is a hand that did not have one single face card in it. It is optimistic in that it holds out hope for our people in all classes, and especially the poor and working people of this country. [Applause]. That is why this budget has to be supported not only by members of this side and the general public but indeed the Opposition, even though they are doing it pretty much tongue in cheek.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to remind the nation that had the people's uprising not succeeded we would have been faced with another NDP budget which budget Mr. Speaker, would be including pensions, gratuities and in phase two of that programme salaries increases for Parliamentarians. And that is what we would have been paying for in an NDP budget, if they had a change to come at this time and we need to remind the nation of that. So even though we are asking for \$5 to be paid on garbage collection I am sure the nation would prefer to pay that than to pay much more than \$5 per month for salary increase, pensions increases and gratuity increases as the NDP would have instituted. We would have been faced with heavy taxes than what were signed under this budget and therefore from the standpoint of comparison, of what the NDP brought in the past and what was likely to come

if they were in office again I think this nation has good reasons to rejoice at the 2002 budget.

Mr. Speaker we are now eight months in Office. By comparison the New Democratic Party has been in office 200 months. Let me repeat that. We have been in office for eight months; the NDP had been in office for exactly 200 flush months. In other words, for every one month of ULP governance the NDP had 25. Not 5 or 20; for every one we had they had 25. That is to say for every one month of ULP governance the NDP governance had two plus years in office. What a waste. Yet our accomplishments and our developments over the eight months have been simply remarkable and stunning by comparison with the NDP. And I would hope that the Opposition would learn from the work of the ULP government including when we were in the Opposition. We were extremely responsible, very committed and hardworking to our role on the other side of the House, well researched, very biting in our criticisms but also very supportive when they on at side came up with things that benefited the people. In other words, it was not a puerile opposition, for opposition sake, we did it in a responsible and mature manner, and that is why we are on this side, having demonstrated our ability and maturity.

By comparison, the NDP opposition is irresponsible; from time after time we have been advising them to prepare their questions and their contribution in a proper manner. Both questions and contribution were weak. They come to these meetings very late. Last week Monday, one week ago when we had the Estimates, every one of them came in here late. The earliest was 9:15 a.m. when we were supposed to start at 9:00 a.m. We had to suspend the sitting in order to accommodate the Leader of the Opposition who came in at 10:00 o'clock and to crown it all they walked out of the Parliament abdicating their responsibilities to the nation and indeed to their party. Their contribution to this budget has been weak and ill researched. The member for the Northern Grenadines criticizing us for not having a primary school in Bequia.

Mr. Speaker, in 1997 the New Democratic Party had nothing in their budget for a primary school in Bequia. Come 1998 they had an election; it was an election issue in Bequia and the Northern Grenadines. A few months after the election in the budget in December of 1998, the same year they put in a line item in the capital budget construction of Port Elizabeth primary school to the tune of \$263,000. The particular project was estimated at \$4.5 million with the completion date at 2001 that is this year. So the NDP following the election outcry put it in. It was for preliminary work on the construction of a school at Port Elizabeth. One year later none of that money was spent and they recycled the figure of \$263,000 in the 2000 budget. Interestingly Mr.

Speaker their last budget in December 2000 completely scraped the project they put in no money for it and they had a remark "the project scope is being reviewed". They put zero for it. In other words, under pressure from the masses they put in the project, then they take the project out, then a member for the Northern Grenadines can come here without doing his home work and say we did not put anything in for the primary school. Mr. Speaker, we have put in nearly three quarts of a million dollars for a lab at the secondary school and we have lot of other things in train for the Northern Grenadines and for Bequia.

The Member for the Southern Grenadines who is supposedly the Opposition spokesman on education, and I had to take him to task for his weak preparation of his questions. He comes here and he talks about the book loan scheme and the way it is executed. He has indicated that we need to have more balance and parity and equitable distribution in relation to this. Mr. Speaker, two years ago when I was in the Opposition and spokesman. I raised the question of the book loan scheme to the then, Mr. Speaker, Minister of education, Honourable Alpien Allen, and the same thing he is now recommending for that side, this side when they were NDP, rejected what they are calling for. The Honourable Minister of Education then said it is always costly and difficult to administer the means test programme also the question of avoidability is complex and difficult to determine, when we had raised the question about how the books are going to be distributed, and now he comes and raise the same issue which they have basically condemned when they were on this side. You see the kind of duplicity that we have to face. One would have thought that the Honourable Member for the Southern Grenadines would have shouted praises on this government for the budget and especially educational component on of the budget. And to shower praises on the budget we have done as a Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports. I thought he would have gotten up and thanked the ULP Government for giving his brother a scholarship to the State University of New York Plattsburg where he is going in January, along hopefully with another 30 people. Those are things that you could at least say thank you for, and show some appreciation of. Instead you seem very obsessed with the five beautiful women inside of the House. But that is okay, another reason perhaps you should exercise your existential options, and come over and join us.

Mr. Speaker, before I get into the substance of my presentation on education, I wish to, through you Mr. Speaker, acknowledge a special group of people in our country, the disabled or as they would put it, the differently abled. Today is international day of the disabled. And I want to not only pay tribute to those wonderful people but also pledge our ministries continued support of their

work. Unfortunately they called off a rally yesterday, I came down but because of the inclemency of the weather they called it off. But we are going to continue to support them for the rest of the week and we have made some arrangements in relation to that. I myself with other ministries officials. Have sat and met with other executive members and we have pledged our continued support. I wish them well for the week and we would try and be part of the many activities as possible. In our budget for the three schools in Kingstown, Georgetown and Bequia, catering for 78 students. We believe as they say, we are different but equal. And I want to congratulate them on the work and pay tribute to them on this occasion.

I want also to pay tribute to our running machine, Pamenos Ballantyne for winning the half marathon in Barbados. Mr. Speaker, under the new organization in the Ministry of Education, the Honourable Minister of State is responsible now for sports and youth, and I concentrate on education, as of recent times. And I know he had already spoken, and he asked me to remember to pay tribute to Mr. Pamenos Ballantyne.

Mr. Speaker, the list of developments and achievements in the Ministry of Education and I am leaving out youth and sports, because they were already covered is extremely long, and in the limited time I have this afternoon, I could probably get to about to 80 or 100 of those achievements, if I move quickly but those are not all. Mr. Speaker, unprecedented in the history of this country there has been a new emphasis on education and a new lease on life, unprecedented. That is reflected not only in the pronouncements of the Prime Minister in his regular programmes and address but by restructuring the budget address to put education first under this sectors, under the specific sectors, and there is no doubt that there is a view in this nation that education is being taken to new heights never before seen in this country. There is a new philosophy that is underpinning that new thrust in education. The philosophy that says that education must be for living and production. In other words it must be connected with life.

Mr. Speaker that is almost said as a slogan but it is indeed a very profound piece of political and educational philosophy. Because it challenges the view of education in information and knowledge as being something disconnected from the rest of society. Something that has been sterilized and sanitized so that it does not connect with the rest of society. Something around which a cordon sanitaire has been put. And we are saying that we have to have a different perspective on education. And even though it was not as glamorous as the school repair programme in July and August, we have been doing work in reinstating a new philosophy of education slowly but surely, because that

is going to underpin education. If our educators do not have in their heads the new philosophy they would be operating at different rates and in different directions and hence the cohesion of thrust forward will be undermined. And we have been putting in some work Mr. Speaker. We are going to continue the challenge of this whole view of education as being something sterilized and disconnected from our people. Education and knowledge must work to address the problems that we face in our society and in this regard, Mr. Speaker, only last week we showed how that connection could be done. On Friday we had in our schools Belize Solidarity Day, and during the week we would ask that teachers use their Social Studies programme to examine not only the history of Belize and the connection with our country through the Garifuna people but also to address the issue of damage by the hurricanes, so they could understand when they make a contribution, the framework within which that contribution is made. And I am pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, that from a short span of some of the institutions today, I believe we are going to get in the vicinity of \$15,000 collected by our school children. Now I say this because this is demonstration of the kind of direction where we want to go where we connect education with what is happening in the real world. And we can do to a lot of the problems that we faced.

Mr. Speaker, we have a very sprawling ministry, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, is very, very sprawling. In addition to the sum 120 preschools, we have to address the preschool services committee and the task force and early childhood education. We have primary schools, close to 70. Multipurpose centres, some five, Schools for Children with Special Needs, some three. Secondary schools, we have some 23, we have subject associations, student bodies, tertiary institutions and others such as the Teachers' Union, education advisory board, national sports council, national PTA's, student councils, adult education organizations, NGO's. In youth, National Youth Council, the National Youth Commission, et cetera, et cetera, come down the line; the sporting disciplines. Mr. Speaker, you are talking when you add the Parent Teachers' Association of the relevant institutions, approaching some 600 bodies that our ministry has to respond to. It is indeed a sprawling ministry which has been described as a ministry that does not sleep. Because anytime round the clock, you are going to find some official doing some work for the Ministry of Education. That is why the two ministers having worked in tandem for the first six, seven months in office where we had to share everything and work closely, we now with the re-opening of the school in September are able to have a certain division of labour where the Minister of Education will focus on education and the Minister of Sports, will concentrate on sports, and youth. It is merely an administrative division of

labour and does not signify any particular emphasis at the expense of one department over another.

Mr. Speaker, since we have been there we have had staff changes. We have had new people come on, and I want to take this opportunity to pay tribute to those who have worked, and given their lives to education, whether within the Ministry or outside and have moved on, or move to other departments and I want to take this opportunity to thank them for their wonderful support and work over the years. We have a new permanent secretary, a new Chief Education Officer and soon a new Deputy Chief Education Officer. Three SEO's in terms of the top hierarchy.

Mr. Speaker, we have had to fast track since we got there, the education sector support plan. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the New Democratic Party had commissioned this, had received a draft in February of 1999. I have repeatedly raised in here, in Parliament while on the Opposition and they have denied me a copy, I did not see this copy, I saw it for the first time over two years later in April of this year, after we got into office, yet this is the platform from which we want to launch the new thrust in education in terms of all its dimensions. Yet it was kept on ice, we were promised consultations by the NDP, but typical NDP broke its promises, we never saw it until April, this year, since then Mr. Speaker, we have engaged in a phenomenal amount of work. On the education support sector plan. Indeed, in keeping with our 100 Days Programme Plan we had on April 30<sup>th</sup>, one of the most comprehensive and far ranging consultations on education. We had for example at the Kingstown Methodist Hall, nearly 30 capsule presentations from a whole host of institutions emphasizing a wide range of matters. Those were incorporated into a second draft and that was subjected to further consultations in a third draft. In the meantime we had consultations, throughout the country and on the radio, with the result Mr. Speaker, between April 30<sup>th</sup> and August 7<sup>th</sup> we had an unprecedented, 15 educational consultation in this nation, ranging from early childhood education to adult education and these have been incorporated into our education sector support plan which is now with the Cabinet and perhaps might be discussed at Wednesday's meeting of the Cabinet, this is how we are moving Mr. Speaker, with urgency and seriousness. So two years it has been on ice under the NDP but within a matter of days and weeks we could have work done on it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go down this list very quickly because I know I am very limited with time. Mr. Speaker, since we have been there we have been attempting to upgrade the Ministry of Education, we have received six new computers, one of which came from the CARICOM Secretariat in support of

the curriculum project and the learning outcomes, and two others were upgraded because we are trying to modernize the Ministry of Education itself. We are engaged Mr. Speaker, in other modifications for the first time, in I do not know how many years, and basically it looked the same to me, but within days of getting into that ministry we were able to start construction which was delayed for a long time to expand the Ministry of Education to the tune of over 200 new square feet in the Ministry of Education in order to improve the operating room, meaning the space of our personnel at the Ministry of Education. That is the kind of work that is going on, we had to operate, Mr. Speaker, under absolutely horrendous conditions when the construction was going on and I want to publicly pay tribute to the staff at the Ministry of Education because that is the time when it is the busiest season in education. Child month is coming up, common entrance is coming up, all the exams are coming up, and promotions have to be dealt with. It is our busiest season and it is the time when we had taken office and also had to deal with the 100 Days Programme which was another overlay on the existing work but the staff rallied under the dust and the hammering and the pounding and the cement flying all over the place. They rallied marvelously Mr. Speaker, and I really want to commend them for that.

And somebody said within recent times when they reflected on it, it looked like when the construction was going on something like a Bin Laden attack on the Ministry of Education given the dust and so on that were flying around but, those are the conditions. I had at times had to abandon my office to the staff of the general office and go and seek some other quarters over in the Ministry of Finance, not that I was looking for promotion but, I had to go and find other space to try and carry out the work and give space to our staff.

Mr. Speaker, we are in the process of restructuring and reorganising the ministry, which is contained in the sector plan. We are putting an information technology unit. Our assessment and evaluation unit is now fully staffed. When we got there we only had one staff member, we are putting the other two staff members. We have adjusted our mission statement to reflect the new look, as you know it was previously Ministry of Education, Works, Culture, Ecclesiastical Affairs and its now Education, Youth and Sports. We modified both our Vision Statement and Mission Statement to incorporate those. Mr. Speaker, we have been having all staff meetings. We have had one of all the sections and that was very important in terms of communication and updating. Indeed tomorrow if I am not mistaken we are supposed to have another one I think at the Business Centre where all staff members will come together.

One of the issues that had come out of that meeting was the issue of internal communication and we moved very readily to correct that by creating an internal newsletter called bulletin board. We have created two of those and we are working on the third one, every two weeks we bring that out. We have intensified our educational reform program. We brought in an assignment, our Dr. Jack to assist us in that exercise and we are expecting that our senior people will take that pretty much on board as we continue to settle and restructure.

Mr. Speaker, with assistance from the Republic of China we are computerising the curriculum. There have been shortages for our schools and we are computerising the curriculum and that is pretty much in training. Numerous numbers of appointments by the Public Service Commission to replace people who are going out and to bring in new ones. We also Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister repeatedly pointed out were able to appoint some 49 QAT's who were retroactive to roughly about July last year. There is a greater thrust in science and technology not only at the level of the ministry but from the inter-ministerial level because; we are collaborating very closely with Minister of Telecommunications and Science, Honourable Jerrol Thompson. Mr. Speaker, last year we did not have a Science Fair, but this year we were able to have it reactivated with assistance from UNESCO and I will address the UNESCO contribution a little later. We are looking at an expanded role and mandate of the Education Media Unit. We believe it is a little too restricted and they are doing a wonderful job under very difficult circumstances. I wish to pay tribute to them as well.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministers in the Ministry of Education are very hands on people, that is our style, and we are not only doing all of this work from the standpoint of administration but we are also outreaching our own selves. The Minister of State, Honourable Clayton Burgin and myself have visited over 30 Educational Institutions since we have been in office and we will continue that exercise, inter-ministerial meetings are continuing. Mr. Speaker, I have already indicated the consultations that we have had in relation to early childhood education and the 120 schools or so that we have, preschools that is. The task force on early childhood education is intensifying its work. We are finalising the regulations, I should point out Mr. Speaker that under the Education Act 1992 provisions are made for education regulations. I have raised while in Opposition this issue and they keep getting from the Government, NDP side at the time about some wishy washy response in relation to the regulations. What we are attempting to do Mr. Speaker, now that we are here and those regulations have on them date 1995, that should tell your how long they have been sitting on ice. We are disaggregating those

regulations that are we are culling out various sections, having them intensely examined by the appropriate people and then brought back Ministry and submitted to the Cabinet. The early childhood education taskforce has intensified its work and they have finalizing the regulations, I am hoping that these can get to Cabinet early in the New Year. We continue to assist the schools. One hundred pre schools, I was hoping that the figures would have increased, but it does not seem so. Where they getting \$200 per month for 12 months. In addition to that we have placed YES personnel, my information is that 14 YES personnel have been placed in preschools. That is creating a lot of problems, Mr. Speaker, because the wages at the preschools are dismally low. As you know preschool education is heavily subsidized by the owners and the proprietors. I used to run one myself so I could tell you very much how that goes. So when the YES people go in and they are receiving \$400 a month, minus the NIS, that is actually in some cases more than the owner of the school will get and it is creating some problems and we are trying to see how we can get that resolved. We have Mr. Speaker, in this country, a very serious hemorrhaging of school children of the rural areas into the urban areas. We are losing them to the urban areas. The reason being under the New Democratic Party and its economic policies there has been an increase not only in poverty as a whole as reflected in their own poverty report, but especially poverty in the rural areas. So there is this hemorrhaging and movement of people to Kingstown and that is creating some problems and I will touch that in a while. But it means that more space is being created in the primary schools and we are looking at that seriously for the establishment of preschool centres within the physical building of the existing primary schools structures.

Mr. Speaker, under primary education, there is no doubt that the school repair programme has been a spectacular success. In a sense, important as that project is Mr. Speaker, the repairs and painting, there is a certain serendipitous outcome as a result of that. That is to say a spill off that is not necessarily planned. And that is serendipitous outcome Mr. Speaker, is the release in the Ministry of Education of a large quantum of quality administrative time. The ministry of education has been literally debilitated with reports and letters about roof and window and pipes, and toilet and so on. I mean you could not turn in the Ministry, every day, emergency they want to send home children and so on. We know what happen under the NDP and I think the Minister, our Deputy Leader made the point earlier about you could not open the school term without several demonstrations and problems and all of that has changed, but the outcome of that programme has been in the Ministry now, we have a large quantum of administrative time which we can direct to very important issues other what I used to refer to as the

irritancy. Because I really saw them as irritancy, detracting from the central mandate of the educational system which is the learning, the inculcation of knowledge among our people. And now with that in place we have been able to spend more time on a lot of important issues, programming, curriculum development, policy changes, restructuring the Ministry, et cetera, et cetera. Some of the larger but very important issues. I have requested of the Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, Minister of Finance, that perhaps over the season when the school is on vacation we could consider and the Minister of Transport, Works and Housing is here, wake up, that we can have a phase two of that programme, maybe over the holidays, because there are one or two things left from the summer programme that still need to be rectified. There is also the fencing to be done and I am hoping that the budget coming so early we would be able to release the allocations for fencing because that point to another question of security. The Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister makes it clear that we are going to get the money, so I think the Minister of Works can start putting together his Christmas team. More news. I do not know if the Prime Minister was here when he went through the \$1 million road programme but it sounds like five, six thousand people on the roads! And they want that finish for two weeks, so after that, people could still move into phase two then of the school repairs programme. And we would be extremely happy. And I know my teachers and colleagues in the Ministry of Education will be indeed very happy about that. Mr. Speaker, the new situation requires new direction and new policies. We cannot in all fairness and we understand why, we having those kind of request again because of the NDP neglect over the years. But in all fairness we cannot now release those schools for shows and weddings and dances and all the other things, and camps and so on, we would have to find other means for accommodating these activities, because it is too fundamental and it has caused too much for us to be using these facilities in that direction.

Mr. Speaker, still under the primary school programme. We have had to create nearly 300 new Grade K or Kindergarten places in Kingstown because of the same rural poverty which is increasing and the hemorrhaging in the urban area. We had to put two new classes at prep school. Two new ones at St. Mary's and they all have at Verbeke Centre. Some more, I think we have moved from five to eight classes at the annex just to accommodate nearly, 300 additional pupils for September; that is the kind of pressure we are subjected to Mr. Speaker, but we lived up to the challenges quite well even if I might say so.

We have introduced French and Spanish for the first time into the primary school, more of the primary schools have gone under the computerized

programme. In the first phase Mr. Speaker, the NDP only gave two primary schools computers under phase one. Mr. Speaker, under this phase two the Unity Labour Party Government has expanded it to 28 schools; is putting 15 primary schools with computers. We are expanding the system there. In order to improve the quality of our mediocre Mr. Speaker, we are asking subject specialization, it has been going on a limited scale but because of the new call for September some 80% of our primary schools are under subject specialization and I am hoping that we can have 100% come September 2002.

Still under the computerized programme, 45 teachers are trained, the New Democratic Party Government rushed through the programme, they did an utter mess of it. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, we had to work over time, from the Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the Minister of Education we had to work overtime to salvage that programme, because it was in such a mess. We could not find furniture and stuff that were supposed to be delivered to the schools. And we did an audit on that, and that was also quite a revelation. Similarly, the then Government did not train the teachers, we had to do it, 45 trained and 10 of them are now prepared for the advanced Microsoft programme. Mr. Speaker, we are moving and we are moving expeditiously. Our emphasis Mr. Speaker, in the primary school system continues to be the capacity building. There are four capacities which we are targeting. The learning capacities of the children, the teaching capacities of the teachers, and the administrative capacities of the principals and administrators and the mobilization capacity of the entire school, but especially principals. Because they have to learn to mobilize the resources whether PTAs or through community resources in partnership address the question of education into our specific communities.

The school feeding education, Mr. Speaker, we have modified that government is now paying the people who are in charge of that programme, they are modifying the basket and generally they are improving the quality of the school feeding programme, which were one of our elements in 100 Days programme.

Still under primary school, Mr. Speaker. Last year the Teachers' College took in 38 students. This year with the assistance of the YES programme we have been able to double the intake of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Teachers' College from 38 to 78 students. [Applause.] Mr. Speaker, we are anticipating as is happening with a number of countries, and we know the case of Jamaica and we discussed that when we were in Jamaica recently, of the loss and indeed hemorrhaging of teachers of the region. And we have to pre-empt that. And we intend to train a lot of our teachers including the young people who

are interested. We are I should point out, Mr. Speaker, are intent on the professionalisation of the teaching force. That is to say the days are long gone, when you come out of school and you go into a classroom. We are saying you have to be a professional teacher before you go in the classroom, you have to be professionally trained and that is one of our targets. [Applause]. We are emphasizing through the sponsorship of school programmes the public sector partnership approach. And we have indeed, Mr. Speaker, had sponsorship for quite a number of schools and we are going to make sure that we carry that through, based on the commitments made. When we got into office, Mr. Speaker, the Sandy Bay school was in a mess. The Minister of Transport, Works and Housing, and I want to commend him for his work on the wonderful school programme; had to take a hands on approach in relation to it. And really had to, and one could say crack the whip to get that project back on stream. And it has been reported that they are going fairly well, they have had one or two problems; but certainly not the disaster that the New Democratic Party had left. So we are looking forward for the Sandy Bay Primary School being completed. They told me not too long from now until its formal opening and I am sure that the Minister of State in the Ministry of Agriculture, the Honourable Montgomery Daniel would be happy to be able to open that school.

Mr. Speaker, the Byera School has commenced. The Troumca School is finished and is to be opened. We are Mr. Speaker, laying the basis at the Primary School level for compulsory education. Much to its shame, the Parliamentary representative for North Central Windward, the Honourable Prime Minister has indicated that the Byera School is on track to be finished in July. We look forward to its opening in September. So things are moving Mr. Speaker, expeditiously. We have to deal with the question of the education of our children. We had delayed on it for the September 2001 term, Mr. Speaker, because it is fine to put legislation in place but if you do not have the support mechanisms, in reality you could be punishing poor people twice. And we believe it is necessary for us to put in place the support mechanisms and in this regard I am working very closely with the Honourable Minister of Social Development. As you know, the uniform programme is being executed through that Ministry and they are doing an excellent job. We are going to work very closely to ensure that when we say by 2002 that all our children under 11 must be in school then we know we have the support mechanisms in place to make sure that is done in a manner to make sure that it does not penalize the poor people of this country.

Mr. Speaker, we continue to work very closely with the primary school principals. And we have very good relation with them. We have Mr. Speaker, a

very good relationship with the Teachers' Union and I put it under primary schools because they are largely primary schools they are addressing. And I understand that the negotiations are going quite well, the teachers' Union members and leadership understand the particular context we are in. There are one or two issues that need to be addressed. We have to definitely address the question of vacation, because teachers have to understand especially in the present times that you cannot have your vacation what you are entitled to on an annual basis, plus your school vacation. I have been advised that that approach cost the Government some \$3 million a year. And that is a lot of money don't care how you spend it. And I am hoping that this matter can be resolved in the negotiations with the Teacher's Union.

Secondary schools. Mr. Speaker, I start with the Common Entrance. Mr. Speaker, you would recall the debacle of the Common Entrance of the year 2000 and especially with the Maths paper. We were traduced and condemned as the ULP, because of the roadblock, the Common Entrance results were so poor. The reality Mr. Speaker, the result is there was a defective or a paper with some defective items, which negatively impacted on the Common Entrance Exam and particularly the Maths. Because when you looked at the CXC exams, which were also road blocked, they went up. The Common Entrance came down they said it was road blocked. The CXC went up but they did not say it is road block that caused them to go up you know. And it is when I brought this paper in this Parliament and I read some of the items, the then NDP members on this side had to hang their heads in shame, because I asked them you know, I read the items Mr. Speaker, and I asked them and I asked them answer this for me and I stood up and I waited, and they hang down their heads and they cannot answer it, because they had no answer for it. This year, Mr. Speaker, we put a new system in place, the teachers union monitored it, not a murmur, you did not hear one murmur about the poor execution of the Common Entrance Exam.

And I want to thank the staff at the Assessment Unit, in particular thank Dr. Yolande Wright who has now gone to join CXC and we really wish her all the best. She is an amazing person in terms of work capacity. Thinks nothing of being at the Ministry 10: p.m., 11:00 p.m. at nights, as some of our other officials but we wish her the best but we know that her presence there would be down to the benefit of our own system here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, the Computerization programme continues at the secondary level. We have added quite a number of secondary schools and multipurpose centres. For the first time all constituencies in the nation will have

institutions with computers. For the first time, thanks to the Unity Labour Party. [Applause]. We are looking at the Sandy Bay Secondary School, as you know we are creating additional spaces, not only by setting up two additional secondary schools, but also by extending existing secondary schools. French and Spanish are taught in all government secondary schools for the first time. We have reintroduced, Mr. Speaker, the secondary school programme at the Teachers' College, it was not there last year you know, it was not there; I do not know how that NDP Government used to operate. A lot of these things, good things in principle, workable, objective, important to advance education but they have their style, inconsistent, inept one may say. We reintroduced the secondary school programme at the Teachers' College.

Mr. Speaker, the school bus system. Seven old buses, we now have three we have not yet put on the roads because we are revamping. We are making a proposal, which we are submitting to cabinet about how we should approach this transport system. Mr. Speaker, the school buses have been in a state of neglect. We have not finished paying the bill for this year but they told me almost \$80,000 has been spent, or charged for repairs to the buses. One of the new ones they told me cost \$100,000. So it might be better that we just buy some new ones, but we need to look at that.

The intake so far for this year, Mr. Speaker, from students paying their small contribution is something like \$10,000. But up to a few days last week it had cost us over \$200,000 for running the school buses. And we need to look at that very seriously; we are completing the figures for submission to Cabinet over the next couple of weeks, but basically we are committed to an improved system and we are going to look to see how best that can be executed.

Mr. Speaker, we have been encouraging subject associations. Those who are specialized in certain subjects, to develop themselves, ban themselves into bodies because it is very important for them to have that degree of expertise, within their mix so that they can advise and guide the Ministry of Education and government. Only last week Tuesday, Mr. Speaker, that I met with the TECVOC people, that is to say the Technical vocational Training personnel from various multipurpose centres to start with they said, Mr. Minister we have been in this thing for all like 20 odd years, and it is the first time, a Minister took time off to sit down and talk with us. And that has been our style. When the school term open Mr. Speaker, Minister Burgin and myself went on the telephone and call around and say how things going down there by you. How things going up there by you? And the first thing was shock. They were shocked. They said Mr. Minister no Minister ever called me for the beginning of the school term. We really appreciate what you are doing; you are

really showing a lot of interest. Takes a lot of time, Mr. Speaker, but we are very concern and our style is very much hands on, like the style of entire government.

The technical, vocational and education people are going to meet in January and form for the first time a subject association. Mr. Speaker, we are proceeding as indicated in the Estimates with the STATVET project because that is very important. The issue of security has arisen at the secondary schools. More so in a sense than the primary schools but also affecting the primary schools. I had had to intervene at the Campden Park Secondary School and asked for police from the Questelles Police Station to be placed there to give some protection. The Prime Minister himself had to personally intervene in relation to the A' Level College, and from reports there have been improvements but we have to address that, and Cabinet is so committed to address that.

I want to take this opportunity, at the level of the secondary school to commend the Girl's High School for a wonderful 90<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Mr. Speaker. They have put out a beautiful magazine here, I am hoping they could have one come to the House, but they had a wonderful year, and we supported them. Cabinet is as I understand, the Board of Directors for High School, and we also support all the other rest secondary schools and primary schools who have had anniversaries celebration.

At the tertiary level Mr. Speaker, the A' level College, we have been able to increase by some 65 students the intake, Mr. Speaker, I wonder what kind of magic my colleagues at the Ministry of Education do to effect these kind of things. Because when you watch things camp to the rafters and you have the demand, because there is a wave coming through the system Mr. Speaker, where people want tertiary education, there was a wave in the early times where people wanted secondary education. Now there is a wave for tertiary education, it is like working magic how they get these people placed. Some additional 65 at the college. They have started a part time programme, Mr. Speaker, in the evenings, a new development. We have extended the book loan scheme the same one the Minister of Southern Grenadines was grumbling about, to the college. At the Technical College, we have been able to put in an additional 46 people again; sometimes I wonder how we manage to achieve these things, given the constraints. They have restructured the programme at the Technical College and that with the craft and technician course in place is providing some new options and new directions for the work at the technical college. I have indicated earlier in relation to the Teachers' College that we are professionalizing the teachers' service and that we are

taking in at the primary school level an additional 40 or so students, and at the secondary school programme, close to 20.

Mr. Speaker, at the tertiary level, at the Teachers College we should point out that information technology is compulsory in the training of our teachers, so they do that as a mandatory subject in the Teachers' College. There has also been the Spanish programme being worked out with the professor from the Venezuela Institute. In the meantime, Mr. Speaker, at the University level this Government is working assiduously to clear the \$7 million which we met when we came into government left by the New Democratic Party. We are sending a number of youngsters to train in Cuba and we hoping they can go off in January.

We have increased the funds available for student loans. And the Prime Minister has already addressed that. We have received only last week; I had to share my time between the Parliament and a delegation from the State University of New York at Plattsburg Campus, along with the Minister of Education from Dominica, Minister Rossell Skirrit, had to share my time between them trying to negotiate along with Minister Burgin how we will approach this question of the scholarships. They have indicated that we will get 400 scholarships over five years. [Applause]. The first batch of these are expected to go off in January, I understand that a few of them are still struggling though the finances and the Prime Minister has graciously indicated that you can organize a meeting with him as soon as there is a space following the budget.

We have been advised if we do not take all the 40 in one year that those which are not taken will be added to the new year. So if for example, in January we get off 30 students which mean we did not take 10, they will add the 10 for the September term to the 40 making it 50. So the global picture will be 200 scholarships over that period of time. So Mr. Speaker, we are taking care of our nation and our young people.

For the first time in the history of this country, you had a college fair hosted by the Documentation Centre, Miss Gail Nurse and her staff there supported by her colleagues at Archives and the library services. That saw some 12 colleges displayed. I myself when I was going to Jamaica, visited them a long drive from Miami to West Palm to visit one, and I had a very good tour at that particular institution. Some of our students are there, the brother of Honourable Montgomery Daniel and some other Vincentian students. They came down for the College fair. The first time we have agreed that we will institutionalize it, and that it would be there next year. Mr. Speaker, on of the

most important developments that will transform the educational landscape in the year 2002 is the implementation of the recommendation to integrate into one college at least three different institutions. For example, you have the A-level College, which is now called the Community College, the Teachers' College, the Technical College and possibly the school of nursing. We still have to debate it, we have submitted the report to Cabinet and we will be discussing it at that level when the time allows, but we are expecting that in September we will have some implementation mechanism in place and begin to look at the issue of offering associate degrees come September 2002.

Mr. Speaker, another thing that would transform the landscape in 2002 of course, is the New Central library. For years, for years the New Democratic Party administration, in its insensitivity like Philistines, they have been keeping the centre of knowledge literally in a dump, I would not even call it a warehouse again. And they expect to lift the educational standard of our people by having them operate out of such a facility but we are changing that under the Unity Labour Party Government.

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK:** Yes, under the New Democratic Party Government.

**HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE:** Mr. Leacock, Senator Leacock ought to keep his mouth closed. I have not reached West St. George, yet you know. I know plenty thing I could talk about but some I would keep secret. Your own party rejected you in 1998 when you ran against Carl Joseph, rejected. Your own party rejected you, now you foster in West St. George, not even the people of West St. George, your own party when you ran against Carl Joseph who is not even a strong contender, and he beat you. How much did he beat you by? [Laughter]. How you so quiet all of a sudden. Didn't Carl Joseph beat you in 1998 when both of you contested to see who would be the candidate for West St. George? Your own party rejected you. And now you want to open your mouth here.

Mr. Speaker, the library is continuing to receive stock of books and I want to thank all the donors. I was present at a ceremony where the rotary club had received some books. For the first time in the history of the country Mr. Speaker, we had an information and a computer management course which was run by the Documentation Centre. We are continuing to develop our branch libraries, the Achieves continue to develop. I want to have us look at that question very carefully because it would be good if we could incorporate the archives into the new library because the documents are extremely important. We need to look at that, or find some home for the archives. They

did a successful website workshop which I had the honour to close early in our term of office.

Our adult education programme. Mr. Speaker, we are going to embark on a major thrust in adult and literacy work next year. We are going to put the pieces in place, I have already indicated at the showcase couple of weeks ago, the adult literacy showcase. We are going to weave together into a national network a number of people, old adult educators who have been trained, new trainees, people from the YES programme, retired teachers, we are going to weave them together into a national network that can launch our campaign. People have been asking for these programmes, Mr. Speaker, and we intend to meet those needs, I am hoping that things can very much be in place so that we can consider launching a genuinely national literacy campaign for the very first time on international Literacy Day on September 8<sup>th</sup>. But those plans are in the making.

Mr. Speaker, I know I mentioned about 80 or so things, but we need to move on to other things. I could talk for another hour, and mention about another hundred or so things from the Ministry of Education, because we have been working hard. Comprehensive programme, a sprawling Ministry and we have been producing.

Mr. Speaker, we have received through the UNESCO Commission, which is based at the Ministry of Education, a lot of support. We have received nearly half a million dollars in funding to carry out programmes such as on the archives, HIV/AIDS, disaster management, Science and Technology, cultural heritage, for example the emphasis on the trans Atlantic programme for UNESCO, education, history workshop bibliography. The work with the Garifuna people, adult education, youth skills, craft and development.

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend our staff and I want to thank UNESCO for their support and we look forward to their continued support through the Ministry of Education and I know they have been collaborating with the Ministry of Tourism and Culture.

Mr. Speaker, I have listed about 90 or so things in education, very quickly, I would now like to turn in the last what I have? About half an hour or so that I left...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You have 16 minutes left.

**HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE:** Sixteen minutes I thought it was half an hour. Mr. Speaker, in education now we are talking about digital time, and according to digital time, it may not quite coincide with analog time.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I am digital.

**HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE:** Thank you, sir. Mr. Speaker, West St. George, perhaps one of the most noteworthy achievements in the constituency of West St. George since the Government took office, Mr. Speaker, has been the formation of six area councils, a sort of informal local government, perhaps like a precursor to formal local government where the community democratically elected executives and officers to serve in their particular areas. We have six councils representing the nine polling divisions in West St. George. A remarkable development, Mr. Speaker, not only in terms of the establishment of them but also by the persons who have come forward, altruistically, Mr. Speaker, to serve the constituency of West St. George and by extension, the nation, I want to publicly commend them. It is difficult to call out names in circumstances like this, Mr. Speaker, but I will tell you. The six executives comprised grass root people who work on the roads, teachers, principals, civil servants, including top civil servants, managers, priests; you name it, we are talking about a wide range of people who come out and work in the interest of the constituency.

Mr. Speaker, if you take quickly the Belmont/Fairbain group, which was formed initially in October 1998, it was dormant for a while and then became reactivated. During that time before its dormancy they had done work on cleaning up the cemetery, and I attended quite a number of those meetings. Those Saturday I was up there. We are trying to do it in a way, Mr. Speaker, that we in each area at least every two months with very intense consultations with the mass of people form the area. What I did and those others may want to consider it, is that through the school we sent out some 400 notices last week for the children to take to their homes and they in fact took them to their homes and we had quite a large turn out, because it is important for people to come out and take power in their communities. Control their destiny. They cleaned up the school during the April vacation. They did some steel grills to cover roads and this council is made up of West St. George and East St. George personnel because we did not think that should divide the community, Belmont/Fairbain, one community so we have four persons representing from each side. They are currently making other drill to cover the road; they have worked on the Belmont school not only the labour intensive programme but also to clean it up afterwards, as volunteers. They have paved the turning point at Fairburn Pasture and there is a lot of cleaning being down in

Belmont/Fairbain, Mr. Speaker. We have got a long list of things coming out of Saturday's meeting that they want us to act on. There is another council established in the Upper West St. George, called the Upper West St. George Council that was established in April, they have had a number of general meetings. They are in fact, providing administration for community centre. I would like to see here, a wonderful community centre. Notwithstanding the manner in which it was done by the NDP, and there are a lot of construction errors that is still there to be corrected. But it really has been a good centre and it is widely used and the council up there is dealing with it administratively and I have been given the assurance by the Honourable Minister of Social Development of its formal opening around the middle of January and we are looking forward to that.

They are also maintaining along with some of the sporting groups, the Dauphne playing field, we have done work, drain and massive road cleaning at Kelborney. Mr. Speaker, a lot of this is before this \$1 million programme that started essentially last week, you know. So put on top of all of this, the \$1 million programme and we have a new look constituency just as we have a new look government and a new look nation. [Applause]. The Dalaway road, part of that is paved, we are now completing the piece of road by the Victor Byron shop in Gomea, for years children have been falling over into the river near to the Darphine/Gomea school, we have now put a railing there, there still needs to be some corrective work but children used to fall over and break their hands and their legs and all sort of things, and for years people have been raising that, it has been neglected by the NDP and now they are seeing the results of good representations. [Applause].

Mr. Speaker, the administrative centre for West St. George operates out of the community centre and so it is a very important hub of activities, I was at a meeting there and in the community, the Saturday before. Every Saturday Mr. Speaker, I go in a different area to hold community meetings. We have another council for the Fountain/Belair area and they have attended several meetings. My own constituency office is based in Belair, right in that area, we have done repairs and cleaned up, we did those in April and even before the labour intensive programme started and the Ministry of Education, Works and Housing have done some fairly major work on that school before the labour intensive programme, so in a sense it got three shots in terms of repairs and so on. In between April and July, and then again in July.

Mr. Speaker, we had a problem with the Belair School, because the New Democratic Party sent in one Mr. Linton Lewis who made a total mess of the Belair playing field digging it up every which way, and we had to do a lot of

corrective work and we still have sections dug up, that we have to try and do corrective work on.

Mr. Speaker, for years the people in the constituency of West St. George has been clamouring for a Cemetery. Just Saturday when we were up there the people said the Belmont Cemetery is full. We need more space. We have raised it, the Unity Labour Party has raised it repeatedly in this Parliament about the need for that. Man, they refused to answer the question, this one said it is not his question, is the next one question and the dancing around. Well, Mr. Speaker, we can announce proudly that as a result of the wonderful support of the Michael Hamlett family we have been able to get some land from that family to the tune of some 1-½ acres to extend the Belair cemetery and it is being used already. Minister of Transport, Works and Housing made reference to roads being done in West St. George and we thank him very much. Because we really had been in bad shape because I think he will have to take affirmative action that is to say for all the years of neglect he now has to put in some extra into West St. George and I hope he will budget accordingly. But a lot of work is being done. White bridge road, vans love it because they use the Villa/Fountain road and they cut through Cane Hall, they love it, Mr. Speaker, and it is nicely paved and I hope everybody takes care of it. [applause]. Similarly, the Cane Hall/Belair road there has been unprecedented cleaning and patching of that road, Mr. Speaker. I want to commend the constituency council for their wonderful work in that area for their wonderful work.

There is a fourth council Dorsetshire Hill which covers two polling stations, Dorsetshire Hill and Queen's Drive come right down to Casson Hill. They were actually formed in 1998, dormant a bit, were reactivated in April, they did a wonderful piece of clean up work in the Easter vacation. Painted the school, they took furniture down to a workshop sand them, I could not recognize the furniture, wonderful piece of work. They basically maintain the cemetery up there, and they were involved in school repair programme. They are doing a crucial piece of wall which for years the NDP had neglected, near a fellow name Charlie, and another bit of wall, and trimming of the Queen's Drive road and the paving of the road have been undertaken. Still a bit of work to be done on the paving. They are having council meeting this Saturday and of course I will be up there, every Saturday I go into a different area.

Mr. Speaker, that is representation ULP style, all is in connection and communion with the people, that is why they have a hard time to move me in West St. George. [Applause]. Arnos Vale Villa Council, established in April, I attended several meetings; we do not have a community centre and I want to

publicly thank Pastor Gevanden Wilson for allowing us to use his church basically for a community meeting place. [Applause]. He is actually an executive member of the council and he had led the group of spiritual leaders in the consecration of the cemetery; I really want to publicly thank him and I should use this opportunity to once again congratulate his daughter along with another West St. George young lady who got island scholarships as a result of performance. That council, Mr. Speaker, has put down some 20 green garbage bins, through out our particular area. They have been instrumental in cleaning Mermaid Gutter and Mermaid Stream which is down on the beach. Mr. Speaker, what has happened are a lot of trees fell cross and danded it up and garbage accumulated. For years, people in the area, including I think is Texaco, had written to the area representative at the time, Honourable Yvonne Francis Gibson, as far as they are concerned she ignored their letters. Well we have been able to clear that Mr. Speaker, used chain saw, cut them through, got the guys, Tractor and Pumpkin, Gary and those boys on the beach to do the clean up and they have done an excellent job and we want them to continue now. We just collected some 200 garbage bags to continue that work, as well as the clean up on the beach.

The council is also involved in establishing road signs and we want to thank the CWSA, not only for the bins but for providing the bins for the road signs. They are also involved in a very interesting project, moving derelict vehicles from the constituency; they have moved about a good dozen or so vehicles from various parts of the constituency. As you know, Mr. Speaker, the Call Centre is there and I want to thank the Government for selecting West St. George and the Arnos Vale area to place the call centre. (And I want to thank the Government for selecting West St. George and the Arnos Vale area to place the Call Centre). A lot of our West St. Georgeans have been getting work there and we appreciate it. [Applause]. That is true, a lot of them have been going there.

Mr. Speaker, under the direction of the Prime Minister we are evolving a new model of how to deal with squatters. As you know, we had some squatters there and I used to be in communion with them. I had some meetings with them and at a Cabinet meeting, and the Prime Minister said look we have to use a new approach to this issue, squatting is a national one, let us use this, may be as a test case. Let us have a committee of you, the area representative, the Minister of Transport, Works and Housing, somebody else and a representative among the squatters. We went there, the squatters elected somebody and that is why Mr. Speaker we were able to get the squatters to move. They moved on their own, basically you know. Nobody had to bulldoze them. They moved and it is one of the best examples of

squatters liquidation in this country. [Applause]. It is exemplary and I think we need to study and analyze that approach to see how we can apply it because we are going to run into some serious problems of the neglect of the New Democratic Party in relation to housing over the years.

The final council, number six, Mr. Speaker, in the Arnos Vale/Cane Hall area, again formed in April, I attended an inaugural meetings, they have used somewhat a different approach to garbage collection, they got drums which they have painted in certain colours with slogans on them and placed them in the various areas. They have embarked on a beautification programme. They painted the two bus sheds in the area, they had a parenting work shop. They decorated the area for independence. And they have done a lot of other work in that area. Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, I do not even know that these things are going on, sometimes they might just send me a note. In other words they do not have a dependence on the area representative and I feel very proud of these people and the work that they have been doing. [Applause]. In other words, Mr. Speaker, even though people might pass and say Mike Browne doing a good job in West St. George, I want you to understand that in a true sense it is together now in West St. George, that we have been working closely with the people and their representatives in executing this programme.

I have made one request with the Ministry of Social Development and the Minister has agreed to assist us in this regard. Because of the vast amount of volunteer work throughout the constituency, we need to strengthen through some staffing at the Administrative centre at the community centre there, we need to get some personnel, and the Minister assured me that we need to get some funds from the special services. Because we used to use some of the special services on the roads, but with the massive road programme we can now divert some of these funds to supporting the massive, massive amount of work being undertaken by these wonderful people in the area councils.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, this budget is further reason why people ought to and I believe would move from the New Democratic Party to the Unity Labour Party. [Applause]. And a number of NDP people have been involved in roadwork. I have sent them out. They are in the Call Centre and they are now on this massive programme Minister Francis talked about, that have five to six thousand people. They have been involved and they appreciate what we have been doing for them.

Mr. Speaker, after we got into office we found the quarter allocation for the roads and a number of them were allocated to known NDP people. I sent to call all of them and I sat down with them, I said, we are not going to take this

road or wall from you, but I want three things, you have to give me the assurance of three things, 1. When you pick your team pick some ULP people because you all had us in the wilderness for a long time, some ULP people need some work. You have to pick some on your team. They said okay. 2. I said give me a professional first class job. They said okay. Third thing, I said do not make me hear a grain of sand go missing. Because this Government is strongly anti-corruption and nobody is going to call Mike Browne's name for a grain of sand in West St. George. [Applause].

Mr. Speaker, they have performed well. One of them was my archrival up in the Gomea area and now he has pledged his support, in fact, he led the self help project that brought the main road into the community centre. He took it over. So much so the fellows them say, Mr. Browne, 'Comrade, together now, you have to give Milton another thing you know, because he really worked good'. And this is the sort of spirit you find. A lot of them come to me and say it is the first time I am talking to you, I really like how you talk. The other day, in the Ministry of Education, a lady approach me and when you see that you know they aren't quite one of ours, and she said her daughter needed a job, she has subjects from the community college, I said send the young lady in let me talk. She sent him, Mr. Speaker, within minutes she had a placement as a YES person. Within minutes. And the mother talking to people in the area now and said it is the first time I am talking to Mr. Browne I do not know he is that kind of person. For two years my own NDP government kept my daughter home sit down with subjects frustrated and within minutes, he could give me a work. [Applause].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Sir, could you give them your greetings now and ...

**HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE:** So the budget is a lot of reason why, Mr. Speaker, why more NDP people are going to shift from NDP to ULP and we welcome them with open arms.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is reasonable before I extend greetings to congratulate Dr. Kennedy Anthony and the anticipated victory in St. Lucia tonight. [Applause]. Today is election day, we know they are going to win. It does not look like the opposition is going to get more than two seats. And we want to embrace him and send our love to him and tell him that we still brothers in the Labour movement.

I want to wish the entire House greetings for Christmas. As somebody said you have already given us two Christmas present in the ULP. First you gave

us a change of government so that is the first Christmas present. [Applause]. And secondly, you gave us on top of all the work, a million dollars on the road that is the second Christmas present from the ULP. And as you know, there are others, and the barrels and the other things that coming up, reach out and touch. So Mr. Speaker, they have a lot of reasons to rejoice. I wish all the members of this House, our side, the other side, notwithstanding their delinquency to their responsibility. The Speaker, the Clerk, assistant, all the staff, stenographers, Sergeant- at-Arms, the Police, all the people that help to make our work so meaningful and positive over the last few months. To the constituency of West St. George, you know how it goes, I am here all the time, to the nation. I want you to continue to rally with the Unity Labour Party, this is your government, this is your Prime Minister, these are your representatives who stand to serve you all the time. I want to thank you for your indulgence Mr. Speaker, and wish this budget an easy passage through the House. [Applause].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Just a minute before you speak, could the members of the gallery please settle down, for me, the member is about to make his presentation so if you could be quiet I would be very much appreciative, thank you, very much.

**HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL:** I now rise to make my contribution to this budget debate. I rise, Mr. Speaker, to make my maiden speechs to express my support for the 2002 budget and to compliment the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Finance for putting together such an outstanding package.

Mr. Speaker, this budget is well articulated, and holds sounds practical measures which will meet the day to day needs, the demands of our people, but it is also an expression of our own vision for a brighter future, linked as it is to the practical considerations of our realities, be it nationally, regionally or internationally. We are all aware, Mr. Speaker, that over the last several years, the world economy has been severely battered. Right home here in St. Vincent we have seen a major down turn in the economy and have been giving at least every sector has been feeling the squeeze of the economy. Be that as it may, Mr. Speaker, I must commend the Prime Minister for his brave and courageous policies both regional, and international, I must commend him for those policies. I believe that St. Vincent and the Grenadines would now take its rightful place as a respected member of the brotherhood of nations. The foundation of which was laid while we were even in Opposition, and the structures which are now being built. Mr. Speaker, what a start it has been for us for us in the ULP administration.

Mr. Speaker, quite like so many of our achievements in this our in augural year. The work in the field of foreign affairs have been phenomenal and for that Mr. Speaker, I commend the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, and equally the Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Our country foreign policy is extremely outstanding and is of high regard. Mr. Speaker, this budget is one I considered multi faceted. It provides an integrated balanced set to meet the physical, economic, social and cultural needs of the society in general and it is a poor people's budget. The marriage of meeting the needs of the national agenda and that of the various constituencies under one hand, and on the other, that of the aged, the youth, the children, the families, the business sector, all Mr. Speaker, is highly commendable.

Mr. Speaker, for the rest of my contribution to this budgetary debate I would like to look on the Estimates before us, and then I would like to move on to the Ministry of Agriculture, the state of the agricultural sector and the task that is before us which my colleague and I would have to undertake and then Mr. Speaker, I would like to move on to some constituency matters.

Mr. Speaker, the 2002 Estimates is made up of some \$419,545,820.00 with recurrent revenue at approximately, \$310,075,730.00, on the capital side of some \$109,470,090.00. Mr. Speaker, when I look back at the 2001 Estimates I see a figure of \$437,708,513.00 a shortfall of this year by approximately \$18.1 million. What is significant, Mr. Speaker, of this budget is that, it is not padded. It is a practical budget, Mr. Speaker, indicating the realities, what can be realized for the year 2002. I recall, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition, he harped very much in terms of questioning the shortfall in terms of the revenue of some \$30 million, and that where would this money come from. I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that since we came to office, in April, nowhere in the 2001 Estimates did you find \$5 million to be spent on school repairs, indeed this was not budgeted for, Mr. Speaker. Nowhere did you find \$2 million to pay estate workers, to at least correct a historic wrong, this money was not budgeted for. Nowhere, Mr. Speaker, \$1 million was allocated in the 2001 Estimates for Christmas work. The people of this country would now see \$1 million to have work for Christmas.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that even though those monies are not within and cannot be seen within the recurrent account, Mr. Speaker, it is under good management of the economy is what is important, and if monies are required for any meaningful projects, I am sure that under the guard, and the capable hands of the Prime Minister, I am sure that monies would be found to have these projects done and to make them realities, Mr. Speaker.

I also, want to commend the Prime Minister for placing for the first time, within a budget before this Parliament, monies, a sum of \$250,000.00 which has been allocated for poverty alleviation. Mr. Speaker, this sum would be further be supported by a sum of \$10 million by STABEX, and I am pleased, Mr. Speaker, of such an intervention into this budgetary allocation for I know, the situation. I know the concern of the people of the constituents of North Windward, and when I come to deal with North Windward, I will deal for specifically in that regard.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to turn more specifically to agriculture, and when I look at the 2002 allocations, I see a sum of \$24.4 million, Mr. Speaker, I look back at the 2001 budgetary allocations and I see a sum of \$23.3 million. For the year 2002 the sum of 24.4 million is allocated where \$10.6 million is allocated to the recurrent side where \$13.8 million is allocated to the capital side. But what I want to say here Mr. Speaker, is that despite the fact that in 2002 where the budgetary allocations, are some 18 million lower, Mr. Speaker, much more monies have been allocated to the Ministry of Agriculture and I think, this is a good sign for an improvement in the agricultural sector.

Mr. Speaker, I sat here during the budgetary debate and I listened to some comments, criticisms expressed on the opposite side, but Mr. Speaker, when it comes to agriculture in this country of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the members oppose should never utter a word in agriculture, the should hang their heads down in shame. It is said as I recall, when I used to be going to Sunday school, it is said that the sins of the father will visit the children unto the third and fourth generation, and I know the members opposite sir, the sins will be visited, sir, because they in no uncertain terms, Mr. Speaker, they have not ....

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Why are you on your feet, Senator Leacock?

**HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL:** .. in terms of any accreditation to agriculture in this country.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Why are you on your feet Sir?

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK:** Mr. Speaker, section ...

**HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL:** Mr. Speaker, I would...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Just a second, just a second. If you are rising to a Point of Order, you would so state immediately, as you get on your feet, but if you are standing there I would not know exactly why you are rising so, could you please state your Point of Order, sir.

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK:** Mr. Speaker, the Point of Order is that the Rules of the House state that the manner of speaking, Section 33(8)not 33(8), sorry, that the language in the House should not be insulting to other members, and I think the reference of sins of others visiting on members of the House in particular.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You could sit sir. Are you finished with your Point of Order, sir?

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK:** That's the point I want to make sir about the insulting language.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Well, I think I am very sensitive to languages that are being used in this House, and as you may have heard earlier I cautioned a member, as a matter of fact, questioned him as to whether a certain statement he made would have been insulting or offensive and you would have heard the explanation to that, honestly speaking, I do not consider the language used by the member as being insulting and offensive. I think it is more a matter of an expression. I have heard more words or language used that could have been challenged and left unchallenged. I really do not think that you should be offended by that language. I guess it is a matter of statement. [Applause].

**HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL:** Thank you, very much Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when I used to go to Sunday School I learnt a lot of biblical expressions and if members opposite have not learnt those kinds of expressions, they have not gone to Sunday School, maybe they went to Monday school. [Applause].

Mr. Speaker, I would like to urge members opposite to study the history of the performance of the agricultural sector within the last 17 years. It is only then they would realize why they should not say anything in terms of agriculture. They need to understand, Mr. Speaker, the many wrongs, and hardships they would have created in the rural areas which would have affected many lives of the rural poor. Mr. Speaker, by the time I am finished, they may be abreast of some of the facts.

Mr. Speaker, the state of the agricultural sector. The agricultural sector of any economy possessed a natural cycle through which it normally moves and impacts the society. The various stages or phases are the periods of prosperity, crisis, recession or depression. For us on this side, Mr. Speaker, we remember the good times, we remember the good times of economic prosperity under the Labour Party administration up until the 1980's, but at last Mr. Speaker, within the last 17 years the NDP has witnessed a retreat from prosperity to poverty, as the NDP lacked management of this sector and by extension the economy and the socio economic conditions of thousands of our people into a state of depression.

In so doing, Mr. Speaker, I would like to make reference to the contribution to the agriculture, the contribution of the GDP of agriculture from 1990 to 1999, within the last 10 years. Mr. Speaker, in 1990 the GDP contribution was 21.2. In 1991, 18.6, in 1992, 19.4; in 1993, 14.9; in 1994, 11.4; in 1995, 14.1, in 1996, 12.5; in 1997, 10.1; in 1998, 10.8; in 1999, 10.4. Mr. Speaker, these figures stand out for themselves. We all know, Mr. Speaker, that the backbone of this economy of this country have been on agriculture.

The agricultural sector has carried this country for many, many years, but despite the fact that tourism is on the upswing and some 200 or so million dollars is in circulation in the country we know for a fact, that when there is a decline in the agricultural sector the business community feels it. And no doubt Mr. Speaker, from the 1990's up until today we have seen a tremendous decline, both in the agricultural sector and the business sector.

Let me deal a little bit here with diversification Mr. Speaker. For many years the NDP administration has been talking about diversification. But where is the revelation, where is there proof that they have been involved in diversification? Mr. Speaker, in 1984 when the NDP administration came to office there was a well diversified agricultural sector. There were bananas, there was sugar cane, there was arrowroot, there were plantains, root crops, including dasheen, eddoes, sweet potatoes, ginger, there were coconuts, there were vegetables, including carrots, where we used to be shipping to Trinidad and there was a healthy livestock industry.

Mr. Speaker, there was also the intervention of the Chinese Technical Mission, where the Chinese were now transferring their technology to this country and the Chinese would have started with a vegetable, an exotic crop known as asparagus, a crop that would have yielded on the external market up to \$12 and \$14 per pound. Where is all of this today, Mr. Speaker? Where is all of that? I am sure the members opposite have a conscience but they only want

to be mischievous. The Marketing Board was in existence, Mr. Speaker; the Marketing Board it bought the farmers produce. What has happened since the last 17 years.

The Diamond Dairy, Mr. Speaker, which was placed under operation back in 1979, the Diamond Dairy was part of the diversification process. Milk was produced at the Diamond Dairy, where is the Diamond Dairy today? The Orange Hill Estate, Mr. Speaker, at that time, operated under the Baernards, at that time Mr. Speaker, was one of the most diversified estate in the Caribbean, there is no doubt about that. And as I recall, Mr. Speaker, that holding would have employed approximately 500 persons. Today it is no longer so. Under the management of that holding Mr. Speaker, there was bananas. There was sugar cane, there were root crops, and there were vegetables. The largest coconut estate in the Caribbean was found there, Mr. Speaker. There were other tree crops, and there was a robust livestock, industry there. Where is all of this today, Mr. Speaker? Yet, Members Opposite are talking about agriculture. Well, I am here to refresh their memories, Mr. Speaker, I am here to refresh the memories of members opposite. And while I do so, Mr. Speaker, their conscience will be their guide.

Mr. Speaker, from a table I have before me, let me indicate a few things here, Mr. Speaker. In 1986, bananas exported was approximately \$52.4 million. By 1990, bananas exported was approximately \$120 million. However, by 1997, 1998 \$38.9 million. Eddoes and dasheen in 1986, we produced and exported \$31.6 million worth. By 1990, we were producing \$5.5 million. By 1997, 1998, Mr. Speaker, we are down to \$4.6 million dollars. Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, looking at this other area, plantains, in 1986 brought \$4.6 million to this country. By 1990, it brought \$1.0 million, by 1997, '98 Mr. Speaker, it was down to \$0.4 million Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, sweet potatoes from 1996 brought in \$15.4 million. By 1990 sweet potatoes went to \$3.7 million, by 1997, '98 Mr. Speaker, potatoes would have brought in \$1.3 million, and this is the trend that has been going on under the NDP administration, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we must remember that the production and export of agriculture commodity, with bananas as the principal crop has long been the main economic activity of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. That has been the principal source of employment; it has been the principal source of income of foreign exchange, and Mr. Speaker of government revenue. Thus, the principal determinant of progress of this agricultural sector, and by extension the economy would have depended heavily on agriculture.

However, Mr. Speaker, I must concede that the protected market conditions that existed particularly under the bananas industry such conditions changed. Such conditions would have changed Mr. Speaker, with the changes associated with the globalization and the free trade that came upon us. I must also concede, Mr. Speaker, that the market changed within the region, particularly in Trinidad, particularly where the impact of the mealy bug was identified, this would have caused some problems.

Mr. Speaker, I recall back in 1994, attending a workshop at the Jaycees Complex where workers of the Ministry of Agriculture were seen cutting down the hedges at the Jaycees Complex and I went and made my own personal observations and saw what it was and having asked the question what is the reason for the actions taken, and I was told it was a general cleaning. But I am an agriculturist by profession and I made my observations and confirmed by observations with other individuals who had similar training and it was confirmed that mealy bug was the problem. And despite the fact that the Ministry knew that the problem was a serious one, they had to take a position that was ordered by the then administration. I knew for sure that the public servants who would have been working and had the responsibility at that time, they were very much concerned but they had to be operating under strict orders.

Mr. Speaker, if only that the Ministry would have taken control when the mealy bug situation broke out, the agricultural sector would have been much better today. But, Mr. Speaker, really who was responsible I wish to say, that the quality of Ministers who would have been assigned to the Ministry during the period was certainly not the kind that a caring government would give to such an important assignment.

The choice of ministers suggested two things Mr. Speaker, one, that the NDP administration did not know that they were in a period of crisis and rapid negative change or, if they knew they just did not care. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to say, that the period showed one of poor management, poor management of the agricultural sector, the agricultural institutions such as the Marketing Corporation, the Arrowroot Association, the Development Corporation and even the St. Vincent Marketing Association. In addition, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture, with its highly trained staff was allowed to drift without specific focus and accountability. [Applause]. I recall the then Prime Minister Sir James making reference one time, indicating the position, that these qualified and learned gentlemen in the Ministry of Agriculture cannot even decorate a grave.

Mr. Speaker, I also looked at the amount of investment applied to this sector, I have seen none in living memory, and there was a total decline of the agro industrial areas. Mr. Speaker, there was dramatic loss of agricultural lands. There was a high deforestation that was done within the forested areas. Praedial larceny was on the rise. There was a total cession of agricultural education in the primary schools. What more can you say, Mr. Speaker. There was even squatting on school premises, that was put aside for school gardens, and where agriculture could have been taught as an agricultural science.

Mr. Speaker, there was wanton loss of agricultural lands from 1985 to 2001. There was a loss of from 29,000 acres, we have reached 17,700 acres, Mr. Speaker. In 15 years there is a loss of some 12,000 acres in this country. A very small country like this. And we know, Mr. Speaker, in the Ministry of agriculture where it takes just one minute to lose one inch of soil, it takes 1000 years to build one inch of soil, how long would it take us to get back just one acre of the 1200 acres we have lost within the 15 years. Mr. Speaker, I am not sure, if there are laws in this country to deal with this situation, but I consider this one that is very grave. If we continue in this trend, Mr. Speaker, in the next 15 years we will lose another 1200 acres, and by the end of the year 2011 we would be in serious trouble Mr. Speaker, but the almighty is not asleep, and the almighty would have guided the hands of the people of this country to make a change on the 28<sup>th</sup> of March and to put the country back in the hands of capable people.

Mr. Speaker, the agricultural sector could not go on in this regard. Productivity was at its lowest, therefore, Mr. Speaker, I cannot see where Members on the Opposite side would be boasting about agriculture I really do not see, Mr. Speaker.

I want to turn to bananas. Mr. Speaker, for over 50 years the banana industry has served us true and well, but within recent times due to the effect of globalization and trade liberalization, this has changed the face of the banana industry completely. But how was this transition period managed, who had the opportunity to manage this transition, this is a point which we should never forget, Mr. Speaker. How was the transition period managed and who managed it.

I recalled, as a member of staff in the Ministry of Agriculture back in 1985 a communiqué that came from the British Government indicating to the Ministry what would have been taking place in Europe at the end of 1992 and Mr. Speaker, for seven long years it was business as usual. In the year of

1992 all we had is that the then Prime Minister begging for mercy, forgetting to put practical measures on the ground to take care of this very important banana industry, all though the data has shown that after 1975 when the lands went out of sugar cane and were planted in bananas production rose and rose steadily.

However, the data also showed Mr. Speaker, that after 1992, 1993 by then there was a constant decline in the banana production. The NDP administration was in office Mr. Speaker, and they had all the years to put the banana industry on a sound footing, much more Mr. Speaker, I made reference of the export in bananas by 1990. And Mr. Speaker, by 1991 the accounts of the Banana Association was showing \$20 million surplus. By the end of 1992, there was a \$20 million deficit. What guidance was given to the banana industry during this period. A time when the banana industry had money that could have taken care of what would have been happening come 1993, 1994 and there on. There was even no need for government to go into the consolidated fund at that time, the banana industry was on sound footing.

Mr. Speaker, by 1993 the farmers lost confidence in the industry. By 2001 a member opposite, Senator Leacock, is asking the ULP Government in its first budget where is the elbowroom for the bananas farmers of this country. Mr. Speaker, is it that it is only now vision comes to the NDP? I regret to say but to train a horse you have to put something on, a blind. Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure that agricultural sector where the banana industry would have played such a vital role, that the people responsible, the government responsible should have played a much more meaningful role. Should have played a much more mature and responsible role to ensure the survival of the banana industry. I wonder sometimes when the questions are asked if the people are in their right mind.

Mr. Speaker, 1990, 1991, '92 were critical years of the banana industry. What have we seen over \$200 million dollars going to Ottley Hall; \$158 million going to the Bequia airport. \$109 million going to Union Island airport; over \$50 million for the ferry berth. How much at that time did the NDP administration put in bananas? There is when you could have offered your elbowroom.

Mr. Speaker, I recall in 1993 when things were getting worse and worse in the banana industry being a member of the senior staff and Mr. Simeon Greene acting as the general manager came to his senior staff, in great despair asking his senior staff to try and get something in place to try and save the banana industry. And we did work and we came up with a programme, Mr. Speaker, and having come up with that programme, Mr. Speaker, we sought financial

assistance from the institution we were doing business with, fertilizer companies, et cetera, we sought financial assistance, there was none coming. We sought financial assistance from the Government. At first it was thrown out of the window by then we were able to make some contacts and through STABEX we were able to get some funding. At that time I must say, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition who was at that time special advisor on bananas took our programme and went on radio along with the Prime Minister then, and with the Prime Minister indicated that the saviour of bananas was here.

From then Mr. Speaker, we have not seen anything out of the saviour that came at that time. In 1994 when the elections were called the Honourable Vincent Beache in Opposition at that time sought to have \$16 million ploughed into the banana industry, it was said no, so while we have millions being spent on other capital projects we cannot and could not have the assistance through the then government. There was a further call Mr. Speaker, for assistance but it was a call in vain.

Mr. Speaker, the farmers in 1992 saw what was happening and asked the then Government and asked if they could start a bank of their own so that they could increase in their business this was not given to the farmers, Mr. Speaker, therefore, it saddens me to hear questions of such coming from the opposite side. I am saying sir, for 17 years you had the opportunity to shape the industry and to give it the elbowroom that you are asking for, you had that sir and you throw it away. You have never done anything. Apparently, you did not know what to do, and no wonder the Opposition walked out of the House last week because, they were never prepared, so they came to the House last week not prepared to debate the Estimate and then walked out of the House and then cried foul play. Mr. Speaker, now the banana industry, owes some \$32 million. They cannot even buy inputs. They cannot even buy Diotine. The farmers are suffering. The Prime Minister continues on a weekly basis to get clearance from the NCB to pay the banana farmers of this country and this cannot continue, therefore, Mr. Speaker, restructuring is necessary. In addition, whether or not you like it sir, the banana industry has to be restructured; it cannot be business as usual.

We have had several consultations and the farmers understand what is happening. We have even come to this Parliament and changed the act to give the elbowroom to the industry so that the industry can prosper, at the end of it Mr. Speaker, we want to see the industry commercialized. The farmers within the industry should be able to reap all the benefits from the efforts that

you put into the business. It is time enough we cut out the middlemen and give the extra dollar to banana farmers.

Mr. Speaker, ....

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You have 15 minutes to complete your presentation.

**HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL:** Mr. Speaker, thank you very much, there is so much to say, Mr. Speaker, but time is of the essence. I want to say Mr. Speaker, that WIBDECO would be restructured. WIBDECO is part of the developmental process. In addition, when I look at some of the accounts of WIBDECO they too would have to restructure some of their business.

Looking at the accounts of the BGA from 1991 to 1998 it has been on average sir, \$2 million on its operating expenses. WIBDECO, Mr. Speaker, on its 2001 budget Mr. Speaker, have indicated its position here that its total operational cost stands out about \$7.5 million. It is broken down into three different areas, Mr. Speaker. West Indies WIBDECO, its taking up \$3.9 million and there are some 27 persons working there Mr. Speaker. UK in its technical operations is spending for this year \$2.6 million with some 12 persons working. UK administration, Mr. Speaker, is spending \$2.8 million with some eight persons working. Moreover, the Sales and Marketing Department would be spending \$2.3 million, Mr. Speaker, with some five persons working. Mr. Speaker, WIBDECO unit would have to have some serious restructuring, and there is no doubt about that. However, the facts would be revealed as time goes on.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to turn to my constituency. First of all Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the constituents of North Windward for electing me into this very high office.

Mr. Speaker, of course over the years I have tried and I have made it at last but it is with perseverance, it is with hard work, and with the commitment of the people that we have made it after a period of years. Mr. Speaker, just like at the national level the people of North Windward is in transition from Opposition to Government and from our election manifesto and platform promises we have organized constituency programmes and projects that would assist us in North Windward.

Mr. Speaker, the North Windward constituency was the most neglected constituency that I considered within the last several years. I would hasten to

say this would not be the case in this new government. And our constituency expects great achievements in a short space of time, because they have been suffering for many years. But despite its considerable endowment, its natural assets there is a robust, healthy and hardworking, resilient population that is found within the North Windward constituency. Its people are regarded as the poorest in this country. It has the highest poverty levels that have existed. Unemployment, teenage pregnancy, drug abuse, absence of secondary school education, poor health, poor housing, all of these are serious problems and need immediate redress.

Over the years, investment in the development of the human and social and physical assets of the area had been minimal, and the most basic. Consequently, Mr. Speaker, the people were without the institutional human capacity to adequately respond to the changes brought on by the persistent decline in competitiveness of the commodities and the systems particularly within agriculture, which was allowed to become the principal economic activity in that area.

Mr. Speaker, the aim of this programme is to improve and to have sustainable income and an improved quality of life for the people of that constituency through a programme, which we have put together within the last couple of months. Mr. Speaker, first of all one, the opportunity for secondary school education. The Minister of Education in his address indicated a while ago what is perceived to be in terms of secondary school education for North Windward. Since we came to office I have been having constant discussion with the Minister to ensure that we are afforded that kind of facility in that area, after all Mr. Speaker, it is said because of the demographics that there is not enough persons to fill a secondary school.

However, Mr. Speaker, we have to look at the practical side of things. It is the poorest area, Mr. Speaker, and sometimes some parents cannot even send their children even as near as Georgetown and we have to take that into consideration, Mr. Speaker.

The Rabacca River, Mr. Speaker, is also another factor, it is a barrier to us and when there are heavy rains, we have to be standing on each side, watching one another. These are factors of concern. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, there is the urgency for secondary education above the river.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of sustainable employment and income for the area, Mr. Speaker, I have had total commitment of my government for the reviving of the arrowroot industry. I would have had several meetings with the farmers, with

the management of the association, and all those who are concerned in terms of improving and revitalizing that very important industry in that area.

Mr. Speaker, the cost that is being paid for their harvest is very poor. There have been some discussions and we are moving the price this year from 23 cents to 25 cents per pound. However, I wish to say, Mr. Speaker, that despite all of our efforts since we came into government, I want to let the country know about the situation that exists at the St. Vincent Arrowroot Association. As you would recall Mr. Speaker, March 27<sup>th</sup> of this year, the assets of the Arrowroot industry was sold. The NIS bought the industry, Mr. Speaker, therefore there is no office anymore in Kingstown. The office has to be relocated the equipment and other machines have to be removed and quickly, Mr. Speaker.

Now, the arrowroot farmers of this country are seeking a home. While the arrowroot industry had owed some \$15.9 million to the National Commercial Bank, the National Insurance Scheme bought that building for \$11.4 million and there was a write off some \$4.5 million, but as a caring government, Mr. Speaker, we would be housing the arrowroot farmers of this country.

Mr. Speaker, we will be building a new and modernized factory for the arrowroot farmers of this country at Orange Hill. We have found somewhere for them to go. We would also be placing the office at Orange Hill, at the moment serious consideration is being given to putting the Pulverizing plant there as well. It is believed that we should have all the operations for easy control.

Mr. Speaker, this government in its early days has also established a comprehensive commercial drive on the acreage of the arrowroot industry. In the next five years, we are targeting 1,000 acres in arrowroot production. Presently, there is approximately 200 acres in, but this is not enough for any good business.

Mr. Speaker, the main roads that service the major arrowroot belt, these roads will be looked at come next year. The Prime Minister has already mentioned that work would be starting in January on the Old Sandy Bay village road. Work would be done on the London Jack road, and the Rowre Mountain road.

Mr. Speaker, the workers, the farmers, in the arrowroot industry have toiled hard over the years and have not been recognized. I am pleased to say, Mr. Speaker, that this government at the end of this crop year, a harvest festival would be put in place to recognize the hard working farmers, and the

labourers that are involved in this back breaking exercise. Mr. Speaker, the details are now being worked out between the Ministry of Agriculture and the management of the arrowroot association.

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, I have been having discussions with certain institutions to establish to the Arrowroot Association two scholarships at the secondary level for school children of the arrowroot farmer, Mr. Speaker. For too long our farmers have been suffering, and I am working hard on this Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, to further ensure government's recognition and full support of this industry, plans are being put in place to have a first day celebration of the opening of the harvesting of this crop. That is when the first crop is going to be harvested API, the Agency for Public Information with the Ministry of Agriculture and with the arrowroot industry would be in the fields of the farmers who would be breaking their fields for the first time, so that the importance of the crop will come alive in this country. It is important, Mr. Speaker, that we recognize the hard work of our farmers who have been in the arrowroot industry for many years.

We would be looking at, Mr. Speaker, other crops. We would be looking at cassava. We would be looking at farine, which is very important to that area. Farine has been a very high fibred food, and it has been in high demand and already through the assistance of FAO we will be setting up a plant very early at Orange Hill. This again would be assisting in terms of giving sustainable income to our farmers, to the people of that area Mr. Speaker.

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, there are other areas that we would be going into, the coconut industry as you know, has been an area that has been of concern to us in that part. The NDP administration has killed coconut industry and we want to see that industry revived. We want to go into some non traditional fruits, Mr. Speaker, which would include fruits, like pineapple, wax apple, Indian Jujube. We want to look at organic husbandry to sustain the farming community there as well, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member can I ask you to round up now? You have encroached on your time.

**HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL:** Mr. Speaker, there is so much that I want to put in Mr. Speaker, but just to say another area of concern is the Rabbacca area which has been giving us some trouble for some time. Mr. Speaker, Rabbacca has been an area of concern. There are mining operations

that has been done there over the years and the way the operations have been done is of concern to us. We want to be involved in changing the attitude of what is happening there, Mr. Speaker. We want our people to be involved, the people who are using the facility to have some concern for the people who are living North of the river so that we too can have ease of accessing the Northern and Southern areas.

Mr. Speaker, for just eight months we have been in office, we have achieved a lot but I want to on rounding up, express my gratitude and thanks to all the farmers, to all the staff in the Ministry of Agriculture, to all that statutory boards, including the St. Vincent Marketing Corporation, the St. Vincent Banana Growers Association, the Arrowroot Association, the hotels, the restaurants that are very much involved in using agricultural products. To the exporters, to the Development Bank and National Commercial Bank and all others who are involved in agriculture in this country, I want to wish them all the best.

I want, on behalf of the constituency of North Windward wish you a Merry Christmas. To all us on this side, to members on the opposite side, to the hard working staff of this Honourable House, including the Sergeant-at-Arms. To the constituents of North Windward, to the people of Fancy, Owia, Point, Sion Hill, Sandy Bay, London, Magum, Overland, Orange Hill, Langley Park, Mt. Bentick, Dickson, Basin Hole, Trotmans, I want to wish all of you a Merry Christmas.

I know, Mr. Speaker, that we have done our best since we are here, we have offered as much as we can, including \$2 million dollars to the estate workers. Mr. Speaker, I just want thank you again, I want to thank the Honourable Prime Minister for the confidence he has placed in the Ministry of Agriculture and I want to wish him the best in the Ministry of Agriculture.

Mr. Speaker, let me once again thank you very much, I wish this budget an easy passage through this Honourable House. Thank you, very much.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Mr. Speaker, I rise now to give full support to budget 2002. But, Mr. Speaker, before I do so I want to use the words from the Good Book and one of those words which I love to use is remember. I remember Mr. Speaker, that while we sat in the Opposition, the Now Leader of the Opposition point to our team and said all you would sit down over there for the next five years. However, Mr. Speaker, thanks be to God we are here. [Applause]. Mr. Speaker, we are here because we are a team that looked with both eyes. We looked at what was happening in our country, we heard the

cries of our people and we did not only look and hear but we took action. And Mr. Speaker, it was not only our team but many Vincentians who understood what we were saying, they joined with us in the streets and we were there to sound the clarion call for change. [Applause]. We need to have a better way, a better way of living in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, I remember we march around this town four times, and we marched with sounds of praise, and what criticisms could not do prayers did it. And I am happy to say, Mr. Speaker, that it is marvelous what praises can do. [Applause]. We marched because we knew that we of ourselves would not have been able to make it. And we came with confidence before the God on whom we must depend, no matter how much money we have to spend we have to depend on him for fair whether, to spare us from the ravishes of hurricane, we had to depend upon him to send his Spirit upon our land, that our land could be healed and that there could be a different way of taking care of his people. And thanks be to God he answers prayers. And he will continue to answer our prayers .

Mr. Speaker, I would have read of many idioms, and I want to quote one at this time and it says:

**“It is not the load that breaks you down it is the way that you carry it.”**

Mr. Speaker, I can remember once we had the people’s parliament in the yard, and our people came out in solidarity. I remember I stood in the courtyard and I asked the God of Heaven to strengthen us and to direct us, we did not do it in our own strength.

Mr. Speaker, I remember that morning, what is now called the road block, we were there and we were saying to the nation that we need to stand up and we need to stand as a united force. [Applause]. Mr. Speaker, the telephone was always going, and thanks be to God for those who prayed that there was a team on the ground interceding to God, Lord let your will be done in this country. [Applause]. So much so that as forklifts came to scare us away, a certain policeman came and even tried to abuse our leader that he was able to say prayers and all was well for the day. Some parents called and one of them called with tears in her eyes do what you can for us, what is going to happen to children and I said do not be afraid because we are going to win. [Applause]. We are going to win that battle.

Mr. Speaker, I cannot forget that as I worked in one of the schools in Kingstown I stood for the right. Because some people in our country feel that

might is right. Mr. Speaker, I headed a school that had 1064, and sometime heart went out as people came and asked, can you help my child, but I could not do the impossible. Many understood, but Mr. Speaker, the case in question is where one was brought down from Fancy and put to sit in a classroom because she was a supporter of the NDP. Mr. Speaker, it cannot work, it has never worked and it will not work. [Applause]. And even in the Ministry of Education which was our parent body we should really stand up and say look, here is a story and it has more than one side, let me find out from the principal what the problem is. The education officer who had long left our shores, and went and had already adopted another culture, was trying to scare this humble servant. But I will not be scared when I am right, and so Mr. Speaker, I had to stand up and let him know that when that child vomited the teachers had to clean, when that child would have mess her pants the teachers had to clean. If anything has to happen to her, the teachers are responsible why not have some respect. Have some respect for the staff, do not do it because of your political party, and then I had my Ministry, my parent body supporting that, never. And I trust that nobody now, that no head teacher would sit down and have that no education officer, or whoever would uphold that because it is not right.

Mr. Speaker, if we are to move on and we must show that we are people of integrity and people of goodwill and people who are educated we must show that we are a no nonsense people, we must be honest in the things we do. I also remember another education officer coming to the school and asking me, how long you are here, I said nine years, you live here, Mr. Speaker, imagine me a Vincentian woman. I started to teach from the age of 17, and I stuck to the guns and I never let up. I have taught in different parts of the country but an education officer who went abroad and was put in that high seat wanted to come and talk down to me, never, no it must not happen. And so he said to me, give me the key. And on Monday, morning I said, sure sir, because many a time, and God bless my husband, many a times he would come and pick me up, and I would be there doing the books, Mr. Speaker, only to make sure that I was free the next day to carry on the next days work.

Mr. Speaker, I was asked to go another school and I said fine, because I would be dealing with children. And Mr. Speaker, I am remembering because I know the hand of God is in all of this. Mr. Speaker, as I went to take up the new position in that school, I compared and I contrasted the workings within those schools. I moved from a school where you would see a child with what you called a big sixteen at break time and a roti. Mr. Speaker, I went to an area where there was more poverty. I went to an area that welcome me, and where I could leave the school compound and go into the village and go into the

homes and reason with the parents. There were times when I got a jeep, brought foodstuff down, and give other children. And thanks be to God. And one day I was looking at some children who were asthmatic and Mr. Speaker, I wondered how long because the yard was too dusty, and so I called the community of Sion Hill, and we were there working under floodlights until 9:00 p.m. trying to pave the yard to help the children. And then a politician moved in with a bottle of rum. I do not know who he was giving a bottle of rum. I know I cannot do my work on a bottle of rum, because I know the God I serve do not want any tumbling down and so Mr. Speaker, he came with two men, and when the sun was too hot he left me to do my work.

Mr. Speaker, I continue the work, and one thing that really moved me off my feet that I could be here to take part in this budget debate, is because a child during prayer time vomited water, plain water and I asked what is the matter and she said Miss I had nothing to eat. And I sent to call the parent and when the parent came I asked what did you give your child this morning to eat and she said I am telling you the truth, I had nothing to give to this child, I boiled some water and I left it to cool to take the flame off her chest. Mr. Speaker, it is a long time I did not hear that. I used to hear my grandmother speak that way, but I did not hear it in a long time, and Mr. Speaker, I went before the God I serve and I said Lord you are speaking, and these overtones are loud, Lord what are you saying to me? After 30 years in the classroom, what are you saying to me? And then it was the convenient time to call the elections. Mr. Speaker, I could not within 21 days, win an incumbent, who was I to do that. But I here today, and I give God praise. [Applause]. And I give God thanks for his team on this side. I give God thanks for Honourable Prime Minister Gonsalves. [Applause].

Prime Minister Gonsalves I want to let you know that as I listened the excellent way in which you gave your budget address, I know you have the mark of excellence from above. [Applause]. I want to encourage you and to let you know that there is a team of men and women on the ground who are your back up, lifting you up before the throne of grace, because in your weakness, you need the protection and the strength of God, so I am asking you on behalf of the resident of Marriacqua to continue. Plan purposely, prepare your work prayerfully, proceed positively, and fulfill your work persistently. [Applause].

Mr. Speaker, the budget before us speaks of full \$419.5 million, the recurrent expenditure \$309.7 million, the capital expenditure \$109.8 million. Mr. Speaker, there are many of our people out there who do not even understand the word budget and I say this to you in all humility. Because I have been involved in financial counseling for many years, and I want to remind us that

a budget is a statement of the cost of doing work. On Wednesday, last Honourable Prime Minister presented budgetary measures 2002, and excellent budget, compassionate towards the poor. Mr. Speaker, I listened to Honourable Members on the opposite side and I heard some adjectives of convenience being uttered. I want to say here and now, Mr. Speaker, what the budget is not. The budget is not a list of wishes. The budget is not padded with unrealistic figures, it is not economically flawed as the Leader of the Opposition quoted. Mr. Speaker, it is not saddled by mascara, Mr. Speaker, it is not a bikini budget. Mr. Speaker, when we came into office we remember our promises to the people of this country. We presented a manifesto to our people and our people at the polls said go on ULP we are following you, because we have seen that you have not hide it from us, it is before us.

Mr. Speaker, only to mention of our top ten policies.

1. Making job creation, especially quality jobs; and sustainable economic development our main priority.
2. Building a top class educational system for living and production in the new century.
3. Modernizing and reforming Government to better and more effectively deliver all services provided by Government.
4. Launching a war on poverty, illiteracy, inadequate housing disease, poor health and an unhealthy environment.

Mr. Speaker, the budget speaks of daycare, and centre for the aged. It talks about the restructuring of the banana industry. It speaks of 1,000 low income housing in 2002. The budget tells of the credit unions that have been contacted so they too can be involved in the building of these homes. The budget speaks of material assistance and repairs for them. Mr. Speaker, it is a people's budget. [Applause]. It is an excellent budget. Because when a government can think of people then the government is on the right tract.

Mr. Speaker, overall I would say again the budget is geared to alleviate poverty. And if I should take up that last word, Mr. Speaker, poverty, and what it means, poverty is lack of what is needed. Poverty is not having enough for the necessities of life. Mr. Speaker, our Prime Minister engaged the senior civil servants in the various ministries, time lines were given, Mr. Speaker. We met from time to time and all ministers and everyone came together so that each ministry knew what the other was planning. Mr.

Speaker, the exercise was a wonderful one. And at this point in time, I want to congratulate all the civil servants who work so that we could come up with ideas and programmes that we can go forward with in the year 2002. [Applause].

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the ministry in which I work have had a change in nomenclature. It was moved from Housing and Community Development to Social Development, the Family, Gender, Cooperatives and Ecclesiastical Affairs. Mr. Speaker, there is a lot of work to do in that ministry, but on taking office Mr. Speaker, it was not easy. Because there were 13 persons within that ministry who did not remember what had happened on March 28<sup>th</sup>, and so they wanted to say to you, all you win but we run things. But you see Mr. Speaker, a leader has to be a leader. You have to know your situation and you have to take charge of the mandate that your people would have given to you. And so in our ministry we tried, but there was one person who said that the 100 Days Programme was a political thing. And Mr. Speaker, I could not understand, I think I have a fair knowledge of syntax. But I could not understand the statement, because if what was on the books was put there by politicians, so indeed it is political, and this is the way to which you come to make the decision. Therefore, I could not understand. And this went forward for time and after a while I could not take it, and so I had to take charge of the ministry. [Applause].

Mr. Speaker, we started with the restructuring of the public assistance programme. In our campaign, Mr. Speaker, we tried to bring to the fore maladies within that programme. Mr. Speaker, we went through the books and we tried to look at the times of birth and deaths, and I would have in this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, let this House know how many persons were collecting monies in the names of dead people. In my own constituency, Mr. Speaker, there was this particular lady that collected this public assistance for 17 long years. And she also was getting. Mr. Speaker, it really pained my heart to know that there were persons in the system who even though their names were on the books they did not receive that money because other persons capitalized on it. And so, Mr. Speaker, we thought we should have a restructuring done and that we would have to do things over in order to clean up that list and to make sure that the persons who deserved to be on that programme would be there.

Mr. Speaker, there is a propaganda machine on the ground which is unhealthy. And Mr. Speaker, it pains my heart that when we come into this Honourable House that we say a prayer. And that prayer reminds us that whatever we do it should be well done. But it seems at times that we are the

ones who are the instigators out there, because I do not understand, why this propaganda machine is always on the road telling so many lies. Mr. Speaker, on that first event that we speak up at the Ministry of Works it was the first time we were going into the restructuring. And I said I want to make sure that everybody who was in the Kingstown area that they get their public assistance. Those who cannot come, that we should just take their names and we would send them their monies. And the officers would go to their homes and we would register them there because we know that they could not come. But Mr. Speaker, do you know the message that was taken that everybody must come, and so I saw some people who can hardly go, and people were dragged to come down and receive that money. One of them said that I was there because I wanted to frighten the people, nonsense. I wanted to make sure that those who deserved got theirs. Mr. Speaker, thank God today that many persons who were left out they are indeed getting the assistance that is due to them.

Mr. Speaker, we then looked at the problems of the school children. We looked at having a crisis centre. I remembered when we were in opposition I got up and I said that this was needed, because of the problems that came to me. I remembered the then Attorney General said he did not see any need for that. Mr. Speaker, we did a review of the \$10 water meter. We did a restructuring of the Women's Affairs. We did a clean up of Kingstown, and new Kingstown Market. Mr. Speaker, the clean up of Kingstown is not easy. Mr. Speaker, over there in Little Tokyo was like a Sodom and Gomorrah where all kinds of things were taking place. You have persons with their buckets, within their little shacks where they were selling, they had their buckets there where they would stoop down there and put their urine. Many of them they put filth in bags and throw it in the drains. There were so many fights, Mr. Speaker. There were a lot of resistance but we persisted, and hence we had it cleaned up.

Mr. Speaker, the vending on the streets. The Permanent Secretary and myself, we walked through Middle Street and we spoke to persons on a one to one basis. Mr. Speaker, I said it before and I would say it again, that I am one of those persons who used to come to sell at the Market, because my parents were deeply into agriculture. And I know what our people are feeling. And our people need to understand that the ULP did not create this problem for them. We meet this market, and with this market we have a lot of problems. It is not the market that suits us, it is there, and we need to adjust ourselves. We need to make the market our own and even though things are hard we still have to keep on striving.

Mr. Speaker, I want to look at some of the things that we would have done. The Ministry of Social Development aimed at strengthening the capacity of all communities, and enhancing living conditions through deduction programmes. And through the family services department the following is a review for the year 2001 and our projections for the year 2002.

Public assistance, Mr. Speaker, to date there are 5,462 persons on the list for public assistance. The total monies spent as of October 31, was \$5,613,300.00. Mr. Speaker, in the family services assistance programme, the number of persons whom we assisted 2,865 persons and the total amount of monies spent \$231,555.29. In our Ministry, Mr. Speaker, we gave immediate and other assistance. And the number of persons assisted thus far, 502 persons, and the total amount of money spent, \$69, 903.01. Mr. Speaker, our ministry is a people's ministry. Regardless of who you are, or what is your condition our Ministry is here and ready to give a hand up; to give the assistance that is necessary.

We did not forget our school children because we want them to stay in school and to learn their lesson. And so we do not want to hear any parent say that my child cannot go to school because my child does not have a uniform. And so hand in hand with the Ministry of Education, we supplied uniforms for our children. We did it in partnership with the teachers in the classroom who would have to teach our children from day to day. And so we listened to them. For school supplies a number of persons assisted, the total amount \$16,586.91. For the school uniform we assisted 2,044 children. [Applause]. And the total amount spent \$102,335.36. A good number of persons would have lost their homes through fire, and one of the things that we always ask them to do is to make sure that the police is called in. To make sure that the police will help in order to get an estimate so that we can properly help those persons. And to date 71 persons would have lost their homes through fire and the total amount spent on those persons is \$43,460.00. We believe that food, clothing and shelter are basics needs to have; these are things of necessity.

Mr. Speaker, because of the fact that the NDP paid such scant attention to housing we have had to look for persons whose house were broken down and some of the floors you could not walk, Mr. Speaker, and so we assisted 1,947 persons. Spending an amount of \$960,808.31.

In the year 2002, Mr. Speaker, it is estimated that 6,000 persons would be assisted with the monthly public assistance. It is proposed that 100 elderly person would benefit from free transportation and another 60 would be assisted on the poor health programme. Mr. Speaker, there are many persons

out there who are lonely and what we have tried to do within our ministry is to set up workings in our community. The Lewis Punnet home is full. You cannot get any space there, therefore we are trying to encourage relatives to look after their brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers, while we try to improve their housing conditions.

The skills training and handicraft. The Ministry proposes to merge the handicraft and skills training division and in light of this proposal to construct a building at Frenches at the present location to house this institute. For too, long Mr. Speaker, we have been spending monies but we need to make sure that whatever the hands find to do that our young people, and our women can do with their might and so we will be able to get bread for their families. The present economic conditions make it imperative that our people develop skills. That would make them employable and self-sufficient by becoming entrepreneurs.

During the year, 365 persons benefited from ten training models and there are plans to train another 350 in the year 2002. [Applause].

Local government, Mr. Speaker. The Ministry will place greater emphasis on providing basic services to our communities throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines. We will continue programmes of infrastructural development and remains committed to enhancing our human resource. Therefore, in the Ministry of Social Development we will provide training in a number of specific areas for our clerks and assistant clerks given government support to widen the knowledge basis of all its citizens in this technological age.

We are committed to the reintroduction of participatory local government. And efforts will be made to devise a practical system by liaising with regional and international agencies.

Mr. Speaker, already we have begun to get papers. We got something from Calgut. We got something on a perspective of Caribbean local government. And we are trying our best. What exists in our communities today, Mr. Speaker, leaves much to be desired. Mr. Speaker, when I came into office I found out that there were persons who would go and do a piece of work without being told to do the work and they would tell the office how much they are charging to do the work. Nonsense, Mr. Speaker, it cannot work. And I want to let our people know that until things are different that any work that must be done within our constituencies that it must be ordered by clerk within the office. [Applause]. Order began in heaven. And accountability goes with responsibility.

In community development, Mr. Speaker, government intends to wage war on poverty, disease poor health and an unhealthy environment. The Ministry is embarking on a programme of improving toilet facilities. Mr. Speaker, currently it is alarming to know that there are so many persons without the proper units. As a survey by the Environmental Health Department revealed that approximately 888 premises nation wide are without any form of toilet facility. In the upcoming year, 222 homes will be provided with pit latrine units at a cost of \$222,000. [Applause]. This project will be done in collaboration with the environmental health Department.

Mr. Speaker, our Ministry continues on its drive to refurbish several community centres throughout the State. And to establish management committees to ensure that these centres remain in a useable state and are utilized for their intended purposes.

Mr. Speaker, if I should make mention of the one in Marriacqua. I remembered the poor people of Marriacqua working in the banana industry. Some of them could only give 60 cents out of the \$5.00 that they got for the week. There were a team of women, who cooked, and you had your team of workmen, they were led by the Honourable Levi Latham. And Mr. Speaker, when I look at the community centre today, my heart yearned, to know that was not built by government, it was built by self help. By the hardworking people of Marriacqua and yet it was left to become dilapidated. Mr. Speaker, woodlice is taking it over. We used to have our weddings there. We used to have our local talent shows. Mr. Speaker, it was such a vital building in our community. But then the New Democratic Party thought it wise to go into the bar where we sold our drinks to put decorated blocks and wanted to make it into a prison for prisoners and took our place to make a courtroom. Mr. Speaker, Marriacqua is big and we know that law and order must be maintained. But at the moment the station was transformed into dormitories upstairs and Sergeant office downstairs, so there is no place for a courtroom. And hence the reason why we are holding on for a while but at the moment Mr. Speaker, I am happy to let this Honourable House knows that I have already done an executive summary of multipurpose building that we are to put in that very courtyard.

Mr. Speaker, the Kingstown Town Board. During the year 2002 the Kingstown Town Board look forward to a rigid system of revenue collections with regards to shop rents, bank rates and property taxes. Mr. Speaker, sometimes when we listen on the airwaves and we hear the tales that are told, we wonder where these men get their facts. Some of these statements are already becoming a tower of Babel. We are hearing Babel sounds there and

we do not know what is the truth from what is the lie. Mr. Speaker, many of the shops there are closed. Persons did not pay since 1999. Some of them are taking the shops to be storerooms, while they are elsewhere selling. Within those shops, Mr. Speaker, we have rats that are so big that they resemble the maniocou. And wonders about the health of our people, when foodstuff is being stored in these shops. I do not know the reason they did not pay but a lot, a lot of monies are outstanding.

The proposed implementation of a flea market on Bedford and Middle Street, along with the construction of additional accommodations for vendors would be given priority by our ministry.

The Kingstown Town Board, other areas of work to be implemented by the Kingstown Town Board are as follows:

- the construction of shops on lands at Bay Front reclaimed area next to Builders Mart for vending operations.
- They will construct raised sidewalks in the Cane Garden side road.
- There would be a widening of the Level Garden Road between the entrance of the Girls' Guide Hut and a road leading to Gill's residence.
- There would be construction of a retaining wall; road and drainage at Upper New Montrose next to Obey Cummings.
- There would be covering of drains on the left hand side of the road to Dasent Cottage, Largo Height to ensure sidewalk for pedestrians and improve access for motor vehicles.
- Road and drain construction Galaba Range, Old Monstrose.
- Cleaning and clearing debris from the North and South Rivers in Kingstown. (Very necessary, Mr. Speaker).
- Rigid system of revenue collections. Shop rents at Little Tokyo, China Town, Bay Fore Shore, and Central Market.

Mr. Speaker, Central Market is really a headache. When we thought that Ottley Hall was bad, Central Market is worse. Mr. Speaker, if the lights ever to go out in that Kingstown Market, it is going to be a jail as it is at nights. Dark, too dark. Mr. Speaker, vendors have come to the office, and I feel pity for them; the very windows that are there rain is coming through and spoiling the goods that they have to sell. Mr. Speaker, even below where they sell provisions, people would look to see when the collecting officers are coming, they would take up their things and move out and when the officers are gone they come back. How can we work that way, Mr. Speaker, our people need to learn honesty; and if we continue to be dishonest how is God going to help us?

We have to be honest before him. We have to be disciplined, Mr. Speaker, we cannot always be side tracking and running. We cannot do that.

Mr. Speaker, the chapel at Kingstown cemetery needs to be refurbished. And there will be that refurbishment. There would be lighting of the Kingstown cemetery. The construction of a double deck stand at the Victoria Park. Necessary, Mr. Speaker. There would be repairs to all the shops at Little Tokyo. They need to be repaired right now. Repairs to the bottom of drains in Kingstown, we noticed that the water cannot flow out properly. The construction of cobblestones on sidewalks in Kingstown. Construction of accommodation for ice boxes vendors at the Car Park at Little Tokyo. When the market was built Mr. Speaker, no accommodation was made for the icebox vendors. Many of those icebox vendors send their children to school by the little money that they make, and Mr. Speaker, we want to help our icebox vendors to be comfortable.

Kingstown Town Board will continue to function effectively as a development agency within the Ministry of Social Development to ensure that all communities within the town boundaries are properly maintained.

Gender Affairs, Mr. Speaker; to date the new department of Gender Affairs has an aggressive sanitization programme involving a series of national and zonal workshops under the theme, building capacity for gender equity 2001 and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, we believe in the four p's of planning. Proper planning, prevent poor performance. We believe that you must educate, to eradicate poverty. Therefore, the first thing we did was to change the office stamp, it now reads, 'Gender Affairs' instead of 'Women's Affairs'. Secondly, there was gender sensitization awareness, zonal discussions have already taken place in Owia, in Sandy Bay, in Chateaubelair, in Spring Village, in Marriaqua, in Canouan, in Union Island. Sessions are scheduled for Bequia, Barrouallie, and Rose Hall, those times are to be announced. The department has noted the need for the organization of these zones to reach a greater number of persons. The zoning of the country to create smaller districts, this will facilitate reaching more people and for providing for greater impact of the gender sensitizing programme. Two brochures are currently been prepared on the topic. Understanding the concept of gender, definition of gender related terms, then we thought we would reach out to the wider public, and we want to have radio programmes. We had 'Women in Focus' now we have 'Gender in Focus'. We thought we would begin with the definition what is gender. Then we would give a history of our department, and then we would go gender

mainstreaming. Then we would move on to gender and the law, gender in planning, gender health and development, the role of gender in social policy. Then, Mr. Speaker, we think of the national policy on gender equity and the national commission on gender equity. So copies of these have been sent to a local person for perusal and guidance. Officers of the department and of the ministry have had discussions on the document. We had Roberto Clerk of ECLAC and she has agreed to scrutinize the document and provide technical assistance regarding our way forward.

The National Council of Women, Mr. Speaker, the council did not seem to function for a while and so we organized meetings. Two meetings were held with the National Council of Women and we decided to review the relationship that existed; and we also came up with proposals, Mr. Speaker. We proposed to expand the department's programme and we want to have a little bit more fund, which we will ask for funds, which we would ask for a little bit later. However, we plan at this time to approach local persons so that we can get additional funding. Meetings have been scheduled to discuss the possibility. It would be necessary to tap on agencies abroad, so that we can get the necessary funds.

Mr. Speaker, I want to let this Honourable House know that in the Ministry of Social Development we do not sit. We go out into the fields as the problems are brought to us, we go out and do on the spot assessments so that we can know how to deal with out people.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want for one minute to leave my constituency unheeded. Mr. Speaker, since in 1998 in the constituency of Marriacqua it seems as though it was the opposition that really did work there. And Mr. Speaker, most of us worked untiringly late to make sure that our community; which is one that knows the power of partnership, we were able to do a lot of work.

Mr. Speaker, in the field of sports. In this Honourable House I did speak of the Cane End Playing field. In addition, Mr. Speaker, it was not safe for our children to play on. It was a dust bowl; it was a hazard to health.

Mr. Speaker, grass seeds were sown on that topsoil but it could not grow. Mr. Speaker, history will tell us of the many great sportsmen who would have practiced on that field. And after I have spoken here, \$20,000.00 was allocated to work on the Cane End playing field. [Applause]. Mr. Speaker, I have proposed that we work hand in hand with the young people. There were persons who would use their trucks to help, and when there is work to do we would give them the work to do, but being in opposition, I did not have hold

on this. And Mr. Speaker, \$20,000.00 has gone down the drain. There was the Marriagua Sports Association, a hardworking group but then they were not consulted; things were just done willy, nilly and so that money was not properly spent. Mr. Speaker, when we looked into the pavilion we saw sacks of cement there that had turn back to stone. These cements could have been given to poor people who were doing construction if they were not ready for them. Mr. Speaker, the drains were clogged; the people down below they were always quarrelling what are we doing. And then Mr. Speaker, we were able to get the youth on the move, we were able to get the grass replanted. The Catholic gave us grass from Argyle and we planted them. We had to take out the bad ones, the stones, the bottles and everything, and thanks be to God today, after two years the sports men and women in Marriagua they have a field on which they can play in a safer manner. [Applause]. But, Mr. Speaker, we are only half way through; and I remember as they came to play on the field, I reminded them that we are far from finished and we were counting on them to give a hand up when we were ready to continue. Mr. Speaker, we have to look at the pavilion, we have to look at the little bar section. We have to remember the discipline we have to have for the field. We have to remember the respect that must be shown to those who practice locally, and to those who will come from the National Council. There is a lot we have to do.

Mr. Speaker, we go up to Richland Park, and we are still on sports. In Richland Park we have been trying, on our own to put drainage there, but now Courts is ready to court in Marriagua they are ready to court the young men and women who would need the Richland Park field on which to play. They have promised to give a hand out and soon our sporting facility there would be better. But, that is not all, Mr. Speaker, the National Sporting Council has promised to help us; and we are going to try to light our netball court again. I remember when I was 17 or there about, in Marriagua there was no other team that could beat us but the Kingstown Anglican Primary School, because they had a girl by the name of Merla Evans, who would have taken the ball when it had just left your hands. And we were good. We had volleyball. And we had all kinds of sports, but today we do not even have a cricket pitch. And so, Mr. Speaker, I am committed to the young people of the Valley. I know that they understand, and they know that I mean what I say. I am still the no nonsense person that I have always been.

Mr. Speaker, in Marriagua not everybody comes to town to sell their provision. Mr. Speaker, we used to sell right at home. People used to leave their communities and come right into Marriagua to buy. Mr. Speaker, I want to let the people know that they can come back to Marriagua again to buy their

meat. I want them to know that a new facility is being constructed, we can sell our lettuce, our carrots and whatever we want. I can put those on it because I know that once it is a government building some people feel that if they want to go and ease their bowls they can go in and leave that load there, but we say no in Marriagua, and we want to make sure that we are disciplined in the way we conduct things.

Up in Richland Park, Mr. Speaker, there is a house that was bought from one Mr. Bacchus. The NDP government paid \$60,000.00. Mr. Speaker, the house is very, very old, and just before elections a notice was put up on it marked 'Richland Park Library' oh, what a laugh. I now understand Mr. Speaker, why some of our people say politics is very dirty. And someone came to me and said, how is it you are in politics and politics is dirty? And I said politics to her politics will be as dirty as you make it. You must be yourself. You must be honest. And if you are honest you will have a blessing from above. And you would be able to do exploits.

Mr. Speaker, I am hoping to sit with our Minister of Works and ask him to come with me to see what is necessary. I will try my best to see how if I can ask for help from abroad, that we can have some computers put in, so that the people in Richland Park would be able to go there and do some work. Get some books and put it in and downstairs in that very building, we would be able to teach cookery rather than going in the school at the end of the day.

Mr. Speaker, since 1998 I have been organizing in the communities our women, young and not so young and the old. I open my arms to all. Mr. Speaker, we have women's group in Evesham, Richland Park, Mesopotamia and they have been putting their hands to do trade work. Mr. Speaker, our women there can do great things, our women there can do crochet, knitting, cookery, flower making, and they have been using the flowers from the Montreal Gardens in doing floral arrangements. Mr. Speaker, these groups are alive and well, and we are continuing to do our work in Marriagua.

Mr. Speaker, when I came into politics the people in Glenside said to me that our former representative said to them 'all you would never get water up in Diggike, not all you. But I say thanks be to God, first of all, and thanks to Mr. Cummings that today Glenside has water. [Applause].

Our cemetery, Mr. Speaker, the Dumbarton cemetery it is well taken care of, and I must applaud Eric for the good work that he does. Up in Richland Park it was dump. Mr. Speaker, our people have to learn to know what to respect, who to respect and where to give that respect. The plant a pumpkin in the

cemetery. An NDP woman, telling the caretaker that he must not take it off. We try to do some work because dogs were trying to pull out the bones of man who was buried close to the bank and they had to still the holes with stones. Then I came and I asked to have a retaining wall put so that the bones of our dead would not be exposed until Jesus comes. The bottom half of the Richland Park cemetery is nearly filled so we have to pay some attention to the top part of it. And the situation is much better now. That is what is happening in Marriacqua now, Mr. Speaker. Our people are organized. We have a hypertensive diabetic group, very active. We have a young parenting group, for our teenagers, who would have dropped out of school or who would have had their babies at an early age. The nurses are holding them together, they are educating them. There is a married men cricket club and there are youth groups in many of our churches. With the help of someone who once lived in Marriacqua we were able to get a generator for our health centre because I know that disaster might strike and there might be a power failure. In Marriacqua babies are delivered there and we need as much light as we can. The Ministry of Works has had one more thing to do in order to have it fit in.

I cannot close without mentioning a woman in Marriacqua, Grace Eustace. [Applause]. The daughter of John Parmenos Eustace. [Applause]. Mr. Speaker, in his love for education JP Eustace asked for permission to use the Marriacqua Community Hall and it was there that he began the secondary education in his school, and after a while with help from abroad he was able to build another school near to his house. And now he has taken off the roof from the Hebrewian Gospel Chapel and he has put on two other stories, now he is gone, but his daughter Gracie is continuing the good work. [Applause].

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to see children who would not have passed the Common Entrance, who Miss Eustace would have reached out to and when I go to the graduation ceremony, they would get seven and eight subjects, but they would not have passed Common Entrance. Miss Eustace thanks to you, and our Government is proud of what you are doing. [Applause]. She wants to have a volleyball court but that we need to do some work on the river defenses where the waters marry. And someone has already been on spot and they have gone back to their land to give us a word as to how we will deal with the river defenses so that she can have a volleyball court to help the youngsters.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned a while ago for a multipurpose centre for Marriacqua. And I am hoping that we can have the approval to use the air space. You see, Mr. Speaker, you see in Marriacqua we have got the Marriacqua United Friendly Society and Mr. Speaker, you would have heard in times past where thieves

would have come in and would have taken that little money. In Marriaqua it was started by Mr. Bunpan Guy, under a nutmeg tree. And then a lodge was built and then after the hall where operations are done was constructed. Mr. Speaker, we only take monies from persons when a brother or sister is dead. So if nobody dies you have no money to pay and you only contribute 15 cents to the death of a brother or sister. And Mr. Speaker, after taking out that sometimes a member would have \$10.00 left. Management could not give a member a cheque for that for thieves thought it fit to come in and steal.

Mr. Speaker, thinking of this and more we want a bank in Marriaqua, we want a bank where we can keep our monies safely. Mr. Speaker, we have Bigger Bigs Construction, workers get their pay on Friday evening, instead of having to journey to town they can go at the bank and get their cheques cash. Mr. Speaker, we need a pharmacy; we need a better library Mr. Speaker, and we need our Courtroom. And so Mr. Speaker, we were looking at one big building where we can have all of this because it would be good to have the bank near to the police station.

Mr. Speaker, I want to pay tribute to His Excellency the Governor General. Mr. Speaker, there are times when problems arise and I know that I can call on the Honourable Gentleman. A lady died suddenly one day, leaving ten children and His Excellency after I spoke to him, he got the partnership of members of his group and he would come to Marriaqua and make sure that those children have food and clothing and he is like a father to them. Your Excellency if you are listening I want to say thank you.

Mr. Speaker, on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November, we had one of our old ladies, one of our golden agers turning 100 years old. [Applause]. The community calls her Mammy Lull. And at 100 Mammy Lull was singing praises to God. Mammy Lull we love you, and we hail you from this Honourable House. I want to hail all our elderly persons. I want to mention Auntie Velma Browne; a Labour Party stalwart. [Applause]. I want to let you know that your energies have not been in vain, but that Labour Government, a poor people's Government, the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in this our age, is saying thanks to you.

I want to hail the staff of the Thompson's Home. And all the persons who are there. I want to hail my sister Parmie Shallow. I know you would be listening there my dear lady. [Applause]. I want to thank you for rallying with the ULP. Home M&A for the Age, continue with the good work. The Louis Punnett Home, I want to hail the staff and I know that inmates there would be listening as well. The Mental Health Centre, I want to greet you and to let you know

that good news would be coming your way, God being our helper. People at the Prisons, male and female prisons. We care about you and we are planning for you, continue to be patient.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member you have 15 minutes.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Much obliged, Mr. Speaker. I want to hail a lady in a wheelchair. A lady with a lot of thought. A lady who is a leader in her own right, Melanie Mc Kenzie. And Miss Patricia Cumberbatch, I want to congratulate you on all the wonderful work you do in this country. [Applause]. I want to let you know that I will commend you and your programme to the 'Good News' Wisconsin, and I know that some help will be forth coming for you. Today is the International Day of the Disabled. And all those who are at home, you may not be able to walk, you may not be able to do certain things, but the Ministry of Social Development cares about you.

I want at this time, Mr. Speaker, to hail all the people in Marriagua. The people of Cane End, Dumbarton, Mespo proper, Glenside, Sayers, Mountique, Farm, Carruth, Freeland, Mt. Pleasant, Rilley, Kelbourne, Hope Well, Richland Park, Ackers, Collins, Carriere, La Croix, Ginger Village, Kellypark. Fellow residence of Marriagua I want to say thanks to you for the confidence you have reposed in me. Without you I could not make it this far. I thanked those of you whom I would have taught when you were little, and you remembered what I stand for. I stand against the evil and the bad, and I strived hard to promote the good. I want to let you know, that you can call on me. I cannot make it on my own but I know from whence my help comes. And I am prepared to go every step of the way as long as you give me that support. I want to say to those of you who have told lies, I want to let you know that as the year closes I forgive you. I want to hail up my wonderful husband, who stood with me as lies were told. [Applause]. Some said I drank rum, and different things of that sort. Mr. Speaker, of all persons, I know the Lord do not want any stumbling down. Why should I drink rum? But then they could not find anything else to say. Yes, it is the spirit from above. And Mr. Speaker, many people have come forward but I want everyone to know, my party is a part of inclusion. [Applause]. I want Senator Shallow to know, that our party is a party of inclusion. So that when people come who would have lost at the polls, when they come up to Freeland to say that they forming Women's Arm tell them go away. Tell them leave Marriagua. The people of Marriagua know what they want. We are a hard working people. [Applause].

Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence, Sir, I can remember on election day there was a picture of me on top of a poll, and one of the NDP acolytes was saying

look at the picture up there, and one lady turn and to him and said take it down. That would make any difference; no difference at all. The Genie has to go back into the bottle, and we are covering the bottle. Marriaqua is not a constituency that you give chicken back and rice you know, you cannot do that. Marriaqua people do not want free rum, you know. You would have the one or two who would take it, and they listened to me in 1998, eat them out, drink them out and vote them out. And that is what they did. It is no sense that you would come and say that you are coming to fool the people of Marriaqua. We have had three secondary schools, Mr. Speaker, the St. Joseph's Convent which is our Valley's number one, it was built by the Catholics and Father Mc Dugall and well contributions were made from persons within the Vincentian community. Mr. Speaker, we have the Emmanuel High School and we have the Mt. View Academy, three secondary schools and not one was built by the Government. We have Bunpan, we have our own health centre. Mr. Speaker, we are a developed community and we know our politics. So if you come in and you tell, yes, and just now, we would be asking for township, Mr. Prime Minister. [Laughter]. Honourable Levi Latham had promised to give us the sea, but I supposed it could not come through the Yambou pass, and so we did not get the sea. But, in all seriousness Mr. Speaker, the people of Marriaqua we know what we want. We know who is who among us. Yes, we have our friends and some would love you and some would hate you. But, Mr. Speaker, people of Marriaqua we know what we want. We want excellence. We want to be a community that is second to none.

Mr. Speaker, even when the banana industry was failing, many persons got up and they took to the seas to go to Trinidad and took those bananas that the Association would not buy and so we are getting our bananas sold. Many of them they are buying them to ripen and bring into town. Mr. Speaker, I can remember when I worked in Richland, every child almost had a christophene arbour because christophine was sold by the pound. Mr. Speaker, we planted yellow peppers, red peppers, ginger, tancias. We planted our carrots and as I told you we used to have our markets in Marriaqua, because we know how to turn our hands and we know how to turn our hands, we know how to spin. When we work as farmers at the Mac Millian area, we did it 'partner hand' in the local parlance, Mr. Speaker. I had my dasheen to weed you came with me, and when you had yours to weed, I went with you. And when we finished cook in the mountains who first finished offered the other piece, so that when yours is finished you give back piece. Who first lit the fire you give the piece. And that is Marriaqua Mr. Speaker. It is not to give them some rum, it is not to teach them to smoke weed. It is not to tell them the things that are bad. You hear them say that in the House, Girlyn say that. No, that is not

leadership and I am warning the people of Marriagua Mr. Speaker, because I see some foreign people coming in, I do not know what they are coming for but I am going to alert people on the ground. I do not want any weed selling in Marriagua, and I am sending the message loud and clear. Some of them came from Fancy, some of them came from Campden Park, Mr. Speaker, and I want the people of Marriagua to know what is happening because my eyes are wide open.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud to belong to Marriagua. We are a Christian community. Mr. Speaker, the only church we do not have up there maybe is the Church of Satan. But we have all different kinds of religion. Mr. Speaker, I am happy to represent that community. Mr. Speaker, I want to encourage the women of our country. Women of our country I want you to know that you have voices within this parliament. I want to invite you to come when you have your problems. I want to let you know, no matter what the problem is, you can come to the Social Development Ministry because of the nature of that Ministry Mr. Speaker, every Friday I leave it free so that I can do counseling, along with the other members in the Ministry and that I can make sure that big problems within all of our Ministries are taken care of.

Mr. Speaker, in rounding up, I want to let my comrades know, that great minds rise above misfortune. I want to remind us all that just a short while ago we had Michael with us but we are to remember now that we are all candidates for the cemetery. We are non-permanent here. I want to beg us to remember the vow we made when we were sworn in. I want to beg us to take the prayer that the Speaker reads as we come in here from day to day. Stop telling lies. Let us be honest. Call a nail a nail. Call a spade a spade. I want to say to our country in this period of economic hardship God's grace is sufficient. We may have the most wonderful of budgets, we would have a plan but who helps us to execute that plan, it is the great and mighty God. [Applause]. I am asking us to take a quantum leap from what's in it for me, because I know many people come in and they asked, what is in it for me. But I want us to say what can I do to help?

And Mr. Speaker, I come to our reach out and touch. Reach out and touch somebody's hand, make this world a better place if you can. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend Honourable Minister Francis for working very hard with his team in trying to make reach out and touch work last year. Mr. Speaker, the contributions were many and we have some \$910.00. left in our hands from the last time. And so we want to continue it this time. And we want to reach out and touch our elderly poor. We want to reach out and touch families who

have it real hard. And within our communities we are organizing to do just that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to wish you and your family God's speed. I want to pray for health and prosperity for you for this season and for times to come. Honourable Prime Minister our team loves you. [Applause]. And no matter who wants to place us in different ranks I heard someone said that you were legalistic, and my answer to that person was 'we have got a balanced team' we are prepared to hold your hands as Joshua held the hand of Moses we are going to hold your hand on this journey. You listen and that is one of the good things about you. You are not perfect and none of us is. But I am asking you to continue to listen; to listen to God. I want to wish the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, a very, merry Christmas and a happy New Year. I want to let you know that as you gave your address, I noticed within Honourable Leader of the Opposition you were angry, I noticed anger within you, as you spoke of the Nano's and other things, I know you are hurt but my dear honourable member, I want to ask you for this season that who ever would have wronged you, put it out of your system, ask God to help you to forgive and let them come around. And let God deal with them. I noticed the anger within you, you are a good-natured member, I know that for sure, and we must give honour where honour is due. You are one of the persons that I remembered in the early days, in Black Power days and so, people used to come from Kingstown out to Mespo and so on and have discussions and that kind of thing. Yes Honourable Leader of the Opposition and I am serious about this. I know you are good-natured and I know you are a good person I want to beg you, do not let the other push you; think of tomorrow. Think of what the Lord is saying to you. I want to give you that assurance. I want to wish the other members on that side God's speed. I want to ask that even though we are on different political sides that we would know that we have a country to build and that we would work together for the common good. I want to let you know that you can call on the Ministry of Social Development and me; you can call on me. You can send your constituents to the office and if the help is immediate, I would do my best, because that is what I am here for; I have a never dieing soul to save, which I must fit for the heavenly sky, and it depends on what I do now in this life, so I encourage you to do the same.

I want to thank the API has been with on the journey with the market. And every time we called you were always there. Thank you, very much. I want to say thanks to the policemen who were there keeping guard as we try to do sessions here; and to all those persons at home remember that I love you and keep Christ in Christmas. Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Any further debate? Honourable Senator Shallow, but Honourable Prime Minister I think this is a good time to take the suspension for members' convenience.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I so moved, Mr. Speaker.

***Question put and agreed.  
Suspension 6:45 p.m. (tea)  
Resumption 7:25 p.m.***

**HONOURABLE GERARD SHALLOW:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I rise to give my assessment to this Appropriation Bill 2001 as it relates to the budgetary proposals for the financial year 2002.

Mr. Speaker, anyone who denies that this country, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, now resides in the bosom of an economic crisis, is mentally deranged, blinded by political partisanship, or exist in a world where fantasy and delusion and wishful thinking are the orders of the day. Let me satisfy your conviction, Mr. Speaker. I want you to visit our interview at random, a selection of the homes in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Mr. Speaker, or take a walk through the highways and the byways of our country, interview a couple business houses or shops and listen to the cry of the common man, interview the people who operate those businesses, and you will discover Mr. Speaker, one commonality, things hard, things rough. It has never been like this before and it will never get better. Times are changing Mr. Speaker, and unfortunately, from bad to worst. Pressure now, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, while some of this blame must be attributed to the decline in global economic activities and liberalized trade rules certain policies and practices implemented here contributes more to the problems we have. And I will give you examples, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, we are living in a numerically small society, where everybody knows somebody or everybody is related to somebody. And we have been over the last eight months Mr. Speaker, experiencing what is refereed to now as rampant political victimization. That it does not make any sense anybody tries to deny, or to mislead or to misguide because it has gone so far and wide that everyone in St. Vincent and the Grenadines can produce evidence that this does exist in fact. Mr. Speaker, there is a very selective way of offering jobs of a late, you have to be associated with Mr. This or a Mr. That or Mr. The other. Once you are a member of the ruling party, jobs belong to you. And I want to conclude Mr. Speaker that there must have been some hidden directive given because

this is something that has been discovered throughout the length and breath of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. You got to be Labour. You got to be ULP or no work for you.

Mr. Speaker, we must also admit that the restructuring of the banana industry has contributed and will continue to contribute to the hardships experienced by our citizens in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, because you know Mr. Speaker, not all our farmers would be able to meet the requirements as set out by the WIBDECO and most importantly, Mr. Speaker, the general decline in agriculture. All contribute to the economic hardships experienced by our citizens in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, I want by way of mentioning say something here, you know, the old rhetoric goes on in this House everyday, NDP this, NDP the other, like a recurring decimal Mr. Speaker. If you were quite observant you would have noticed that more than 98% of that side of the House would have had to mentioned the New Democratic Party in some way or the other because they know that there is a problem, there is a thorn in the flesh of the ULP, and that is the existence and the continued growth of the New Democratic Party. But I will tell you one thing, Mr. Speaker, we need to asked ourselves a simple question, how come you have been given a mandate to govern by such a large majority, you have boasted about it time and time again, how come NDP is such a problem; as a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I want to make one conclusion, I am convinced that those who hold on providing this problem, either fall short or lack thereof the requisite skills and or knowledge base required to execute the duties they were either nominated or elected to do.

Mr. Speaker, you see, there are the Government, they have the mandate to govern, then get on with the business of governance. You see, Mr. Speaker, I am convinced that too much time is being spent on attempting to relegate the NDP, too much time is spent in regurgitate the past. Do you know like ruminant, you eat and chew on the same thing, time and time again, until the body accepts it without you swallowing? And Mr. Speaker, if the truth be told it would be concluded by all Vincentians that the ULP has created more damage to this economy in eight months than the New Democratic Party would have created in 17 years. Mr. Speaker, you must realize that we were elected four consecutive times and on the second time with all 15 seats, what does that symbolize, Mr. Speaker, that is a clear indication that the New Democratic Party has performed, and pretty soon will be performing.

Mr. Speaker, agriculture remains the backbone of our economy. As a matter of fact, agriculture employs more people than any other industry in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. But only 3.4% of the recurring expenditure has

been allocated, or expended to this vital industry and ministry; only 7.7% of the capital expenditure has been allocated to agriculture of the capital expenditure, it is therefore imperative, Mr. Speaker, that immediate attention be paid to this industry with a view to stimulate and revitalize this industry.

Mr. Speaker, it must be noted that education and training are very vital to the continued development of agriculture in St. Vincent and the Grenadines but in the midst of this all Mr. Speaker, as far as training and education are concerned you would have seen a decline the monies allocated for several sub sectors of the agriculture industry and I will quote a few, Mr. Speaker. Animal and health production, fell from 16,000 in the year 2001 to 10,000 2000. Exotic pest control has fallen from 10,000 to 8,000. Extension and advisory services, Mr. Speaker, has fallen from 25,000 in 2000's Estimates to 20,000. But above this all, Mr. Speaker, we are expected to strengthen the extension services to farmers, we are expected to establish a marketing intelligence system, we are expected to embark on an educational programme in best pests, and best practices in farm management and we are expected to enhance pest control services. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, only \$1,210,154.00 less has been expended for the administration and implementation of agricultural activities and practices in the year 2002.

Mr. Speaker, our non-banana farmers and those farmers who would have to leave the banana industry as a result of their inability to comply with the requirements, or to meet the requirements of the WIBDECO proposals have left lots of our farmers in a void. By that Mr. Speaker, their lands are going to be left uncultivated and it is therefore the responsibility of this government to let the farmers in St. Vincent and the Grenadines know what quantity, type and market arrangements would be put in place so that they can earn some income, hence survive. Those who are involved in livestock production must be given some security and this time Mr. Speaker, not by stray dogs, because that is not a significant problem in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I think a more significant problem in St. Vincent and the Grenadines where these animals are concerned is the increased infestation of rats. So I would appreciate if the Honourable Minister of Agriculture can design a programme to decrease the number of rats we have in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Instead of heighten the awareness of stray dogs. And Mr. Speaker, the major problem that surrounds livestock production in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is that of thieves. I heard in the past of plans afoot to equip farmers with shotguns. Ha, ha, ha, Mr. Speaker. It makes me feel that I am in a place where humour is the only thing we can breed.

Fisheries, Mr. Speaker. Now it is important to note that the Fisheries Division has been the first division in the Ministry of Agriculture that has established a website. And I think it is vitally important for the Minister of Agriculture Land and Fisheries to visit that website a little bit more often. Because I am of the firm opinion that it would make his presentation more substantive.

Mr. Speaker, it is totally incorrect to say that all the fishing facilities in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is not in operation. In fact, Mr. Speaker, there are only two fishing facilities that are not in operation and they are the most recently built ones. One in Barrouallie and one Chateaubelair and this merely because the change in sociology and the traditional harvesting methods.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Point of Order.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Could you please state your point of order.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** The point of order to which I relate, Mr. Speaker, is Order 33(9) 'a member shall not read his speech, but he may read extracts from books or papers in support of his argument and may refresh his memory by reference to notes.' The Honourable Member I believe is reading his speech. He has been turning the pages, my friend has been reading his speech; it became evident to me when he referred to website and so forth and the manner in which he was going down. I knew then he was reading it. And I saw him turning the pages, perhaps Mr. Speaker, you could ascertain from him the truth of that because he would not lie to the House. I do not think, so that the matter may be corrected that he can look at his notes but do not read his speech.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** The point you raised is germane and of course I would just draw the member's attention to that point. I have heard someone shouting that others have been doing that as I said this Chair is tolerant to a number of things, if you bring it to my attention and ask for a ruling I will do so, but the point is germane.

**HONOURABLE GERARD SHALLOW:** Much obliged, Mr. Speaker. It is only saddening that we on this side of the House are always falling victims to practices of this nature when it is executed by one and all.

Mr. Speaker, there are several conservation organizations globally that are established to conserve and protect the marine resources. These same organizations, Mr. Speaker, mainly from Europe and the Untied States of America are the very same developed countries that have plundered over the

years the marine resources. And they have come up Mr. Speaker, with certain rules and regulations to which we the smaller developing countries with smaller populations, traditional and cultural practices within our harvesting methods and most importantly, on a sustainable basis are asked to comply with these regulations. This problem will continue to surface, Mr. Speaker, because it is important for us to note that one of the major problems we have been experiencing is that of the inferior types of gears used by smaller developing countries in harvesting fishes.

Mr. Speaker, these same advanced or developing countries are the ones that have plundered over exploited almost near to extinction our marine resources. It is therefore vitally important Mr. Speaker, that this government takes it on board to ensure that whatever is required to do be done such that our fishermen, our fisher folk on mainland St. Vincent and the Grenadines restore some order of livelihood. I must at this time, Mr. Speaker, extend sympathy to the fisher folks, those on the mainland and those on the Grenadines, the fact that it would appear that they would have to wait for another two or so years before the facilities can be brought up to date so that they can resume marketing of their fishes. And Mr. Speaker, mention that these people contribute a very huge percentage of our population. They need to survive they need to do business, they need to take care of themselves, and it is hoped that this government, they would hope that this government would see the urgency in ensuring that the necessary requirements are met. It is heartening to hear Mr. Speaker that there is going to be a refurbishing of the new Kingstown Fish Market. The only sad thing about it though, is that they would have to wait until 2003 before this project could be completed. It would be funded by the Japanese and we are hoping that the government would see it fit to move or act with some urgency so that some order, some means of revival could be regained by the fisher folks who are involved in this honourable industry.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to the Ministry of Social Development, Family, Gender and Ecclesiastical Affairs, Co-operatives. The Estimates Mr. Speaker, 2002 fell by \$618,000.00 below the estimates of last year, or the last budget. There is an increase in the number of street children; child abuse is still on the rampage Mr. Speaker, there is a growing need to increase assistance to the deviant and the destitute. We need to increase the assistance given and the probation services allocated for people who suffer this misfortune. Mr. Speaker, it is vitally important that consideration be given to this sector of that honourable ministry. These children, Mr. Speaker, are noble citizens and should be treated thus. We know that there are lots of problems involved in housing; we know that there are problems involved in the provision of food, of

clothing and shelter, but it is the responsibility of the government Mr. Speaker, to ensure that all of its citizens are properly taken care of Mr. Speaker. I am keenly looking forward, Mr. Speaker, to the day when this would be taken on board and be given serious attention with a view to remedying that problem.

Mr. Speaker, in the area of non-formal skills training, I would have thought that the decline in agriculture and the decline in the tourism industry that more resources, financial and otherwise would have been placed in this subsection of that ministry, Mr. Speaker; however I observed by way of the estimates that the allocations for 2002 has fallen by \$50,000 this is outrageous Mr. Speaker, how on earth can we tackle the problems that are confronting the people; how would we be able to provide for the destitute and for those that are hopeless, how are we able to develop sustainable our human resource? Mr. Speaker, we need answers. This cannot be realized when the allocation has fallen by \$50,000. Very ironic, Mr. Speaker, this is not one of the areas where we talk the talk and walk the walk. Whatever we want to say this time Mr. Speaker, is that we talk the talk and we walk the talk.

Mr. Speaker roads in the rural communities, sometimes I do wonder, Mr. Speaker if members of the government do travel on the roads of this country. Never before in the history of St. Vincent and the Grenadines have our roads deteriorated to the level at which they now exist. But I tell you Mr. Speaker, I am presently contemplating buying a donkey because I am of the opinion, that this condition is working in tandem with the agencies that are selling motor vehicle parts, because I cannot see the reason why Mr. Speaker, we have to allow our roads to deteriorate to the extent at which they are. Mr. Speaker, you only need to take a drive out to Georgetown, Diamonds, Greggs, Lauders, and I am sure Mr. Speaker, you would be so disgusted that you, yourself would want to file a law suit against the government. And do you know what is most disappointing Mr. Speaker, only \$200,000 have been allocated to refurbish roads in the rural areas. Mr. Speaker, sometimes I do wonder how we do our fiscal planning, because this is totally insufficient to address this problem. The government needs to think again, Mr. Speaker. Because if it continues like this, pretty soon somebody is going to get seriously ill, get seriously hurt, or the rate of accidents would go up significantly.

Just this morning, Mr. Speaker, I had to be so cautious because people in trying to get away from holes find themselves on the wrong hand even in corners, and this is outrageous, Mr. Speaker. Maybe this might bring some comfort.

Mr. Speaker I heard all this hue and cry about our Central Market, yes; and I observed in the capital estimates a total of \$1,800,000 allocated, I felt good when I saw the figure Mr. Speaker, until I read the comments only to discover that this money is to be spent on consultancy services, consultancy fees, and retention fees and for outstanding payments. Mr. Speaker, I want to make one thing clear here, sometimes I do wonder if we do understand how our priority runs here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. When we examine the problems that are being experienced here by our vendors, -- now Mr. Speaker, I must emphasize at this point that I do subscribe to the notion of cleaning up Kingstown. But at the same time Mr. Speaker, the people on the streets are the ones who are making an honest clean living. I am simply saying Mr. Speaker, with all the monies that are being spent in huge sums doing things that are not of priority to us, some of that could have been spent in providing additional accommodations, maybe somewhere out on the Complex, or maybe the extension of the market itself or maybe the creation of a flea market or something of that nature, to take the vendors from where they are and place them.

Just the other day, Mr. Speaker, I came up Middle Street and met one big crowd of people chasing down through Middle Street, I did not know what was happening, all I did I just had to turn and join the crowd running. Only to learn that it was the police and the big animal truck arresting and seizing people's goods. Mr. Speaker, they are people too. And do you know what is painstaking about this Mr. Speaker? There are people in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, honourable citizens, even parliamentarians who would have earned a living from vending and plying the same type of trade that they now come back to abuse. But, I do want to say one thing, Mr. Speaker, when you kick down the ladder on which you climb you find it very difficult to come down. And very often you come down in so many pieces that there is no adhesive to bring you back together again. I hope they would keep that in mind Mr. Speaker.

Now, we talk about gender, Mr. Speaker, we talk about gender. I could understand why this concept is underplayed, because the New Democratic Party would have done it all, in the area of gender, in equity and in programmes organized. And I want to name you a few Mr. Speaker, if you could tell me who established Women's Desk to address the needs of the women and it is not the New Democratic Party, then you have to think again. If you can tell me who carried out the assessment of the laws and legislations to remove discrimination against women in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Mr. Speaker, and it is not the NDP then something got to be wrong. If I asked you who constructed the in camera Family Court so that people's private

matters could be heard in privacy and confidence and it is not the New Democratic Party then think again. If I ask you who increased the power sharing and decision making of women in this country and it is not the New Democratic Party now come again.

Mr. Speaker, I want to think seriously about the function, the role of the office of Ecclesiastical Affairs. Sometimes I wonder if this is mere existence, in the portfolio, because Mr. Speaker, very often we chose to put all the blame of criminal activities, violence, promiscuity and other immoral acts, on anything else but the Christian principles that should be fostered in our society. [Interjection]. I would not and will not blame Christianity, what I am saying Mr. Speaker, if we foster and we create the institutions that would foster positive Christian principles in our young children, we will have a better society. Mr. Speaker, let me ask you a simple question, why is not the New Testament or the Holy Bible not included on the book list in schools? Mr. Speaker, why are not hymns and religions songs taught in schools? I know in my day I knew them all because we had that privilege. You have a lot of work to do, Mr. Speaker. Because do you know why, no country can grow, develop or progress unless its peoples are funded in the beliefs and the principles of God.

Mr. Speaker, I want to address the very important issue of garbage disposal in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Recently Mr. Speaker, there was a large boast, hue and cry, about the reduction of the \$2.50 of the water bill for the poor and age. Mr. Speaker, all of a sudden we are seeing a new introduction of \$5.00, what for? To pick up garbage. But let me tell you something, Mr. Speaker, we have to ensure in this time that those garbage truck gives their services to each and every Vincentian citizen you know, because it would be really unfair for everybody to pay their \$5.00 when they are not enjoying the benefits of services of those garbage trucks. I could tell you Mr. Speaker, that in my area there are certain points where they reach and turn back. I am still waiting on a bill because I would want to see exactly what is going to happen. It is vitally important, in times like these when people are already experiencing difficulty, when financial resources are scarce and hard to find that people have to still be paying additional money, and yet it is called a poor people's budget. Well I like the description of a poor people's budget you know, because this one was designed to kill.

Mr. Speaker, I like the notion of describing this budget as a poor people's budget you know, do you know why, because we have more than evidence to prove what it exactly means. And I will tell you one thing, Mr. Speaker, we got our barrels cheaper yes, but we pay more in another corner, so we give in one

hand and we take back in the other hand and we believe that we out smart Vincentians but, let them do fool themselves, Mr. Speaker, Vincentians are educated, intelligent and fully aware as to exactly what is happening, so when they think that they caught us all, Mr. Speaker, they still have to wait. Because as you see, Mr. Speaker, the backlash will come. It definitely will come.

Mr. Speaker, I have observed in this consumption tax, common external tariff, Amendment Resolution 2001, some very smart and stringent measures, imposed upon us without consultation and without discussion. But I would just want to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to give the nation an idea as to what to expect, because, Mr. Speaker, the year 2002 would be rougher and tougher than the one we just concluded. Mr. Speaker, I have seen here new consumption tax rates, and they have grown Mr. Speaker, margarine, lard and lard substitute now up 15%, what does that mean? Up to 15%. Sausages and similar meat products and I am talking the chicken sausages, the canned, the other chicken sausages, the salami sausages and other sausages that are canned are up to 20%, now poor people are the ones who buy these things, so I hope that they are listening.

Mr. Speaker, liver of any animal, canned corn beef, sardines, herrings, mackerels and other prepared and preserved fishes are now up to 20% Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, even chewing gum, whether sugar coated or not, even chewing gum is up to 25%. I do not have to eat it, you are right. Prepared foods made from cereal and cereal products those folks who love their little cornflakes and thing, 15% up. Mr. Speaker, sweet biscuits, biscuits that are unsweetened we called them salt biscuits, ice cream cones and other such confectionaries, 20%, peanut butter 15%. Soya bean, tomato ketchup, even ketchup, other tomato sauces, mustards, pepper sauces, mayonnaise, all of these are now up to 15%. Yet we are still saying that this is a poor people's budget.

Let go around some more, Mr. Speaker. Even the ladies who now have to buy their shampoo have to pay more. Now shampoos, straightening liquids, hair lacquers and other substance of that nature now up to 35% Mr. Speaker. When we bring this down on the people then we would now have to cut our hair, eat the traditional foods directly from the soil or die. And this Mr. Speaker, we described in elegantly sounding terms, well decorated promotion as the poor people's budget. But, hold on, the implementation of this would prove that the proof of the pudding is really and truly in the eating. So we have already paid of the barrels this year and would likely pay for them next year. So next year perhaps we could get them all free. So we could truly

mean free next year because we would have already paid for them throughout this financial year through the taxes. But, I want to extend my sympathies to the poor and struggling and destitute Vincentians, you know, because they are not fully aware exactly to what is happening.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable member, you have ten minutes.

**HONOURABLE GERARD SHALLOW:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. But I do hope that when the government imposes these taxes on the people and the result manifest itself in a couple years ahead, they would accept it and say yes, I bought it all on myself.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn to my constituency of Marriaqua. [Interjection] I am a true citizen of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and I do belong to a constituency called Marriaqua. [Interjection] Hold on you will find out in a while. Mr. Speaker, there is a problem in Marriaqua when it comes to the cultural and social life of our people. Over the years we have been deprived of the use of the community centre to host our social, our cultural and other activities and that is simply because Mr. Speaker, that activities that are now taking place at that community centre prohibits, apart from that there has been a little mingling of hands in there you know, people abusing power and believing that they own St. Vincent and the Grenadines, but the truth will reveal itself Mr. Speaker, another idiom is 'time is a little bit longer than twine'.

Mr. Speaker, over the years the people of Glenside would have been suffering a very serious problem with the drainage system coming down from the top of Glenside, they call that area MacKies Gutter. Very often the Honourable Representative of Marriaqua would be able to testify to this, every time it rains and rains heavily the people on the flat have to be rescued and secured at the hospital and other places and yet, Mr. Speaker, now that she is there to execute and use the resources of the government to solve the problems of the people, the people are still waiting and wondering when would these problems rather be attended to. I hope Mr. Speaker, that it would be done sooner than later, otherwise, Mr. Speaker, these things would come back to haunt them.

Mr. Speaker, two years ago we suffered a horrible loss of five young students in Marriaqua, on more than three or four occasions I would have seen the Honourable Representative then in Opposition moving around that area with video cameras and stuff like that and making sure that this matter be treated with urgency. Up to this point, Mr. Speaker the Farm River remains the same.

All of the interest and the urgency that was shown in having this problem resolved remains the same.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Marriagua are still awaiting the urgent remedial solutions to these existing problems and I hope that it would be attended to pretty soon. The Marriagua Government School borders one of the larger rivers in the Valley, one of the larger three rivers, the Zinger and Mr. Speaker, time and time again I receive complaints in the capacity as president of that PTA that children are often adventurous being young, going into that river, sometimes the river comes down even without heavy rains. We have been applying to this government for the longest while to at least ensure that the river is protected. Mr. Speaker, it is fitting that other people's personal property is protected by river defenses and then the people's children must be exposed to all the dangers and threats, I would appreciate it Mr. Speaker, if some urgent attention could be paid to this very serious problem before we end up or wind up losing more of our children.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to lament the problems of roads in Marriagua because I want to believe that we cannot describe what we have out there as roads. It must be footpaths or agouti tracks. Because Mr. Speaker, if you travel through the villages of Riley, Evesham, Cane End, Carrierre, Collins, Mt. Pleasant, Freeland, Mountaque, Caruth, Richland Park, call them all, Hope Well, you would encounter great, great difficulty on foot, much more if you are to use your vehicle. Mr. Speaker, aren't we in Marriagua part and parcel of the population of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, why should we be treated in a manner such as this? I know there are always excuses, but I tell you Mr. Speaker, these are the things that would come back to haunt you. And I hope that you would give due consideration to these things.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to wish the people of Petit Bordel who are today celebrating their 25 years without a representative from the Government. The Petit Bordel Secondary school, I want to wish them well, and I hope that they would endure to the end and continue to benefit.

Mr. Speaker, let me take this opportunity finally to thank all the loving, conscientious and wise folks of Marriagua who have stood by me through thick and thin and would have given me their unrelentless support. Those who did not support me are welcomed, as I am always embracive and willing to execute, as I would refer to as inclusion. I want to let you people of Marriagau know that I love you all, I would always be there for you, I would do anything that is within my power to ensure that you endure a better and healthy life. I want to take this opportunity to wish you all a very merry

Christmas and a prosperous New Year. I pray that God will give you all strength to withstand the battering that are supposed to be imposed upon us in the not too distant future, but being black we know we are strong Mr. Speaker, and we would be able to endure until we will be relieved in the not too distant future.

Mr. Speaker, I want to extend merry Christmas to you and your family, I want to extend a very merry Christmas to the very loving and embracing staff of the House of Assembly. I want to extend merry Christmas to all the members on the government side, I hope that God will speak to you and will instill in you a sense of purpose and love for people. And I hope that you all would enjoy a very merry Christmas and have prosperous New Year. To my Honourable Leader of the Opposition I do not think I can find the words to describe the way in which I want him to enjoy himself, although I know he is presently experiencing the hardships as well. But let, me take this opportunity Mr. President to wish you and your family a very merry Christmas and a bright and prosperous and successful new year. My other brothers right and left on the opposition bench wish you all the best and I hope that you will endure to the end.

Let me take this opportunity to finally wish all the people of Marriagua a very merry Christmas and a bright and prosperous new year. You all would be getting an opportunity to meet with me before that precious day comes. It is always my duty to give my visits and to ensure that everything is A Okay; I love you all and I hope that you will see the wisdom to make wise and conscious decisions. Thank you very much Marriagua and I would be there for you every time. I love you. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, we have had a very long day, and tomorrow morning really is the last morning of this debate, I therefore beg to move the suspension of this House until 9:00 o'clock tomorrow morning.

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

#### **SUSPENSION**

***Question put and agreed to  
House suspended at 8:10 p.m.***