

No. 2
First Session

THURSDAY
3RD May, 2001

Seventh Parliament

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

THE
PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES
(HANSARD)

ADVANCE COPY

OFFICIAL REPORT

CONTENTS

Thursday 3rd May, 2001

Prayers	6
Obituaries	6
Congratulatory Remarks	8
Minutes	13
Petitions	14
Questions	29
Merchant Shipping (Amendment) Bill 2001 (First, second and third readings)	37

Securities Bill 2001 (First reading)	65
Motion on Constitutional Reform	66
Dr. the Hon. Ralph Gonsalves	66
Adjournment	78

THE

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

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

SECOND SITTING

3RD May, 2001

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

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

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER IN THE CHAIR

Honourable Hendrick Alexander

Present

MEMBERS OF CABINET

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

Dr. The Honourable Ralph Gonsalves

Member for North Central Windward

Attorney General

Honourable Judith Jones-Morgan

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

Honourable Louis Straker

Member for Central Leeward

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

Member for South Windward

Minister of Education, Youth and Sports
Honourable Michael Browne

Member for West St. George

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

Member for Marriaqua

Minister of Agriculture, Lands and Fisheries
Honourable Selmon Walters

Member for South Central
Windward

Minister of Health and the Environment
Honourable Dr. Douglas Slater

Member for South Leeward

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

Member for North Leeward

Minister of Tourism and Culture
Honourable Rene Baptist

Member for West Kingstown

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

Member for East St. George

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

Member for North Windward

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

Member for Central Kingstown

Minister of Transport, Works and Housing
Honourable Julian Francis

Government Senator

Honourable Edwin Snagg

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

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE

Honourable Arnhim Eustace

Member for East Kingstown/
Leader of the Opposition

Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday

Member for Northern Grenadines

Honourable Terrance Ollivierre

Member for Southern Grenadines

Honourable Juliet George

Government Senator

Honourable Andrea Young

Government Senator/Deputy Speaker

Honourable Joseph Burns Bonadie

Opposition Senator

Honourable Gerard Shallow

Opposition Senator

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 3RD MAY 2001

PRAYERS

Mr. Speaker, read the Prayers of the House.

OBITUARIES

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in this Honourable House to pay tribute to a son of the soil. The sun set on his life when the circle was completed on the 8th April, 2001, his name was Roderick Malcolm Grant.

A giant in the industry of tourism, in St. Vincent and the Grenadines where he spent the largest part of his corporate life in promoting this country as a tourism destination. His service with LIAT is unmatched throughout the region, indeed, Mr. Speaker, we feel that he is a large part, the person who you may call the hero in making LIAT a household name in this part of the Caribbean. In his later years he settled into retirement in his beloved travel business, but however he found time to be an active member in the commercial life of this country by serving as the director of Y.D. Lima (St. Vincent) Ltd.

A father, a husband, a national, such was his service to this country which he loved. He mastered the English language and could argue with any Queen's Counsel with astuteness and ability. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members may God have mercy on the soul of Roderick Malcolm Grant. Sympathy of this Honourable House goes out to his family.

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members of this House, I rise also to pay tribute to Roderick Malcolm Grant, a devoted business man who had passed on and gone to the great beyond. We want to recognize the services to St. Vincent and the Grenadines in the business ventures that he had performed here.

I take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, on our behalf to sympathize with his family and friends, and may his soul rest in peace.

HONOURABLE JOSEPH BURNS BONADIE: Mr. Speaker, I would like to join the other two members opposite in paying tribute to Roddy Grant. I don't know whether or not they are more familiar with him than me. I know the Minister of Transport is an unofficial member of the Cobblestone Club which I believe that Mr. Grant was the Chairman.

I met Roddy Grant after leaving school when I headed up the Commercial Technical and Allied Workers Union. In his official capacity as chairman of the Tourist Board, and I organised the taxi drivers in St. Vincent and the Grenadines to deal with the tour operators so that they could get a better share of the cake and Roddy Grant as chairman of the Tourist Board gave us tremendous support in that he was able to bring together the tour operators and the Union so that we could get a better share and we did not know, Mr. Speaker, what was being paid to the operators vis-a-vis what the taxi drivers received, but Roderick Grant, a man who understands the plight of the ordinary man and woman, who was a very straightforward individual gave us the details from which we were able to move forward.

As the Minister of Tourism said, he was a stickler for the English language, and he always criticized people who made very long speeches with little content, and he would write articles to the press that would be two or three paragraphs, if so many, but full of biting words, and at times he attempted to rebuke a lot of us who like to use a lot of "flurry". He was a good businessman. He was a man who traveled extensively, and at times he would discuss his leaving us at Cobblestone in the heart of winter to go to places like Chicago, and of course when he returns he would give us the stories and the experiences of his life. I was not here when he died. I was not able to attend his funeral, which I regret very much, because Roderick Grant is a giant among Vincentians who have passed this way. I think he has left a lasting impression and I would hope that somewhere along the line we would be able to give him some recognition. He was a man who did not like kudos, in terms of MB's and OB's, he was always very critical of those things. But I am sure that he could be remembered for the contribution, which he has made to tourism and to the business in general in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I wish that the House would record to his family our sympathies on his passing.

HONOURABLE SELMON WALTERS: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to pay tribute to another son of our soil, the late Raymond S. Liverpool of Rasal Agencies and of Cane Garden. I first came into contact with Mr. Liverpool when I went to Barrouallie many years ago, in fact, his mother-in-law was a very good friend of mine, and I can recall days when I went down there and she would want to talk about Raymond, and she would mistakenly say Selmon.

Mr. Speaker, here is another son of the Vincentian soil who made a stalwart contribution to nation building. Sometimes they pass away and we tend to forget the contribution made by these people. Mr. Liverpool made his contribution in terms of the

commercial development of the nation. And now that he is gone, we would pay tribute to him in this House, and I would like the House to pass on our sympathies to his wife and his children and may his soul rest in peace.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: I too would like to join Honourable Selmon Walters, Minister of Agriculture in paying tribute to Raymond Liverpool. He was a quiet and a dignified man. A man of strong convictions; a man who had worked hard to build his business from scratch. In fact he started his business from home, and over the years he was able to expand by the dint and toil of his hands and his own mind. What stands out for me, Mr. Speaker, about his life is the quiet dignity of the man. He really was an exemplary citizen in our country. And I sincerely regret his passing. At his funeral I noted the presence of the Jaycees who recognized his contribution to that organisation during his life. I know his wife and his children would sadly miss him, and they now have the responsibility of carrying on his business that he has started. I wish to say to them that we in this House offered them sincerest sympathies.

CONGRATULATORY REMARKS

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, this side of the House would very much like to congratulate five outstanding Vincentians on their appointment as Goodwill Ambassadors for St. Vincent and the Grenadines, which appointment carries the privilege of holding a diplomatic passport of this country. Goodwill Ambassadors would not be paid any salary or stipend, however, if, as is expected, they would from time to time perform certain duties overseas on behalf of the Government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, they would receive the usual allowances which appertain to such specific representation.

The five persons whom we in the Cabinet, this week appointed to the office of Goodwill Ambassador are Cameron Cuffy, West Indies Test Cricketer, Nixon Mc Lean, West Indies Test Cricketer, Pamenos Ballantyne, the finest athlete this country has ever produced, and the most outstanding marathoner in the Caribbean, and indeed on the basis of the results in the Sydney Olympics, the second best marathoner in the Western Hemisphere. Then there is Skiddy Francis-Crick, a stalwart netballer who has represented this country with great distinction regionally and internationally in the sport and who is a member of the West Indies Net Ball Team. And finally Alston Becket Cyrus an international cultural artiste of considerable distinction. A man with a string of hit records who has brought glory to St. Vincent and the Grenadines and all have brought an additional nobility to our Caribbean Civilizations.

Persons who have been appointed to the office of Goodwill Ambassador have been so appointed because of their exceptional merit and achievement in the field of sports and culture and persons who are of sound character and disposition. I suspect that there are other persons whom individuals may wish to suggest to be appointed as Goodwill

Ambassadors, and they may well be, but we have to be careful that we do not appoint too many persons to the office thereby devaluing the significance.

As is well known in the country, it was on the basis of my intervention when I was on the other side that Michael Findley, the West Indies Cricket Test Selection Committee Chairman, that it was on my initiative that the then Prime Minister, Sir James Mitchell agreed on the floor of the House to accord Mr. Findley the privilege of carrying a diplomatic passport.

It is with regret that in the same week that the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines appointed Mr. Cameron Cuffy to the Office of Goodwill Ambassador that Cable and Wireless (West Indies) Ltd here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines found it expedient to retrench him, dismiss him, or whatever euphemism is used in down sizing, that is a matter where there has been an exchange of letters between the Prime Minister and the general manager here and also conversations with Chief Executive Officer of Cable and Wireless regionally, Mr. Errol Miller. This morning I receive a letter from Mr. Kyle the general manager here with a proposal in relation to Mr. Cuffy, consequent on my representation.

I do not think that that particular proposal is acceptable by the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and I have so communicated, the terms, which we would consider acceptable in all the circumstances. It would not be prudent of me to state the details, but only to indicate that that matter is the subject of on going discussions, and exchange of letters. We are also very concerned about the other Cable and Wireless workers and the Honourable Jerrol Thompson, the Minister of Telecommunications and Honourable Edwin Snagg, Parliamentary Sectary in the Ministry of Labour have been asked by me to interface with Cable and Wireless as to the retrenchment or the dismissal or whatever terminology is used, to interface with them concerning those other persons.

I want most heartedly to congratulate the first batch of very distinguished Goodwill Ambassadors, and I am quite sure that the Opposition would join the Government in recognizing this as positive move for persons in the field of Sports and Culture or other areas of human endeavour and they would be examples for others to aspire to. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Mr. Speaker, I would just like to offer my share of congratulations to the five Goodwill Ambassadors those who the Government has seen fit to recognize for their tremendous contributions in the various spheres of life in this country. The ones who do their utmost to place this country on the map, as small as we are to give us a recognition beyond our physical size.

I am mostly familiar with the name of Alston Becket Cyrus, and I have spoken in this House glowing terms about a young man. Most every one knows his connection to me, he is a family member as a dear friend, and I have acted as elder brother to him. I have known him all his life. I recall the early days when he used piece of board and what we call bag thread had it tightened, placed on the board and started his adventure as a banjoist or guitarist because of course that was the old way, and the cheapest way of getting a home made banjo. And I recall the little fellow who was my neighbour also making up his own calypsoes. Everyone knows that I had been instrumental in bring him up to the United States, he entered the Army and stated to sing there and thrilled the other soldiers with his ability to compose and sing. And when he left the United States Army he went full blown as a calypsonian.

Becket is a very humble man who has come from very humble beginnings. Now everyone knows as a Seventh Day Adventist I don't indulge too much in calypsoes, but every single record he has cut he has sent a complementary copy to my home,, and my children they enjoy the music and they practice their own little dancing as I did when I was much younger at the music of the calypsoes there. [Interjection] Yes I used to at times. And so because of my familiarity with this young man who has really grown as a great calypsonian, well recognized not only nationally, not only regionally, but internationally, because I remember some years ago when he went to Brazil, and of course his Calypso "Teaser" was a big hit there, translated in Spanish. But he has done much to create a goodwill for this country and to place our name on the map, and think this is the very least we can do for him, while he is still alive.

The Beatles at one time were given recognition and were knighted by the Queen for their contribution to their country, their cultural and financial contribution to United Kingdom, and certainly we can do no less, in recognizing one of our great cultural artiste, and so I am very happy and proud that we have given this recognition to my dear friend, Alston Becket, along with the other four, who have excelled in the area of sports, but I am more closely affiliated with Becket, I know more of him than I know of the others. With regards to those who might feel that it was too restricted, and I know that there are lots of other people, we do not want to diminish the contribution that they are making, but I know that there would be further and future opportunities to recognize them, but I think that this is an excellent start for us to recognize some of those who gave so much to put our country on the map and create goodwill for our people. Thank you.

HONOURABLE JOSEPH BURNS BONADIE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to join with the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister in paying tribute and complimenting the Government on the appointment of these five Goodwill Ambassadors.

The Prime Minister always anticipates what somebody is going to say, and I want an additional name added to the list, and it is our contribution not to diminish in terms of

what they have done, but I think nobody in St. Vincent and the Grenadines would have any dispute in adding, and I am not being presumptuous, but in adding Adonis Foyle to that list. I think he is the number one basketball player of which we are all proud; he lives in the United States. And he can do a good job for us. I wish to join with the Prime Minister in saying that it is unfortunate that one of the Goodwill Ambassadors has been down sized in Cable and Wireless. But I think we have to look at what is going on globally. I myself have my own reservations in terms of some of the persons that have been axed at Cable and Wireless. It might not be a good idea to try to make an exception for someone because he plays West Indies cricket. What I would agree with is the effort made by the Prime Minister to ensure that our Goodwill Ambassador Cameron Cuffy is given something that would keep him occupied and keep him alive.

I too, Mr. Speaker, made some intervention with Cable and Wireless,, because, as you know, a lot of the benefits that workers are deriving now from down sizing, were benefits anticipated in terms of your own negotiating with the company, and I believe that as a Goodwill Ambassador, Cameron Cuffy can do quite a lot for St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and I believe that it is incumbent on the Government to work out some arrangement with Cable and wireless, not in terms of his employment but in terms of what the Government wants him to do, so that they can make a contribution to fulfill the financial obligations in his new role. I believe that that would be a fitting compromise, and I want to commend the Prime Minister for the effort which he has made in terms of ensuring that one of our sons of the soil who has distinguished himself is taken care of. We like to give a lot of lip service to people who have performed, and we like to rate them, but I believe, Mr. Speaker, we have to ensure that the issuing of a diplomatic passport alone is not what we are about. I wish to commend the Government for starting something which I believe is good, and I feel that from time to time these persons can make their mark and put St. Vincent greater on the map.

Some years ago, I held a benefit in Toronto for Becket, and I did it, Mr. Speaker, because of the tremendous contribution which he had made to Caribana in Toronto, and in bringing up to Toronto, a number of Vincentian Bands, and as you would know, St. Vincent and the Grenadines for those persons who lived in Toronto, and I am sure the Honourable Minister of National Security would attest that Caribana was started by Vincentians and the contributions which they made, and they continue to make to the economy of Ontario. Becket played a very important part in that, a number of the bands from St. Vincent and the Grenadines went Toronto to accompany Becket during his period up there, something which they still do. And I thought, and felt proud as a Vincentian that we could impress upon the Caribana committee, which incidentally has been dominated by Jamaicans, that here is a Vincentian carrying on the tradition of what was started by Vincentians and Dr. Allan Liverpool, I think, must take full credit with the Daisley brothers.

So we are very happy in deed and we want to associate ourselves with these five Goodwill Ambassadors but implore you to take into consideration the sixth one which in no way will diminish the office that these Goodwill Ambassadors would be required to perform.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: May I crave your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, on this matter, I want to assure the Honourable Senator Bonadie that the name of Adonis Foyle was discussed at some length, he is a person who is a distinguished athlete and I know him well, he has spent a lot of time in my company the last time he was in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, also other names were considered, for example, Ezra Hendrickson, because as you know he plays, you see him on Channel 14, and he has a jersey over another one marked "100% Vincy, and every time he scores he takes off the jersey for his team so that the whole world would see 100% Vincy, and often as you would realize that these are judgment calls, it is not in anyway intended to diminish the achievement of those others. I mention those so that Senator Bonadie would appreciate that these names and others were considered, and as the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister said that this is a start, but bearing in mind we can't give too many so as to diminish the value. It is like if you give every Tom, Dick, Harry and Mary a knighthood, as sometimes happen in some countries after a while the knighthood doesn't carry the same value and I think that is appreciated.

I want to say in relation to Cameron Cuffy without giving any details, specifically what I put to Cable and Wireless is that Cameron Cuffy be employed with the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines as a Sports Development Officer for a particular period of time on particular terms, and as Senator Bonadie, a Trade Unionist, knows quite well in this sort of a discussion you have a proposal, you have a counter proposal, certain things advanced are not acceptable, in fact some things advanced may well be an affront, but we are in the process of trying to come to some understanding on the matter and I am hopeful that the matter would be amicably resolved without the issue in any way affecting the relation between the Government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines on the one hand, and Cable and Wireless on the other. But the issue of Cameron Cuffy and the manner in which he has been down sized is one of profound significance to the people of this country, and I am very pleased to see that both the Opposition has joined the Government on this matter so that Cable and Wireless would have no wriggle room in our discussions as to expecting that some partisan advantage could be sought by not paying full credence to the position of the Government.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise on this occasion to congratulate this side of the House, the Government for making what is a very bold step toward democracy in this country. Today I know that Vincentians are out there now listening to this live broadcast of the House. And this cannot be underestimated, recently I can remember when we tried, some members of the media,

the press tried to do so in advance of democracy while we were on the other side, and members on this side then, in fact very much sitting in the vicinity where I am today, made it a big huff and a puff and going across to that side to disconnect the broadcast; as was said earlier about the late Roddy Grant, he did not mince words, and did not speak long speeches, I am not going to do that, but to send home the message that this Government will continue to do whatever we are guided by the people, in the interest of the people, and certainly this is a step towards that. I thank you.

HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in my capacity as Minister of Education to join in the congratulations to the five persons who are recipients of the Goodwill Ambassadorships. The names have been called, and I just wish to reiterate that by definition, a goodwill ambassador is a messenger and an agent of goodwill. In our context, that messenger that messenger ought to be quite explicitly Vincentian, precisely because we want that person to take the goodwill from our shores, and that person is going to carry diplomatic passport.

We expect our Goodwill Ambassadors, Mr. Speaker, to continue to represent St. Vincent and the Grenadines not only via their sporting talents, but also via their exemplary behaviour and conduct, and indeed by their nationalism and regionalism. We expect them to serve as role models and an inspiration, especially to our young people, but generally to our population. We know that they are indeed the embodiment of talent, and indeed tremendous discipline, because many of them have had to overcome enormous difficulties and indeed certain vicissitudes of life, but they have demonstrated strength of character, which we believe is exemplary. They also embody health, and healthy competition, and we see them as samples and symbols of our civilization. In that context we consider them not necessary to be larger than life indeed they are part of life, but important large symbols in our lives. And in that context we believe the selection was very appropriately done and that the selection merits commendation.

It is indeed interesting to note that one of the five is a woman, and this is not by way of tokenism to make sure that a woman is among goodwill ambassadors, because everybody would agree that Skiddy Francis is part of that upper circle, that upper echelon in international sports and deserves that selection to be a goodwill ambassador.

It is interesting in terms of the distribution, Mr. Speaker, that the four sports person come from the Windward side of the country, and our cultural icon comes from the Leeward side, I think that is share coincidence. [Interjection] Yes Marriaqua is part of the Leeward. But it is interesting to just not the distribution of the persons selected and I hope it would not be long before capital Kingstown is well represented among our goodwill and the Grenadines, among our Goodwill Ambassadors.

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting because we know in sports you have the ups and the downs and reflecting on the second one day international yesterday we saw the contrasting fortunes and performances of two of the Goodwill Ambassadors with the outstanding work of Cameron Cuffy, 10 overs, 21 runs, 2 wickets when people like Hershell Gibbs were going full cry. But we saw on the other side the difficulties faced by our own Nixon Mc Lean, but that is how the sporting arena goes, but taken in its totality Mr. Speaker, their performance, as the Prime Minister pointed out, reflects exceptional merit and achievement, and I am sure we will rally around those persons.

From the Ministry of Education we will expect them to be symbols of our young, people and that they would be made available, as they have been doing in the past, for work in the schools to inspire our young people, and indeed to inspire our nation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I rise to offer sincere congratulations to Alston Becket Cyrus on his being elevated to being a goodwill ambassador for St. Vincent and the Grenadines, being recognized by the Government of this country, with such status, the longer I live the more I understand certain truisms. There have been many words said about Becket and his excellence and his international acclaim, however, this side of the House did what the old people say; actions speak louder than words. And therefore I also rise to congratulate, Mr. Speaker, the wisdom of this Cabinet and this Government in putting their best foot forward, and in fulfilling a pledge made to the people of this country in the last Election campaign to so endorse persons of excellence in this country and elevate them to such a status. This is only the beginning, and this is the first one in the arena of culture, I'm urging all others involved in culture and the arts to emulate Alston Becket Cyrus, and become of international acclaim.

Congratulations to the sports persons as well, including Skiddy Francis-Crick, I wish that some of us could shoot as well and score as often. Congratulations to all five.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the Sittings held on the 11th January 2001 and 17th April 2001, copies of which had been circulated previously, were taken as read and were confirmed.

PETITIONS

HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions in my name.

1. THE HUMBLE PETITION OF THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS OF ONTARIO;

IN THE MATTER OF AN APPLICATION BY THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS OF ONTARIO

A Charitable Corporation Incorporated Under the Laws of the Province of Ontario, Canada.

**THE REVOCATION OF
THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS INCORPORATION
ACT NO. 35 OF 1969
OF THE LAWS OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES
TO**

**THE SPEAKER AND HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF:

Brother Raymond Schell, Brother Isidore Wasylenchuk and brother Martin O'Connell, the president, the vice-president and the secretary, respectively, of the Brothers of the Christian Schools of Ontario.

SHOWETH THAT:

1. Your Petitioners are authorized officers of the Brothers of the Christian Schools of Ontario a body corporate established under the Laws of the Province of Ontario in the Dominion of Canada.
2. Until recently the Brothers of the Christian Schools of Ontario operated and administered the St. Martin's Secondary School in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines through The Incorporated Trustees of the Brothers of the Christian Schools of Saint Vincent a body corporate established under and by virtue of the provisions of the Brothers of the Christian schools Incorporation Act No. 35 of 1969) of the Laws of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines hereinafter referred to as "the Incorporation Trustees").
3. The Incorporated Trustees have ceased to carry on in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines the operation of educational institutions the purpose for which the Corporation was established under Act No. 35 of 1969 and they have relinquished the operation of the St. Martin's Secondary School to the Roman Catholic Bishop of Kingstown.
4. The Brothers of the Christian Schools of Ontario no longer maintains a presence in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and have fulfilled all its obligations therein.

5. The Brothers of the Christian Schools of Ontario therefore desire to have the Brothers of the Christian Schools Incorporation Act (No. 35 of 1969) of the Laws of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines revoked thereby dissolving the Corporation.

AND YOUR PETITIONERS AS IN DUTY BOUND WILL EVER PRAY.

Dated the 19th day of August, 2000.

THE BROTHERS OF THE CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS OF ONTARIO

Signed by: Per: Brother Raymond Schell, President
 Per: Brother Isidore Wasylenchuk, Vice-President
 Per: Brother Martin O'Connell, Secretary

Sworn to me this 9th day of August, 2000.

Signed Stephen O'Donohue, Notary Public

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

Signed by Theresa Adams, Clerk of the House of Assembly

2. THE HUMBLE PETITION OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE INTERMEDIATE HIGH SCHOOL OF KINGSTOWN IN ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES;

THE HUMBLE PETITION of the Board of Governors of the Intermediate High School of Kingstown in St. Vincent and the Grenadines SHOWETH:-

1. The Intermediate High School (I.H.S.) is a private Education Institution established since 1928 and has been providing secondary education to the children of the State of St. Vincent and the Grenadines
2. I.H.S. has on roll 345 students with a daily attendance of 330.
3. It is the desire of the Board of Governors to give this educational institution permanency and succession beyond the lives of its present Board that is to have perpetual succession.

4. The existing members of the Board of Governors have resolved and requested the Honourable Minister of Education to present the relevant bill to the House of Assembly. A copy of which is exhibited herewith and marked "ORDS1".
5. The object of the Petition is to give perpetual succession to the I.H.S. by incorporating it into a Corporation Sole for the purpose of carrying on the function and role of a private Educational institution with full power to purchase, take, hold, enjoy, sell, transport, mortgage, lease, invest and otherwise deal with and dispose of all property moveable and immovable of whatever nature or kind.

AND YOUR PETITIONER THEREFORE PRAY that a PRIVATE BILL as exhibited herewith the reasons and objects as are provided and to effect the above purpose to be introduced in the House of Assembly.

AND YOUR PETITIONERS will in duty bound ever pray.

Dated the 27th day of December, 2000

/s/ Othniel R. Sylvester
Chairman of the Board of Governors

Mr. Speaker, I beg to have the papers laid on the table.

***Question put and agreed to.
Papers laid on the table.***

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Social Development. We will treat you papers as we treated the Minister of Education, you will read them all at once.

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I rise to present ten petitions standing in my name;

3. IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION BY THE TRUSTEES OF "FOUNTAIN GOSPEL HALL" TO THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY SEEKING INCORPORATION AS A BODY CORPORATE TO:-

THE SPEAKER AND HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES.

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF:-

MR. HUGH MC KIE	– ELDER of Arnos Vale
MR. ELUM MURPHY	– ELDER of Cane hall
MR. BRENDON GIBSON	– ELDER of Cane Garden
MR. CHRISTOPHER DENNIE	– ELDER of Kingstown Park

MR. CURTIS GREAVES
MR. FITZGERALD PROVIDENCE
MR. ORMOND CODRINGTON

– **MEMBER of Queen’s Drive**
– **MEMBER of Old Montrose**
– **MEMBER of Arnos Vale**

SHOWETH THAT:-

1. Your Petitioners are the members of the Executive Committee of “Fountain Gospel Hall” in the State of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (hereinafter referred to as “the CHURCH”)
2. Your Petitioners have been mandated by the Church to seek legal incorporation as a body corporate of the said Church.
3. The said Church was established in the State of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines with the objectives of carrying out the great Commission of Jesus Christ to go into all the world and preach the gospel.
Your Petitioners further state that the Church seeks not what it can receive but what it can give so that lives can be enriched and to assist Government in the eradication of social evils such as drugs, unemployment and general associated with teenagers, adult and social deprived in our society.

Endorsed as being in accordance with the Rules with respect to Petitions.
Resubmitted 2/4/01

Signed by Theresa Adams, Clerk of the House of Assembly.

4. THE HUMBLE PETITION OF MEMBERS OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES.

The Humble Petition of PASTOR SIMEON NORTON and CLETON BURNETT and LANCELOT BROOKS, members of THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES SHOWETH:

That sometime in the year 1980 a church called ARNOS VALE CHRISTIAN CHURCH was established at Arnos Vale, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines with a membership of 30 persons which has since grown to 110 persons.

That in or about December 1987 a branch of that church called GLEN CHRISTIAN CHURCH was established at Glen, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines with a membership of 20 persons which has since grown to 75 persons

That our combined total membership is 185 persons and will gradually grow in strength with the passage of time. Our total congregation now exceeds 185 persons.

That the members of the congregation of the said ARNOS VALE CHRISTIAN CHURCH and the GLEN CHRISTIAN CHURCH met and unanimously agreed that they should consolidate under one name THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES, to be incorporated as a single church (the "Church" with several branches and with the rights and obligations normally given and performed by churches incorporated by the private Acts of Parliament.

The main objectives of THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES and its branches which have a common doctrine is to teach in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines the Biblical truths as they perceive them as a part of the Christian religion.

That is the intention of the Church and its branches to serve the entire Vincentian community.

That the Church is active in social as well as religious work and will support develop and take part in cultural and other artistic activities beneficial to their communities; to relieve poverty, suffering and distress among members of the those communities through social welfare organisation or otherwise; to establish, maintain and supply technical staff required for medical and dental services and to cooperate with the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines if this agreed, in meeting the medical and dental needs of the community; as well as to provide educational opportunities for members of the church in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and elsewhere in theological training and related disciplines.

That the need for our presence in the community is evidenced by the growth of our membership.

That the Church is dedicated to the growth, survival and strengthening of our Christian community.

That our Church will be managed by an Executive Committee.

That it is essential that the Executive Committee of the Church be created an ecclesiastical corporation under the laws of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines with power to appoint trustees and their successors in office, and to own property for the sole use of the said Church.

That the Constitution of the State of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines guarantees the freedom of religion as is widely practiced in this State.

WE THEREFORE DESIRE that a Private Bill, the objects and reasons for which is to provide incorporation of the said body of THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES as a corporation aggregate, and to effect the above purposes, should be introduced in the House of Assembly, Kingstown

AND YOUR PETITIONERS shall in duty bound ever pray.

DATED AT KINGSTOWN in the Parish of Saint George in the State of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines this 15th day of February in the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand.

Signed Pastor Simeon Norton, Lancelot Brooks, Cleton Burnett

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

Signed by Theresa Adams Clerk of the House of Assembly.

5. THE HUMBLE PETITION OF MEMBERS OF THE KINGSTOWN BAPTIST CHURCH OF ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES.

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF:

Cecil Richards of Cane Hall, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Pastor.

Stephern Lewis of Cane Garden, Kingstown, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Treasurer

Diana Alexis of Rivulet, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Secretary

SHOWETH THAT:

1. Your petitioners are the Officers of an organisation called the KINGSTOWN BAPTIST CHURCH OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES, a body which has been in existence since 1979. This body is concerned with presenting the gospel to every one such that its transforming power will draw them into a personal dynamic relationship with god.
2. Your petitioners have been mandated to seek the legal incorporation as a body corporate of the said Organisation.
3. The membership of the Organisation is comprised of general members.
4. The objects of the Organisation as enumerated in the constitution are:

- i. To be a spiritual organism whose members are guided by the Holy Spirit in sharing their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ with as many people as possible in their local community and the world.
 - ii. To be a worshipping, growing, ministering fellowship of believers. This fellowship is a visible part of the body of Christ that seeks to glorify god in all of its activities.
 - iii. To be a part of the body of Christ whose members are committed to ministering to people in the community in every area of their needs where possible.
 - iv. To be a fellowship of believers whose purpose is to be Christ-like in all aspects of their daily lives.
5. Your petitioners append hereto a draft copy of the legislative measures considered appropriate to meet the requirements of the said Organisation should this humble petition be approved.
 6. Your petitioners humbly pray that their Petition may meet the approval of your Honourable Personages.

AND YOUR PETITIONERS AS IN DUTY BOUND WILL EVER PRAY.

Dated in Kingstown in the State of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines

This 5th day of July, 2000.

Cecil Richards Pastor
Stephern Lewis Treasurer
Diana Alexis Secretary

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

Endorsed as being in accordance with the rules with respect to petitions

Signed by Theresa Adams, Clerk of the House of Assembly.

6. THE HUMBLE PETITION OF THE TRUSTEES OF LIVING WATERS MINISTRIES.

IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION BY THE TRUSTEES OF "LIVING WATERS MINISTRIES" TO THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY SEEKING INCORPORATION AS A BODY CORPORATE.

TO: THE SPEAKER AND HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES.

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF:-

MR. PAUL KIRBY	- FAIR HALL	-PASTOR/PRESIDENT
MRS. LAUREENE KIRBY	- FAIR HALL	-VICE PRESIDENT/SECRETARY
MRS. YVETTE WICKHAM	- DORSETSHIRE HILL	- TREASURER
MISS. CLOTHEL YOUNG-	- ARNOS VALE	- PRO/COMMITTEE MEMBER
MRS. VIRGIL FREDERICK	- GIBSON CORNER	- COMMITTEE MEMBER
MRS. ESTHER THOM	- NEW MONTROSE	- COMMITTEE MEMBER
PATRICIA DA SILVA	- LEVEL GARDEN	- COMMITTEE MEMBER

SHOWETH THAT:-

1. Your Petitioners are the members of the Executive Committee of “LIVING WATERS MINISTRIES” in the State of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (hereinafter referred to as “the CHURCH”)
2. Your Petitioners have been mandated by the Church to seek legal incorporation as a body Corporate of the said Church.
3. The said Church was established in the State of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines with the objective of carrying out the great Commission of Jesus Christ to go into all the world and preach the gospel.
Your petitioners further state that the Church seeks not what it can receive but what it can give so that lives can be enriched and to assist Government in the eradication of social evils such as drugs, unemployment and generally associated with teenagers, adult and the socially deprived persons in our society.

AND YOUR PETITIONERS AS IN THE DULY BOUND WILL EVER PRAY

Signed: Mr. Paul Kirby
Mrs. Laureene Kirby
Mrs. Yvette Wickham
Miss Clothel Young
Mrs. Virgil Frederick
Mrs. Esther Thom
Patricia Da Silva

Endorsed as being in accordance with the rules with respect to petitions

Signed by Theresa Adams, Clerk of the House of Assembly.

7. IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION BY THE TRUSTEES OF “EVANGEL TEMPLE INCORPORATED” TO THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY SEEKING INCORPORATION AS A BODY CORPORATE TO:-

THE SPEAKER AND HONOURABLE MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES.

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF:-

ISAAC A. SOLEYN	of U.S.A.	PASTOR/NATIONAL OVERSEER
NORRIS MILLER	of S.V.G.	PASTOR/SECRETARY
BETSY MILLER	of S.V.G.	ASST. SECRETARY/TREASURER
DORIS A. SOLEYN	of U.S.A.	COMMITTEE MEMBER
ANTHONY L. SOLEYN	of U.S.A.	COMMITTEE MEMBER
GEVANDEAN WILSON	of S.V.G.	COMMITTEE MEMBER
MARCIA CREESE	of S.V.G.	COMMITTEE MEMBER

SHOWETH THAT:-

1. Your Petitioners are the members of the Executive Committee of “EVANGEL TEMPLE INCORPORATED” in the State of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (hereinafter referred to as “the CHURCH”)
2. Your Petitioners have been mandated by the Church to seek legal incorporation as a body Corporate of the said Church.
3. The said Church was established in the State of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in the year 1998 with the objective of Carrying out the great commission of Jesus Christ to go into all the world and preach the gospel. Your petitioners further states that the Church seeks not what it can received but what it can give so that lives can be enriched and to assist Government in the eradication of social evils such as drugs, unemployment and general associated with teenagers, adult and the social deprived in our society.

AND YOUR PETITIONERS AS IN DULY BOUND WILL EVER PRAY

Signed by: Isaac A. Soleyn
Norris Miller
Betsy Miller
Doris A. Soleyn
Anthony L. Soleyn
Gevandean Wilson
Marcia Creese

Endorsed as being in accordance with the rules with respect to petitions

Signed by Theresa Adams, Clerk of the House of Assembly.

8. IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION BY THE TRUSTEES OF “WELLS OF LIVING WATER CHURCH” TO THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY SEEKING INCORPORATION AS A BODY CORPORATE TO:-

THE SPEAKER AND HONOURABLE MEMBER OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES.

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF:-

MR. MICHAEL WISE	of S.V.G.	PASTOR
MR. DAVID HARRISON	of Barbados	TRUSTEE
MRS. SONIA HARRISON	of Barbados	TRUSTEE
MR. ANDREW SHEPHERD	of Barbados	TRUSTEE
MR. ROBERT READ	of Barbados	TRUSTEE
MR. SHAUN LEWIS	of S.V.G.	SECRETARY
MRS. MARIE LAIDLAW	of S.V.G.	TREASURER
MR. HUDSON JOHNSON	of S.V.G.	PRO

SHOWETH THAT:-

1. Your Petitioners are the members of the Executive Committee of **“WELLS OF LIVING WATER CHURCH”** in the State of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (hereinafter referred to as **“the CHURCH”**)
2. Your Petitioners have been mandated by the Church to seek legal incorporation as a body Corporate of the said Church.
3. The said Church was established in the State of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in the year 1998 with the objective of Carrying out the great commission of Jesus Christ to go into all the world and preach the gospel.
Your petitioners further states that the Church seeks not what it can received but what it can give so that lives can be enriched and to assist Government in the eradication of social evils such as drugs, unemployment and general associated with teenagers, adult and the social deprived in our society.

AND YOUR PETITIONERS AS IN DULY BOUND WILL EVER PRAY

Signed by: Mr. Michael Wise
Mr. David Harrison
Mrs. Sonia Harrison
Mr. Andrew Shepherd
Mr. Robert Read
Mr. Shaun Lewis
Mrs. Marie Laidlow
Mr. Hudson Johnson

Endorsed as being in accordance with the rules with respect to petitions

Signed by Theresa Adams, Clerk of the House of Assembly.

9. THE HUMBLE PETITION OF PASTOR CALVIN LEDGER, THEOPHILUS LYNCH, PHILMORE LYNCH, VIANNA WEEKS, EZRA LEDGER, NATHAN LEDGER, RODEN FERGUS ALL MEMBERS OF THE LIGHT OF TRUTH CHURCH OF GOD SHOWETH:-

That in 1969 a Church called "The Light of Truth Church of God was started at Richland Park, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And your Petitioners will in duly bound ever pray.

Dated at Kingstown this 26th day of November in the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand.

Endorsed as being in accordance with the rules with respect to petitions.

Signed by Theresa Adams, Clerk of the House of Assembly.

10. THE HUMBLE OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE APOSTOLIC DELIVERANCE CHURCH to the House of Assembly seeking incorporation as a body corporate to:-

To: THE SPEAKER AND HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES.

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF: -

ERIC RODRIGUEZ	OF BIABOU	PASTOR
DARRIEL WILLIAMS	OF BIABOU	SECRETARY
INDGRID FITZ PATRICK	OF BRIDGETOWN	TREASURER
CYRILENE RODRIGUEZ	OF BIABOU	PRO
CHARLES AUDAIN	OF SPRING	COMMITTEE MEMBER
ULRIC LAVIA	OF ARNOS VALE	COMMITTEE MEMBER
JUDY AUDAIN	OF SPRING	COMMITTEE MEMBER

SHOWETH THAT:-

1. Your Petitioners are the members of the Executive Committee of “**APOSTOLIC DELIVERANCE CHURCH**” in the State of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (hereinafter referred to as “the CHURCH”)

2. Your Petitioners have been mandated by the Church to seek legal incorporation as a body Corporate of the said Church.
3. The said Church was established in the State of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in the year 1998 with the objective of Carrying out the great commission of Jesus Christ to go into all the world and preach the gospel.

Your petitioners further states that the Church seeks not what it can received but what it can give so that lives can be enriched and to assist Government in the eradication of social evils such as drugs, unemployment and general associated with teenagers, adult and the social deprived in our society.

AND YOUR PETITIONERS AS IN DULY BOUND WILL EVER PRAY

**Signed by: Eric Rodriguez
 Darriel Williams
 Indgrid Fitz Patrick
 Cyrilene Rodriguez
 Charles Audain
 Ulric Lavia
 Judy Audain**

Endorsed as being in accordance with the rules with respect to petitions.

Signed by Theresa Adams, Clerk of the House of Assembly.

11. THE HUMBLE PETITION OF THE TRUSTEES OF MT. HALIBETH CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF THE WORLD INCORPORATION DIOCESE OF ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES to the House of Assembly seeking incorporation as a body corporate to:-

To: THE SPEAKER AND HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES.

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF:-

MARY ELENE BONADIE	OF FAIR HALL	BISHOP
ELSA YOUNG	OF CALLIAQUA	REVEREND
MAUREEN CUPID	OF NEW MONTROSE	SECRETARY
ERMINE TASH	OF CALLIAQUA	TREASURER
SAMUEL EDWARDS	OF FAIR HALL	ASSISTANT TREASURER

SHOWETH THAT:-

1. Your Petitioners are the members of the Executive Committee of “**APOSTOLIC DELIVERANCE CHURCH**” in the State of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines (hereinafter referred to as “the CHURCH”)
2. Your Petitioners have been mandated by the Church to seek legal incorporation as a body Corporate of the said Church.
3. The said Church was established in the State of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in the year 1998 with the objective of Carrying out the great commission of Jesus Christ to go into all the world and preach the gospel.

Your petitioners further states that the Church seeks not what it can received but what it can give so that lives can be enriched and to assist Government in the eradication of social evils such as drugs, unemployment and general associated with teenagers, adult and the social deprived in our society.

AND YOUR PETITIONERS AS IN DULY BOUND WILL EVER PRAY

Signed by: Mary Elene Bonadie

Elsa Young

Maureen Cupid

Ermine Tash

Samuel Edwards

Endorsed as being in accordance with the rules with respect to petitions.

Signed by Theresa Adams, Clerk of the House of Assembly.

12. THE HUMBLE PETITION OF THE TRUSTEES OF BETHANY BAPTIST CHURCH to the House of Assembly seeking incorporation as a body corporate to:-

To: THE SPEAKER AND HONOURABLE MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES.

THE HUMBLE PETITION OF:-

**JUNIOR BUTLER
ARLENE MILLER
JEROD JACKSON
VERONIC TROTMAN**

**OF STUBBS
OF STUBBS
OF STUBBS
OF STUBBS**

**PRESIDENT
SECRETARY
TREASURER/COMMITTEE MEMBER
SUNDAYSCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT**

ROHAN MC DONALD
SALLY-ANN D. BUTLER
CHARON SCIPIO

OF STUBBS
OF STUBBS
OF STUBBS

COMMITTEE MEMBER
COMMITTEE MEMBER
COMMITTEE MEMBER

AND YOUR PETITIONERS AS IN DULY BOUND WILL EVER PRAY

Signed By: Junior Butler
Arlene Miller
Jerod Jackson
Veronic Trotman
Rohan Mc Donald
Sally-Ann D. Butler
Charon Scipio

Endorsed as being in accordance with the rules with respect to petitions.

Signed by Theresa Adams, Clerk of the House of Assembly.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to have these papers laid on the table.

Question put and agreed to.
Papers laid on the table.

QUESTIONS

1. *The Honourable Arnhim Eustace (East Kingstown) to ask the Minister of Telecommunications, Science, Technology and Industry to indicate the current status of the Call Centre programmes signed by the NDP Administration and which would bring 1400 jobs to this country.*

HONOURABLE DR JERROL THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, the development of the informatics sector in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is progressing steadily.

We have been reviewing the present agreement between the Government and the Call Centres of Grenada and making the necessary arrangements for the start of the first Call Centre. The agreement as signed has many weaknesses and limitations.

Nevertheless, we plan to introduce the first Call Centre in Georgetown and almost simultaneously in Campden Park. The Campden Park site will require extensive renovations and retrofitting in order to bring it up to (IT) Information Technology Standards.

The previous government left no money to start the programme, however, we are confident that this government will be pursuing the Call Centre program expeditiously.

Indeed the government is currently involved in sourcing the initial US\$1.4 million investments to start the Georgetown and Campden Park Call Centres.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Supplemental, Mr. Speaker, before we left office we had created an account for the refurbishing of the Campden Park location, so was in fact created, more specifically, Mr. Speaker, could the Honourable Minister indicate when it is likely that Call Centres at Campden Park and Georgetown would be started and how many seats per call centre?

HONOURABLE DR JERROL THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, we are moving quite imperiously in getting the two Call Centres going. It is hoped that within the upcoming months these entities would probably be going on. In terms of the number of seats in Georgetown it is hoped to be in the region of 80 seats, and in Campden Park in the region of starting with another 100 seats expanding it up to 200 seats.

2. The Honourable Arnhim Eustace (East Kingstown) to ask the Honourable Prime Minister/Minister of Finance to indicate when he intends to present a new Budget to this Honourable House.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, it not usual for the Minister of Finance to indicate if or when he would be presenting a new budget. Of course, we are familiar with the laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines that the Appropriation Bill would come before the end of the financial year, of course it can come even into the new year as has happened on occasion. The Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines however, having come into office consequent upon the March 28th Elections, we are currently reviewing the existing provisions in the Estimates for this year, and the Appropriation Bill that has been passed in December last year, to see what amendments and adjustments would be made, taking into account different priorities and different emphases between the previous administration and this one.

Accordingly, the staffing in the Ministry of Finance has assured me that sometime in June, there should be a position to present Supplementary Estimates with a Supplementary Appropriation Bill, and of course to take account of any special warrants which may be deemed necessary to be processed between that and that particular date in accordance with the Finance and Audit Act of which the Honourable Leader of the Opposition is very familiar.

We are having of course, a lot of work being done simultaneously because we have to do this whilst at the same time be making preparation from now for the Budgets in November or December, whenever it is finally decided, because frankly I don't like how we have the annual budget debate just a week or so before Christmas. I don't think people pay it any mind, and I would like to have it a little earlier. I don't know whether I am going to be able to make that target this year, for the simple reason there is all this pressure of work on the staff and as is well known, though we have extremely talented and hardworking people in the Ministry of Finance and that Ministry has now been strengthened further by the fiscal adviser, there is, of course, a limited institutional capacity to deal with certain issues and matters, and we are seeking to see how that institutional capacity can be strengthened, particularly given the on rushing of a series of events, for instance the new banana regime, which is coming in place in July, and then the tariff only system in 2006 (we just basically have four years), and the free trade area of the Americas which is coming on stream latest December 2005. In other words, work which should have been done, let us say over a period of 12 years, we have to compress that work in four years, whilst at the same time dealing with a number of issues which have been left over from the previous administration.

I hope the answer is sufficiently comprehensive to indicate how we are moving.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to note that the Honourable Prime Minister recognizes that banana industry still requires full support at the international level, and is no longer a matter just for local person.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of the Opposition, I remind you though, that we do not debate questions.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: I am not debating, Sir, I am just making a comment.

3. *The Honourable Arnhim Eustace (East Kingstown) to ask the Honourable Prime Minister/Minister of Finance to indicate how he proposed to deal with the operational conflict of interest within his portfolio between the Ministries of Finance and Labour.*

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, we on this side of the House do not see any conflict of interest between the Prime Minister/Minister of Finance holding the portfolio of Minister of Finance and the Ministry of Labour indeed both the labour movement and the business community have applauded this joinder. I would say the Public Relations Officer of the New Democratic Party, Mr. St. Clair Leacock in his capacity as President of the St. Vincent Employees Federation, publicly applauded the joinder and does not at all see any conflict. We are functioning in this Government in a holistic way, where the whole is more than a summation of the individual parts. And we have already, Mr. Speaker, in order to enhance the macro-economic management of the economy and to address labour

issues. The Government has already established three vital committees. 1. The Cabinet Committee on the economy. 2. A technical tripartite committee, a nine member committee, three from the government, three from labour and three from the business community, the private sector, and that body is a technical committee not a parliamentary one and that committee will deal with prices, wages, production and employment, issues which touch upon both finance, the macro economic management of the country and labour issues and the third committee is a broad-based national economic and social development council on which the Leader of the Opposition has been invited to sit, he or his nominee; and there would also be just one nominee from the Government. It would consist of twenty odd members, the whole spectrum of opinion in the country, labour, business, churches, NGO's, community based organisations and the like.

Now, within the Ministry of Labour, and we have already seen this, within the Ministry of Labour where disputes arise, the Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of Labour is the immediate point man, but if there are difficulties which require the intervention of the Prime Minister, that intervention would take place. Whether indeed the Prime Minister was Minister of Labour or not, Senator Bonadie knows very well that has been the practice when the Late Right Honourable Milton Cato was Prime Minister, and indeed in his regional work and trade unionism he would have witnessed that happening with the late Right Honourable Errol Barrow in Barbados and the late Right Honourable G.M.G. Tom Adams, so we do not see any conflict conceptually or operationally, and I believe that if the Honourable Leader of the Opposition reflects sufficiently on the issues he may well join his Public Relation Officer in seeing wisdom in this particular move.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: I think it's important that I place the issue in context. What I am simply asking in light of the fact that the Minister of Finance is the chief negotiator for all contracts on public works and the Prime Minister is the Minister of Finance, can the Labour Minister who is also the Prime Minister effectively play the role of honest broker?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Well I think, given the architecture which we have set up, of institutions which we have set up and given the holistic manner in which the Government intends to function, and this has been demonstrated already, the concern of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, I believe is essentially abstract, and not real, and I think that both the Labour Movement and the business community and all aspects of the labour movement have recognized it and I note his abstract concern.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Time will tell.

4. *The Honourable Dr. Godwin Friday (Northern Grenadines) to ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs to state clearly:*

(a) What is his Government's position with respect to our relations with the Republic of China on Taiwan?

(b) Whether any approaches has been made to, or any discussions held with the People's Republic of China.

HONOURABLE LOUIS STRAKER: Mr. Speaker, relations with the Republic of China on Taiwan was initiated and established by the Labour Party Government under the late Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Milton Cato in August of 1981. We appreciate the decision of the NDP Administration for seeing wisdom in pursuing the course charted by the Labour Administration.

The new Unity Labour Party Administration has already taken positive steps to strengthen the relationship between Taiwan and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. We have had several meetings with Mr. Tom Chou, the Charge d' Affaires on matters of mutual interest, and we are delighted that the Government of the Republic of China on Taiwan has kindly invited our Prime Minister and a delegation including the Minister of Airports, the Minister of Transport and Roads to visit Taiwan from May 13-22.

We in the Unity Labour Party unequivocally on several occasions in public meetings on radio and television, we have stated that this new ULP Administration expects to continue and strengthen relations with Taiwan. Only those who are physically deaf or those who wish to create mischief or doubt in people's minds would pretend not to hear or know of our strong and oft-repeated affirmations of continued support for a strong relationship with Taiwan. As a consequence of our policy of support for Taiwan, this Government has not made any approach, or held any discussion with the Peoples' Republic of China.

5. *The Honourable Terrence Ollivierre (South Grenadines) to ask the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports to please state:*

In light of the recent problem discovered at the Kingstown Preparatory School, and the statement made by the Honourable Prime Minister which attributed blame to the Public Service on this issue, what are the findings of the report commissioned by the Honourable Minister of Education on this matter.

HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, for the benefit of the listening public and those gathered in the gallery, I wish to, (I see they have the Order Paper some of them) to repeat the question, question being in light of the recent problem discovered at the Kingstown Preparatory School, and the statement made by the Honourable

Prime Minister which attributed blame to the Public Service on this issue, what are the findings of the report commissioned by the Honourable Minister of Education on this matter.

Mr. Speaker, first of all, the question is vague, and I wish to advise the Honourable Member to be guided in the preparation of his questions in the future. For example, I am not sure what the recent problem is referring to; and he has not elaborated in regard to the statement made by the Prime Minister. The Prime Minister has made quite a number of statements.

However, Mr. Speaker, having said that, I wish to avoid the error made by the previous government in dealing with questions when posed by us then in the Opposition. At which time they tried to rubbish not only the question, but also the Opposition, and refuse to answer them. Notwithstanding the vagueness of the question, I would wish given our Government's commitment to transparency and education of the public to reveal the following findings: 1. No recent problems were discovered at the Kingstown Preparatory School. 2. There are many problems, all inherited by this administration and a legacy of the previous past NDP regime. Those problems (and I have drawn from reports of the relevant files) included September 2, 2000, problem with the toilet. January 17, 2000, problem with the drainage. February 24, 1999 problem with overcrowding and termites, January 24th 1999, problem with the railing and children falling over and breaking parts of their body. A recent report from January of this year which addresses, and I quote this one: "Window sills and doors being badly damaged by termites. This is a long standing problem." It goes on to say: "Termites continue to erode the cupboards as well. More cupboards, chairs and tables for teachers are urgently needed. Some teachers are using the students' desks as tables." And it goes on and on.

Mr. Speaker, in 1996 the Headteacher of the Kingstown Preparatory School, was one Mrs. Girlyn Miguel, now Honourable Girlyn Miguel. She was transferred by the NDP administration from that school to the Sion Hill School because she stood up for what is right. There was an overcrowding problem at the school, she resisted taking in a student that was sent by certain people, and she was told she would have to pay the price, she was punished and accordingly victimized and transferred. Since then, Mr. Speaker, there has been a drop in the morale of teachers, and that has been part of my recent finding, the low morale of teachers at that school.

Recently the old problem, (not a recent problem) of woodlice was tackled. And I must say, Mr. Speaker, that it is indeed disheartening to note the irresponsibility of the previous regime that allowed this problem to continue over the years.

Mr. Speaker, I wish on that note to point out that this administration has addressed the particular problem at Prep School, and indeed is moving very assiduously to address similar problems throughout the school system.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

HONOURABLE TERRANCE OLLIVIERRE: All I asked is for the results of the report that was commissioned by the Minister after the children were sent home at the beginning of the term.

HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, it seems that the author of the question is not even familiar with what he said. It required the findings and I have given the findings Mr. Speaker, thank you.

6. *The Honourable Joseph Bonadie (Opposition Senator) to ask the Minister responsible for Labour to indicate the status of the programme with the United States for the recruitment of workers for the Tourism (Hospitality) Industry specifically –*

(a) To indicate the number of persons selected so far.

(b) How many of the names submitted by the former N.D.P Administration were selected.

(c) State the number of names added after the general election.

(d) Indicate how many of these names were selected.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the Department of Labour was instructed by the Permanent Secretary/Ministry of Agriculture and Labour, (the last administration) to co-ordinate activities relative to the recruitment of workers for the Hospitality Industry in the United States of America. The process was started on 12th March, 2001; 16 days before the General Elections.

The programme was advertised on all radio stations and television, whereby applications from suitably qualified persons were sought with a time frame of fourteen days, fourteen hundred and fifty (1450) applications were received. (indicating, Mr. Speaker, the level of unemployment in the country under the NDP administration.

A three (3) member recruitment team from the United States of America visited St. Vincent and the Grenadines since the new government assumed office, very early in its administration, on 9th and 10th April, to conduct interviews for selecting thirty two (32) workers for the Brown Palace Hotel, Denver, Colorado. One Hundred and fifty persons were randomly selected from the 1450 applications for the interview process.

The membership of the team which came from the United States of America is as follows:

Ms. Veronica Srickland – Director, Practical Employees Solutions from Dallas, Texas.

Mr. John Chaszar, General Manager, Brown Palace Hotel.

Ms. Susie Vagar – Director of House Keeping, Brown Palace Hotel.

Twenty-two candidates were selected were selected on 26th April, 2001.

The Department of Labour is not aware that names were submitted by the NDP Administration, given the fact that applications were solicited not from the NDP but from the general public.

The deadline for the submission of applications was not extended after the General Elections. That's A, B and C, D the Honourable Senator Bonadie would note is essentially a repeat of A. I think you had it there by error. Because A asked to indicate the number of persons selected so far; and D asked to indicate how many of these names were selected. That's the answer, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE JOSEPH BURNS BONADIE: Mr. Speaker, I think the Honourable Prime Minister knows that D relates to C. I am not asking a supplementary but D relates to C, in other words whether or not the names were added that were not there previously in the first part.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I have indicated the number that has been selected.

- 7. The Honourable Gerard Shallow (Opposition Senator) to ask the Minister of Social Development, Co-operatives, The Family, Gender and Ecclesiastical Affairs to please state, in light of the fact that significant strides had been made by the former administration cleaning up the capital Kingstown and in light of the return of vendors to the street, what arrangements have the Government.*

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, at present, a very small percentage of vendors still sell on the streets, using carts and trolleys occasionally during the week. On Fridays and Saturdays there is normally an increase in this activity. Since assuming the office of Minister with responsibility for the Market, I have made two (2) official visits to the Market. On my first visit, I was accompanied by the Honourable Minister of Works, Housing and Transportation and his Permanent Secretary, along with the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Social Development and the Warden of the Kingstown Town Board.

During these visits, several issues were raised. They are:

- (a) The urgent need for doors to allow the flow of buyers in and out of the wings on the ground floor.
- (b) The need for water-fountains or coolers to be erected.
- (c) The need for the door on the side facing Jax Enterprises Ltd. to be opened to allow easy access to the first and second floors.
- (d) The need for regular media-promotion of the Market by the Kingstown Town Board.
- (e) The very slow business in the Market.
- (f) The non-operation of the elevators.

I am of the conviction that the requests of the vendors must be addressed. In this context, the following were done:

1. The Agency for Public Information has completed two television promotional programmes on vendors and their goods in the Market.
2. Officials from the Planning Division have visited and decided where the doors on the wings would be placed. This project should be completed by May 15th.
3. The installation of water-fountains at the Market has some technical issues that must be considered, since in the original plan there was no provision for such. However, in the interim the Kingstown Town Board would place water coolers to substitute for the fountains. These would be in place by May 15, 2001.
4. The door on the side facing Jax Enterprise Ltd. was closed for safety purposes. This situation has been remedied and the door will be opened to allow easier access to the first and second floor.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I have publicly asked vendors to operate in their designated areas in the Market, and once we have fulfilled our obligation by putting in place the necessary requirements, efforts will be made to ensure that all vendors comply with the regulations.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

THE MERCHANT SHIPPING (AMENDMENT) BILL 2001

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I beg to move the introduction of the first reading of a Bill for an Act to amend the Merchant Shipping Act Cap. 364.

The objects and the reasons, Mr. Speaker, that it seeks to amend the Merchant Shipping Act (Cap. 364) in order to ensure compliance with the Standards of Training Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers Convention 1978, as amended in 1995.

HONOURABLE JUDITH JONES-MORGAN: I beg to second the Motion, Mr. Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker because of the urgency of this matter and in accordance with Section 48 of the Standing Orders I beg to move that this Bill be taken through all its stages at this sitting.

HONOURABLE JUDITH JONES-MORGAN: I beg to second the Motion, Mr. Speaker.

Question put and agreed to.

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the second reading of this Bill.

HONOURABLE JUDITH JONES-MORGAN: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

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

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

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker, we on this side of this House do not like and would not make it a practice of taking a Bill through all its stages at one sitting. But there is some urgency in this matter and as I debate the urgency would become quite clear.

The Merchant Shipping Act was brought into being by the Labour Party, years and years ago. And there is some \$4 million thereabout that accrued to the Consolidated Fund from this measure. But we are in danger of being black listed unless there are certain measures but in place immediately. For over four years I am told that this matter should have been dealt with, and the matter I am referring to, Mr. Speaker, is a convention which we are party to, and it is called the STCW Convention. And STCW here means Standards of Training Certification and Watchkeeping for seafarers. That's what the abbreviation means.

This STCW Convention came about since 1978. The purpose of the convention is to ensure that Seafarers are properly looked after in layman's term. The certification of these seafarers, their hours of work, what provisions would be made for seafarers

medically, et cetera, et cetera. In the past, each state or party enacted its own legislation, and it was not a conformity globally, so to speak, and so although the STCW Convention came about in 1978, and because of the contravention of some of these measures, where the Governments and the parties had to police this and so on, and there was no proper reporting of this.

In 1995 there was an amendment to the STCW Convention, in our own laws, Merchant Shipping Act Cap. 364 there are certain sections, Section 69 for instance, that deals with complement of officers on a ship, and there are certain areas laid out for instance in the existing Law Cap. 364 it states that a ship of 500 tonnes or upwards there shall be one officer beside the master. In the cases of the ship having more than one mate, at least you must have a first and a second mate et cetera, and it goes on to deal with the horsepower'. But all of these were insular because each state or each party enacted its own legislations. And so the STCW felt they need standardization and the amendments were brought, now we have only until June of this year to comply with these amendments, and to enact these legislations which are the amendments here into law, or otherwise we would be black listed, and that would have serious consequences towards the ships that carry our flags; wherein if we are black listed any ship that carries our flag can be refused entry into a port that is a party to this convention.

I don't have to spell it out, Mr. Speaker, what this can do to our shipping, our maritime shipping, this is not costal, I am talking about Maritime Shipping and so on. Hence this was lying, I don't know where, but some where for over three years, for over four years, and it is only now that there is a new administration to use the term of the Honourable Prime Minister, it is only now since an event took place on the 28th March, and there is a change in administration that we are now seeing and realizing the state in which the last administration left this country.

This is not the only incident, most of us know that we are black listed and cannot export fish to Europe for the same lethargic reaction of the last administration, by not doing what they were supposed to do in a timely fashion. We are fortunate in this case that we can catch this in time, we only have until June, and this is why we asked that this Bill be taken through all its stages. Because for us to adopt the STCW Convention there are certain amendments that must be made to our Parent Law, hence, Mr. Speaker, Section 69 of the Parent Act would be repealed and replaced by Section 2 of this Amendment that is incorporated in the Bill. In that Section 69 as I read out before was the complement of officers, Section 69 now would read:

“Standards of training certification and watchkeeping.”

On the surface it might look as though we are putting in something that is less favourable to the seafarers, but what is not in the Act here would be incorporated in the

regulations. And it is like this in that if all these are incorporated in the Act and you have rapid changes, then it means that you have to come back to the House to change, whilst if they are in the regulations they can be done quickly and effectively. So Section 69, Mr. Speaker, would be repealed and be replaced by this section, a new section 69 (1) and a new section 69 (2) as stated in the Bill.

Now, in order to effect the other changes in the regulations, and these regulations were sent off to the IMO, or the STCW, I am not quite sure which body deals with this, but in order to affect these and bring these regulations into law, we have to repeal certain sections of the parent law, because as you would know, Honourable Members, the parent law takes precedent over the regulations. That the Act takes precedent over subsidiary legislations. And these are left there, then we cannot effect the regulations because the parent act would supercede that and so we are asking that sections 70, which is power to except ships, 71 which grades of certificates of competency, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 78, and 80 that those sections be repealed completely and those measures that are embodied in this law would then be incorporated into the new regulations.

Section 116, I think it is, Mr. Speaker, also is repealed and a new section replaced with the marginal notes as well. And that is, as I have said before, medical supplies that every ship must carry and so, in the parent Act there was an area there that said a ship with a hundred passengers or more, or something like that, would have to have a medical officer on board. Now we can understand that this was applied more in the breach than, because for any ship that is plying the trades and must have a medical officer, and if you have a medical officer you have to have a sick bed et cetera, et cetera, then I believe that some of the owners of the ship was finding this very difficult, but these would be included in the regulations, and so Mr. Speaker, I envisage no difficulty in the passage of this bill, in that it is something that is needed and needed very urgently.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that we need to have these regularized, we are party to this convention and as such we have to comply with the regulations of the convention. Sections 82 as well, just be reminded, this amended, by repealing subsection (2) which is not this whole section that is being amended, just subsection (2) of the Merchant Shipping Act and that is amended by substituting, repealing subsection (2) and substituting what is in this bill, what is the duties and liabilities of the master what the master has to be, what he has to do, once the ship is on the high seas, et cetera, how he arranges what system, how he would organize what duties, et cetera, and that he must maintain discipline and other things like this on board.

So, Mr. Speaker, I think it is a straightforward Bill and I am asking that this Bill has easy passage, thank you.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Any further debate? Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, it is true that we have been involved here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines in this international Merchant Shipping for many years. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, the Merchant Shipping Act is a 1982 Act, we have been involved in some 19 years. The Honourable Minister in his presentation indicated that he saw no difficulty with the passage of this Bill, and indeed I agree that is not difficult. Although, Mr. Speaker, intentionally or not, he sought to leave the impression that the past administration seem to have this business in disarray. I believe it is important, Mr. Speaker, that I point to a few matters in this regard. First of all, Mr. Speaker, the present state of the industry which is governed by this Act and the three or four amendments which have been made since 1982 and now the proposed amendments.

Mr. Speaker, in 1982 and '83 when we were first involved in this exercise, understandably those were the early days of relatively slow growth in the industry as we sought to advance our own position. The Commissioner of Maritime Affairs was appointed to operate from Monaco, and today there are offices in Monaco, Switzerland, agents in London, United Arab Emirates, Greek, Forte Lauderdale and Hong Kong. Over the years, Mr. Speaker, much time and effort have been spent to find position, St. Vincent and the Grenadines as far as Merchant Shipping is concerned, and the number of ships carrying St. Vincent and the Grenadines' flag.

Today, Mr. Speaker, as of September 30, 2000, I don't have any figures later than that, but September 30, 2000 we had 2500 ships carrying the St. Vincent and the Grenadines' flag. On average, the last few years we have been registering 35 to 45 ships per month. The gross register tonnage for all the ships under the St. Vincent and the Grenadines as of September 30, 2000, some ten million tons. St. Vincent and the Grenadines ranks very high in the shipping business, Mr. Speaker, the last time I checked I think we were ranked number 9 in the world. So I don't want anyone, Mr. Speaker, get the impression that the industry is in disarray. I agree with the Honourable Minister that there is need to make the amendments that are now being proposed and we on this side of the House would support the amendments.

Mr. Speaker I want to say that this matter has been discussed prior to the last General Elections, particularly in December, and there was a difference of opinion, a legal difference which between our own department here and the regional offices which represents us overseas, as to how this matter should have been handled. And in fact there were regulations, which were discussed. It is not as if the last administration did not do anything, or was not appraised of the situation.

And, Mr. Speaker, I crave to point out that as far as Merchant Shipping goes, there are some 23 conventions, 15 protocols, 901 resolutions, 43 codes and guidelines, making a grand total 982. Here we are a small country operating in a field quite international, and having through our offices and local staff, short, as we may here have to deal with all this range of conventions, resolutions and codes. And it is not an easy task, Mr. Speaker; it is something that much larger countries than our own will have great difficulty coming to grips with. No wonder efforts are now being made to standardize as far as is possible, and indeed amendments being made here are part of that overall process.

Mr. Speaker, in the December 2000, the *Boltic*, which is the recognized shipping magazine, most prestigious shipping magazine world wide, there is an article on the St. Vincent and the Grenadines participation on this business on pages 60, and 61 which I would make a document of this House. Because I think, Mr. Speaker, this article sets out and gives some history and overview which is useful for us here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that the gentleman yesterday, Mr. Benevovick, who I believe the Honourable Minister would have known before was appointed by the Maritime Commission who died recently, did a very good job for St. Vincent and the Grenadines in terms of helping to develop the business over the years. And today his daughter is continuing to operate the business on our behalf, with head offices in Monaco and Switzerland. So, Mr. Speaker I believe it is important that we understand that we are well placed in this industry, that the industry is not in shambles, but rather we are making additional efforts here this morning to resolve a particular problem and I said, Mr. Speaker, we support those efforts.

Mr. Speaker, the importance of this sector of our economy cannot be measured solely by the four or five million dollars in revenue that we earn to the Consolidated Fund. This industry indicates, Mr. Speaker, as far as the service sector of our economy is concerned, that we have to continue to develop activities of this type if our country is to move forward in this era of globalization. Because this is what it is, you know, this is a global industry and we are required, Mr. Speaker, small as we are, to meet all the international requirements and compete in that industry. And Mr. Speaker, in so doing we do not impose any taxes on our nationals, the revenues earned come from fees, so it is an important industry and we have to spend what ever time we must in trying to keep abreast of all that is happening and ensure that we even further improve our rankings as far this industry is concerned. Surely there are problems and surely there are shortages and deficiencies, which are difficult in small administrations to handle, but I believe Mr. Speaker, that is very important that we continue to operate this industry. And I am assuming, and it is clear to me that from the statement of the Minister introduce this item that there is a commitment to do so.

Mr. Speaker, you know there is a lesson for us here. A lesson for St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I think on both sides of this House we have been saying over the years

that if you can't compete we will perish. Because all of us know, Mr. Speaker, that if difficulties attending our Banana Industry, and even with the recent agreement arrived at we know that there is a fixed timeframe before we go to a freely liberalized banana regime and again, Mr. Speaker, the question of competition is going to arise. So we have to find and continue to work on activities, which allow us to compete, where we have some comparative advantage that allows us to compete, or some absolute advantage that allows us to compete. And hence, Mr. Speaker, when we deal with this Bill we are not simply dealing with a matter of amendments that relate to standardization, we are dealing with the creation of an infrastructure, which allows a sector of our economy in an era of globalization to continue to grow. It is the same argument in this House from time to time we have applied to the offshore sector, and I think on both sides of the House we recognized the limitations that we have in terms of staffing and other infrastructure important for this type of activity. And I think that all of us know, Mr. Speaker, that we have no choice but to get involved in as many activities as we can where there is some possibility for us to compete in on the international market.

And Mr. Speaker, the effort here to standardize, to use standards of training, certification and so forth we support fully, we recognize the deadline that is attached to the exercise and hence we had no difficulty, Mr. Speaker with this bill going through all its stages at this sitting. Because I think we are at one, Mr. Speaker, in our recognition of the fact that this is a critically important sector of our economy, because it demonstrates that a small open island economy can, Mr. Speaker, in certain activities internationally.

Honourable Prime Minister has just returned from his discussions of free trade in the Americas, where I am sure the whole question of our ability to survive, our ability to compete in that new environment was central to the discussions, and how can we survive in such an environment, Mr. Speaker. But here is an example. But when we come to the more pressing problems of goods, we could find ourselves in greater difficulties, and I think all of us, Mr. Speaker, in this Honourable House are well aware of this information, that whatever negotiations take place they must recognize the vulnerability of our economy, the vulnerability of our size, frequency of natural disaster and so forth, all these things we have to reckon with. And Mr. Speaker, I believe that it is in this context that we have to look at this particular piece of legislation. In a way it signals, a symbol that we need to look for activities in which all of us have the opportunity to compete in the new world environment.

Mr. Speaker, there have been several discussions in this House, several interventions, both by myself and the current Prime Minister on matters pertaining to this, and I believe it is important that our people understand fully that what we are dealing with here, Mr. Speaker, is the ability of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to demonstrate the capability to compete in the international environment in a particular activity, therefore

to what extent later on, Mr. Speaker, we can improve our position and indeed expand that into other activities. I think this is what it is about, Mr. Speaker, and I support the proposals that have set out for the amendment and to get the regulations ready and off to the relevant institutions, and Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat that we must not cease to explore avenues for new activities to which we think we can compete on it, and in all our negotiations, we have to be constantly, Mr. Speaker, examining the options, with the view to determining what it is we can do to provide and at the same time, a better standard of living for our people in the present environment.

With those few words, Mr. Speaker, I wish this Bill a safe passage through this Honourable House.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to the Leader of the Opposition for two things, first to give his unqualified support to the passage of this amendment, and secondly for casting the debate within a broader context beyond merchant shipping to include the general matter of services. I think however that important and valuable as those contributions to this debate are and have been, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition cannot so easily escape the charge that his administration, that of the NDP, has been negligent and incompetent in the handling of this matter. I want Mr. Speaker, to indicate how we have arrived at the stage where we are today. I was sworn in as Prime Minister on the 29th March, the Cabinet was put together, ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Could we just have a slight adjustment; I think that there is a feed back somewhere. I think you should slightly adjust.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The Cabinet was sworn in on April the first, Sunday, Monday therefore was the first full day of work of the Government, on Tuesday the third of April, just one month ago, I spoke to Ms. Bonavic, the Commissioner of Maritime Affairs in Monaco, and asked her to come to St. Vincent for us to discuss this urgent matter, she asked me when, I said can you come tomorrow. She arrived within one week with her legal adviser, and on Tuesday the 10th of April we held discussions, and on the same Tuesday, Tuesday morning actually at 7:30 a.m. on the very day she continued the discussion with the Attorney General.

Of course, the Attorney General's Chambers has very limited man power resources, so having been fully briefed by the Commissioner of Maritime Affairs, and other legal experts I proceeded to call the Governor of the Central Bank, my university classmate, Mr. Dwight Venner, and asked him if he could lend us the services of his Legal Drafts person, that she would function on this matter out of the Central Bank while we try to get this amendment Bill together, and that is how we are at this particular pass. Because as the Minister of National Security and Airport and Seaport Administration said, this matter had been languishing for some time in the government of the NDP

administration, because the International Maritime Organization gave long notice that come the end of May this year St. Vincent and the Grenadines would be put on the black list. And that would affect our shipping.

In fact for certain categories of shipping, it is my information that there had been a stop put on the registration of ships here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. It is important to understand the deadline with which we are working, the end of this month. It is true, as the Leader of the Opposition said, that this matter had been discussed by the previous administration, and indeed they passed some regulations, I think it was in January this year, at Cabinet, but we will have to have those regulations revoked because the very passage of those regulations gave rise for further concern by the International Maritime Organisation. What was needed was a substantial amendment to the current law, and then for new regulations to be made pursuant to those amendments, and indeed before this month is finished we are coming back to the House with a second set of amendments to the Merchant Shipping Act, in order for us to accommodate the complete menu, package of regulations which have been advised upon by the international maritime organisation. But we had to do this today as a gesture of good faith that the new administration is moving expeditiously for us to meet the deadline. So that we have to clean up work left by administration while trying to carry our own agenda forward, and that is the difficulty with which we are faced. And what is at stake, as the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, and the Honourable Minister of National Security and Seaport Administration they made the point, what is at stake is over \$4 million, that is as they say on the block, is a good piece of change.

So the exercise in which we are involved here may appear esoteric but it is fundamentally about economics. And that is why it is critical for the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to hear by way of live broadcasts these important matters, so that as the Leader of the Opposition quite correctly said that they will get a base of data of information upon which they would be able to make judgments as to how we have to move in restructuring our economy. But of course they could only get that information if the Parliament is broadcast live, and that is a critical element of good governance, but for 17 years the NDP didn't want to broadcast Parliament live so these are intrinsically connected. They are integrated with one another.

I will say this, on the first Friday after the elections, the former Prime Minister, Sir James, called me and congratulated me on our victory, and he said "Ralph when you go in one of the first things I want you to check is the status of the Merchant Shipping Act," he said because we are facing the hammer. Now his own administration, and that of his successor couldn't deal with the problem, but within a few weeks we are here in the House. Well, now if there is one reason why of justification why the people put out the NDP and put the ULP in power, this is just one reason, of justification why the people put out the NDP and put the ULP in power this is one such reason. Urgency, Mr. Speaker.

This administration is not in love with problems. We are in love with the solution to the problems. Now this amendment as I said would be followed by another one before the end of this month. And then substantial work has to be done on the regulations, and not only do I have to get the assistance of a lady from the Central Bank, I had contacted a retired high court judge to ask her if she would come to assist us with some of the work which we have to do. You must be able, if you are a Prime Minister, to place telephone calls and mobilize resources. That is what leadership is about, and this issue is not unrelated to leadership, and the people in the elections recognize that. So all these are matters which have come together in a simple amendment.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say something about the wider question addressed by the Leader of the Opposition. And he is correct that the debate must be place in that wider context, because it is so placed it looks as though it is piece of a law being passed. We have had difficulties with many of our service areas. One I see here in merchant shipping, it is true that we have made progress, but we were under the hammer and this is the start of the reprieve. After all you couldn't be in office for 17 years and don't have a few more ships registered. It would be a terrible thing. Particularly since we had have very good persons as the Maritime Commissioner, and their work would have to be appreciated here in this House.

But let us take the Offshore Finance Sector. The international agencies relating to offshore finance services and OECD countries have been giving the offshore finance services a hammering. A lot of it not justified, but some of it is justified. They said we would not like you to have as directors for the offshore finance authority persons who are involved in associated banking activities, or in the private sector, and there are five persons on the offshore finance authority. What has this new administration done? Two of the five positions are essentially statutory. The offshore finance inspector who is now acting Mr. Douglas Williams, and the Director General of Finance and Planning. Mr. Maurice Edwards. Two men of impeccable integrity.

And then we proceed to appoint another man of similar standing and integrity, Sims Martin, the fiscal adviser, the chairman of the Offshore Finance Authority and we have gone not just for the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank to assist with oversight of the offshore sector. We have asked the Governor of the Central Bank, and we have secured his permission to appoint the Deputy Governor of the Central Bank, a Vincentian, Mr. Errol Allen to also sit on that Offshore Finance Authority, making the number four, nobody can complain about them. Those four, the fifth person we have not named yet, because I am seeking advice, scouting the Caribbean for another person of independence and quality to sit there.

The Offshore Finance Authority can do its work at the moment with four, but when the full complement of five, the people throughout the world would be able to look at the

Offshore Authority in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and say that is an authority that is completely sanitized. And that is important for us to do. Then we are going to make certain changes within the Offshore Finance Authority itself. We are appointing an offshore finance promoter to separate the functions of promotion and regulation. You can't be regulating the business and promoting it at the same time. And the person who we have earmarked for the same job we have already sent him with two other persons to a seminar in Venezuela, and when he returns we would be sending him again to another one in Miami to build up the technical expertise with the offshore sector, both in the promotion and the regulatory area, and we have other persons to put in and some of the names which I have in mind would surprise even the opposition, because it is "together now."

It would even surprise them some of the names. And when we took steps to assist in the sanitization of the off shore sector by deporting Phillip Marc Vaughn, the NDP publicized on radio saying Vaughn "hasn't yet been found guilty for any offence, how you could let the man go," but those of us in the authority, and those of us who receive the necessary intelligence reports, we know what Vaughn is about. The man, has been charged using our language with forty indictable offences in the United States of America, 40, twenty-three of them for money laundering and 17 for assorted types of fraud and conspiracy, wire fraud, mail fraud, bank fraud. Notwithstanding a letter on the file from the former offshore inspector, saying that the man is clean as a whistle, good diligence. The man since 1985, the allegations are in the intelligence report that I have received from the international authorities specifically out of the United States of America. This man has been engaged in what is called a pansy scheme, tells people that I could get returns on your investment up to 84%. And you have some people who would believe that you know. Eighty-four percent and what he is accused of doing he take your money and the next man's money and a fourth, and a fifth, and a tenth' suckers money; and when the first one wants back investment on his money he, takes the last money because there is no investment to give to the other one, a classic pyramid scheme. I will have a statement more to make on Phillip Marc Vaughn because there are other things to be revealed which I have not revealed; and you know that I have a tendency of allowing people to run their mouth until it is right to reveal what I have to reveal. So they better beware.

I do not want to comment on the case below, dealing with the issue of a constitutional motion, concerning Mr. Vaughn. I wouldn't be permitted so to do in any case by the Speaker. But I noticed that lawyers who are involved in the matter are discussing it on their programme on television. They are trying to make this thing like politics, because Phillip Marc Vaughn was campaigning for the NDP in the last election, and the evidence indicate that he contributed sizable sums of money to the NDP in the last elections. The Leader of the Opposition wouldn't know everything that happens in the NDP you know, he wouldn't know everything that happens in the NDP. But I am in a position to get the requisite intelligence reports. And those are the facts, so I agree

with the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, we have to present this Bill, Mr. Speaker, within the context of the Services, but in order to make sure that the offshore finance services advance and process, you have to sanitize it. You have to sanitize it. The police acted in the matter and when the police acted as one on an issue this government will not allow it to hang out there and dry; and that is why the Cabinet of St. Vincent and the Grenadines has endorsed the actions of the police in relation to Phillip Marc Vaughn. If an individual policeman does something, breaking the law, or offending the Human Rights of a Vincentian, so be it, he or she will have to take the slings and arrows of misfortune, which may befall him.

It is passing strange that those who criticize us, in the Unity Labour Party for protesting in April and May, for protecting the rights of black people in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, one of the principal critics would lie down in his suit in hot sun in front of police vehicle to protect a white man. It is not me who raised these issues, you know. Passing strange, but the people of this country have wisdom, and they understand. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition quite rightly raised the issue of the Banana Industry and the problems, which are inherent in it. And Mr. Speaker, the point of relevance and contact of this debate is not just about the Bill, but the issues of the wider economy and again the Leader of the Opposition is correct, and in that regard I would like to state the following:

The market position for the industry has been given a reprieve, the market regime which is coming into being on the first of July this year, is not as good as the one we have, but it is far better than the earlier proposed first come, first serve. That would have wiped us out completely. This one is giving us some breathing space, the Tariff quota system which will keep us up to 2006 until the tariff only regime comes into place, which only the very competitive would survive.

We have therefore, essentially, four years to put in place something, which the NDP has diddled and doodled about for over the last dozen years, and we have to restructure the banana industry. You will notice you would have heard on the news yesterday that the evening before the European Union and Ecuador came to a conclusion, and an understanding around the regime and that understanding has not shaken the broad parameters of the regime. But I want to show you again the importance of leadership in matters of these. In Quebec the Honourable Louis Straker can say to you and other persons who were on the delegation, I had a lot of meetings with President La Bore of Ecuador. I also held discussions with the foreign Ministers of Ecuador and the Ambassador of Ecuador to Washington. And I got the measure of where they were coming from.

I also, along with Prime Minister Anthony of St. Lucia and Charles of Dominica, held a lengthy meeting with US trade representative, Mr. Zolic, and Mr. Zolic indicated that the Ecuadorians can do what they want, jump high, jump low. The US and the

European Union were firm in bringing this matter to an end. That lasted too long, but Ecuador wanted to have a meeting with us, the banana producing countries, because they wanted to reopen the matter to see if they could get some leverage, some more room, and to see how they could wriggle something better out, and I told the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs in Quebec – [interjection] I know you would like to come over as the Honourable Deputy Foreign Minister. Laughter.

Now I said to him in my room, I said comrade we have to dance with Ecuador, but we can't kiss, we could dance but don't kiss them. So that I was the most surprised man last week; I had call from CARICOM Secretariat that they had organized a meeting with Ecuador in Miami for the next morning, and they were calling me to tell me about it because in the quasi Cabinet in CARICOM, I hold the responsibly for banana as indeed did my predecessor. So I asked them who gave them the authority to do this, because I am the lead in CARICOM, it is true that I am the new boy on the block, but I know what is my responsibility. I said you can go ahead with the meeting but I would issue a statement that you do not have the sanction of the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines who is the spokesperson. An hour half they called back, canceling it, because I feared that they were not only going to kiss with Ecuador but have sex, to use metaphoric language, and my firmness in that regard has borne fruit, because Ecuador having no leeway, no wriggle room had to come to terms with European Union, in other words they want to use the Windwards because we are small.

We are small, but we are not 'dothtish'. So when these things happen, they don't happen by accident. Again the people of this country get an insight as to how the Unity Labour Party government is functioning.

And yesterday in St. Lucia I had the privilege to take the Chair in the meeting between the Leaders of the Windward Islands and the banana donor group, and we made substantial progress on the question of the disbursement of STABEX monies and SFA funds, which is a matter I know which would have been of great concern to the governments in the Windward Islands. And we had a proposal from WIBDECO, which proposal would be discussed within one month, and we have agreed in St. Vincent to host such a meeting on the first and second of June, because I want the banana farmers out there to get certain things absolutely clear. There is a future for the banana industry, particularly if we produce the quality, and if we have the consistent supply in order to face the supermarket trade. If we sell about 90% of our production to the supermarket, we will be doing all right. Ten percent on the wholesale where the prices are not so good, well we can bear that. But when you selling 20 and 25 percent on the whole sale trade you have real problems in order to give a reasonable price to the farmers.

The second thing, it is clear that the industry as it has been functioning cannot continue. I want to report to the people of this country that the Banana Growers Association has a debt in excess of \$25 million, these are the facts, I have gotten the report on the matter just few days ago. You have \$13 million dollars to be collected from farmers, but you and I know that the collection of that is notional, you maybe able to collect half, if you are lucky, and there has been a habit of lending the good farmers and the bad farmers equally for inputs, and giving them money on credit for other things. I say that you bad farmer, you shouldn't be given loan. You cannot be encouraged to stay in the business when you cannot survive in the business and you only pulling down the good farmers. Because if we don't take some tough decision, the whole industry would collapse in the year 2006 and even before.

And I want to speak on this matter in the way I am speaking about it because they are international problems, but we have been negligent at home in taking certain decisions which we must take. Of course, I put it to the European Union very squarely yesterday, that if we have to take off the debts of the Association we are going to need help in so doing. But they would only give help if there is a package which is presented to restructure the industry where they do not see that they are taking their tax payers money and put essentially in a suck-me-well hole. The excellent farmers out there can survive. And when I talk about the excellent farmers, I am not talking about just about big farmers only you know, because you have some big farmers who are not good farmers. And you have some men with a two and three acres who are producing excellent quality bananas as far down as Richmond.

And we, Mr. Speaker, we intend to ask all the people in this country, and to carry the message as we are carrying it, to help us in the restructuring of this industry. Of course rural poverty has been increasing, and those persons who have to come out of the banana industry, we have to address some other things, and that is why the Minister of Telecommunications in his wisdom, understanding the strategy of the government, and to alleviate poverty in the rural areas, to lessen the poverty said we should move first with the Call Centre in Georgetown to see if we could arrest the problem of rural poverty.

And that is the way in which we in the government seeing the issue in the broad terms.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member you have ten minutes.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say further on bananas that there are areas of economic diversification, which we have got into where we have to try and use the window we have, in the next few years, to get the requisite monies out of the European Union.

Because unless we do so, the people are going to leave the countryside and come into town, and you going to have more crime, AIDS in the city. You will have national security problems.

The NDP government whilst giving lip service to many things, was so tardy, I understand and appreciate the difficulties under which the Leader of the Opposition assumed the leadership of his party, and he may not have had the necessary control of his organisation, but that is how sometimes, if the Good Lord gives you a hand and you have to play it the best you can. And I would say, the people of this country now expect all of us to work together now to solve these real serious problems in the way in which when the NDP had gotten 12 seats in 1994 and the ULP had gotten 3 we worked together, on all the committees, the only time when the difficulty arose is when the electorate spoke in a manner which showed that NDP result of 1998 was untenable. But our record shows that we co-operated fully between 1994 and 1998. And I anticipate that now that the NDP has three and we have twelve, the similar co-operation which the ULP gave between 1994 and 1998 would be given to this ULP administration.

I want, Mr. Speaker, to commend the new Attorney General on the excellent work she has done so far to have this Bill brought here. And remember she only had, when I told her two weeks ago, I want the Bill on May the 3rd she said to me, Prime Minister you are not serious. I said I am dead serious. This is number one on the Order Paper for Government Business, and she has delivered and I commend her and I commend all those who have worked.

There will be other meetings of the House in this month because we have to address other amendments and the regulations, which will have to be drawn up, and those regulations would have to go to the Cabinet also before the end of this month. As you see we have to be doing this work while dealing with the free trade area of the Americas, while dealing with bananas. While dealing with Atlantic tuna, while dealing with the Shipping for fishing industry, in order to assist greatly the fisherman not only on mainland St. Vincent but in the Southern Grenadines and in the Northern Grenadines. And I am prepared to brief the two members of the Grenadines seat as to the problems that are connected with the fishing industry from our own perspective, and to see in which they themselves can come about together now to solve these problems.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Senator Bonadie.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, may I suggest that we take the adjournment and return at 2:30 p.m. I therefore move the adjournment. I asked

this particular indulgence because there are a number of Bishops from the Antilles who have invited a number of us to a function at 1:00 p.m. and I would be very grateful. One of the things we have to split ourselves. I suspect maybe one or more members of the opposition perhaps would have to go to that function and it may take us certainly past, the function is at 1:00 p.m. it may take us an hour and a half. So I move the suspension of this sitting until 2:00 p.m.

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

***Question put and agreed to.
House suspended for lunch at 12:35 p.m.
House resumed at 2:35 p.m.***

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: We continue the debate on the amendment to the Merchant Shipping Act. Senator Bonadie.

HONOURABLE JOSEPH BURNS BONADIE: Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I rise also to give support to this Bill which is brought before the House, and I listened this morning to the contributions made by the Honourable Minister that introduced the Act, and by the Honourable Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that we recognize some of the shortcomings of the previous administration, but it is not very nice to lay blame for everything that is happening on what the previous administration did. Some of the problems, which you would encounter, Mr. Speaker, that the new government would encounter are some of the problems which the former administration encountered. And I must commend the Prime Minister in moving out from outside the realms of the Ministry of Justice where there are tremendous bottlenecks and going outside to bring this Bill before Parliament. I would also like to commend the Attorney General for moving expeditiously.

Mr. Speaker, it is not a question about who gets what points. When you have an international convention and that international convention is adopted, it takes years before the convention could be agreed upon by all the parties, and after the agreement is made with the Convention, it takes another long period of time for the implementation and the ratification of such conventions, and these are international conventions which apply to all countries that are signatories dated, and the Merchant Shipping Act of which we are a big player, regardless of the criticism that you can level against the New Democratic Party Administration, the Merchant Shipping business St. Vincent is a big player, and if in a scheme of things in this world we are in the first ten, it means that we are a big player.

It is true to say that it was foresight of the former Labour Party administration that brought in the Merchant Shipping Act, and what I would like to say, Mr. Speaker is that

the international convention relating to this matter was in place before the 1982, Act was introduced. The '82 Act came after the '78 international convention. But things changed as we evolved over a period of years, and there are certain requirements and certain standards that you have to meet, and certain things which we have to put in place in terms of the regulations, and the Minister of National Security was quite right in that when we have laws on our books and we have regulations one supercedes the next and you have to satisfy the people in the international arena, that you have things that are compatible, and what you have, we have the international convention which has since been changed and the new amendments to the international convention would be coming into place by February 2002, so as the Prime Minister rightly said, we have to have other regulations come into this Parliament so that we can catch up to speed.

But Mr. Speaker, I believe it was with all sincerity when the Senior Minister and Former Prime Minister attempted to have dialogue and discourse with the Prime Minister in terms of the priority which should be given to the Merchant Shipping Act. It was as a result of a meeting which took place between what was known in the international circles as the committee, or the panel of competent persons that came together to study our amendments and what we wanted to do, and as a result of them sitting down in the international maritime organisations, they made certain recommendations to this Government. Certain recommendations that we had to put in place in order to make the convention compatible and in keeping with the laws which we had on the statute books, and at one time the discussions went like this, that we had to revise the laws, but because of the speed within which the international community operates, and because of the competition for registering ships, other people start to attack us and to expose our flank, and we had to move with dispatch, and I am very happy indeed that this measure is before this House today.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister spoke, the Leader of the Opposition spoke about the context in which the Maritime Shipping Act must be seen in the international arena, and it is very important in that as the Prime Minister said, \$4 million is no small change, and I too would like to add my voice to the competency with which the Maritime Commissioner in the past and the present one is carrying out her task.

One of the problems, Mr. Speaker, that we were confronted with as it relates to the convention and as it relates to our laws, was that for example, our Maritime Commissioner had to certify in the past that a captain of a ship was competent, that he had the certification, and the problem that has arisen was that, we don't have a maritime school, so St. Vincent was certifying that the captain of a particular ship was competent, and what is acceptable today as a result of the change is that once we are satisfied that the convention was ratified by a country from which a captain might have come, we could certify to the competency of the master. So our Maritime

Commissioner can now certify to the competency as a result of the country from, which that person came from being a signatory to the international convention.

Another point, Mr. Speaker, some months ago you would have heard, and those of us who listen to CNN where one of our ships, and we have a lot of ships flying our flags in the waters, and when you talk of over two thousand ships you are talking about a lot of flags, and one of our ships was chartered by the Canadian Government, to move from Bosnia back to Canada, arms that went as part of the United Nations package, and that ship was stalled in the Atlantic because the owners, the company that received the charter was holding the Canadian Government to ransom because they wanted cash for the movement of arms that were sophisticated and expensive, and some of the responsibility that we have to take for ships that carry our flag, is not a responsibility that should be taken very lightly and I believe that in politics we should not try to be divisive in terms of, if a ship is arrested or if a ship is in trouble, that one should point a finger and blame the Government, or blame the administration. We have to take our responsibility seriously as a nation; as a nation that is competing with other countries over the world for ships to fly our flags and we gave the go ahead to the Canadian Government on a quest from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to board and carry the ship into port because of the cargo and the nature of the cargo, so we have to take our responsibility seriously when we register ships.

The Honourable Prime Minister mentioned about tuna, we have a lot of vessels that are catching tuna, and as a result of the competition that we are having with Brazil, where a lot of those ships were registered in Brazil, and they are now registered with St. Vincent and the Grenadines, they have reported us to the international community that our boats, boats carrying our flags, boats that some of us have never seen, are now over fishing in the Atlantic and catching the big eye tuna. But we have to respond to those allegations. So we have to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that we pass the relevant laws and regulations so that we can oversee, and we are dealing in a competitive world where some of the trawlers have dual registration. They register flying the flag of St. Vincent and the Grenadines when it suits their purposes, and they hoist another flag when it suits their purposes. So they have dual registration. So some of the same ships that are offenders, they fly our flag when it is convenient to them. So we take a lot of licks because we do not have the capacity to oversee all the ships that we are registering. And the bulk of our ships are registered overseas, so we have to be au fait with the regulations, with laws which we have to pass.

Mr. Speaker, our laws were very strict in relation to what was required, some of the conventions made it a little flexible, for example, we were saying that a doctor must be on board if the ship is of a certain size, what the convention is saying in the regulations is that we must make sure that at least on the ships we have certain medical facilities that are available to the people who are sailing on these ships. So that part of the

convention was incompatible with our law that says you require a doctor, so we had to take that out to make it a little bit more flexible.

So those were some of the things that we had to deal with as a Government and some of the things that the new Government must deal with. But the point I want to make is that we must take international conventions very seriously and we must make sure and I hope that the Attorney General will ensure that in her department a particular area is set aside to look at international conventions, not only maritime conventions but a lot of international treaties that we have signed that we have to police. A lot of international conventions that we have ratified, that from time to time we have to report on, and I must admit that I am sure that we are a little tardy in terms of the reporting because of the pressure and the nature of what we have to do. And a lot of people do not understand, who work in the Government system and don't care how you feel that you can solve that problem, you can't solve it. You cannot solve it; because it will not be solved overnight. People have a lot to do, the legal department, I know, is overburdened with a number of issues, and I made the point for example that every Bill that comes to Parliament you have to send it to the Legal Department.

Every matter that goes to Cabinet has to go the Legal Department, so it is not as easy to talk about, oh, nothing is happening, every single thing needs, under the laws of this country, a legal opinion. So you have a lot of people who have devoted their time, and if you have a Cabinet meeting, every week, every week those documents have to be circulated. So a lot of time is being wasted looking for legal loopholes for matters going before Cabinet, and other things you have to report on. Statutory things which you have an obligation, those are left by the way side, and it is a lot of work, it is a lot of research.

So I am urging the Attorney General to go all the way, and I am happy that the Prime Minister could have called on some legal friends abroad, and if this matter had gone to the Legal Department as it went before, it would never be before this House. Never be before this House. And I am saying so without fear of contradiction.

Mr. Speaker, we have a responsibility as persons in this House, and as people who occupy what is termed the highest Office in the land, being Members of Parliament, and it is sad that out of one corner of the mouths of some people they talking about a new dispensation in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and out of the other side, the actions do not support what is being said out of the other side of the mouth. It is all well and good in the hustling of politics to talk about who must receive blame. The Honourable Prime Minister spoke about the banana industry in the wider scheme of things, and politically speaking, you can blame the Government in Office, you are now in office, and you have to face the same facts that we faced.

The Prime Minister put it very well, when he had a meeting in Quebec with the Ecuadorian Foreign Minister and the President, and I am happy that he took the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister to dance with Ecuador and didn't go any further, no kissing and no sex. But I would like to ask is that the Ecuadorians seem to be very happy now as a result of a meeting which took place two days ago, and I don't know if at that point they turn the ball around and they were kissing with the Europeans, or having sex, but they are happy and I am saying that we have to find out what gave them cause to be happy in the context of our future in the banana industry.

As far as I know, the Commissioner is in the dark in terms of things, you of course had a meeting with the delegate recently and might be au fait but if they are happy it means that they got something that must cause, or some cause for concern, because they were prepared to go to the WTO, and now they are not going again, so they had to have gotten something. So we have to be careful. I believe that we have to treat the situation in bananas as a national issue, an issue where I know you as the new Government needs the support of those of us on this side, because the Europeans are singing some of the same tunes to you that they sang to us, diversifications, without the requisite compensatory dollars to help us to turn around the economy. And your approach is the correct one. Yes, we will sell the question of diversification but we need funds to carry it through. And I think the time has come where we will stop blaming a former administration for everything that is wrong. Yes, you got to take the blame for some things, but let us move on man, let us move on. Let us move on in light of what the Prime Minister has said and do not beat a dead horse. Let us move on, we have a country to build that is what you said, you talk about together now and you revel.

I was very startled when I heard a certain member of the House compliment the Government for broadcasting of debates in the House of Parliament, and I am happy for that. But you know, he speaks as though the broadcast used to happen before and they stopped under the NDP. It is the first, it is the first, but you had a Labour Party Administration before and it was never done for fifteen years, so it is a first, let us compliment you on what you have done, but don't go back and say as though you were the only government in office here. You had Labour Party Government before, you just lay claim that the Labour Party Government brought in the Merchant Act, it is the same Labour Party and you are continuing.

The Labour Party appointed the Commissioner, and the same Commission is in place. So you don't say one side of your mouth one thing and in the next side of your mouth something else. Let's build the country. Time to move from that, let's build the country. So if you have brought in live Parliamentary debate, that is a good thing and you must take your credit, but don't get on as though NDP was in here all the years since independence. Don't give that impression; don't give that impression at all.

Leaders have certain things which they do, and certain leaders have certain directions that they would take the country, they would like to take the Parliament, they would like to take their party. And you have to give 'Jack' his jacket, and I am saying that you also have to be fair that we have evolved after 21 years of independence, we are coming into a new era we are coming into a new century, so the approach must be different, and you have been given the responsibility, Mr. Speaker, to take the country in the 21st Century, and what I would like to see is 21st Century behaviour, not 20th Century behaviour like so many people that come inside here. Twenty-first Century behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, we are operating in a global context, and as a result we have to approach things in a different fashion. The Prime Minister has rightfully said that during the period of time that he has been operating in the transition, a number of events have overtaken us, free trade of the Americas, single market in Europe, single currency, the banana in trouble, lots of problems, and at the same time you have to deal with the day to day affairs of the country. I believe that we have to operate at two levels; we have to operate at full speed to catch up in the international arena because we are now in the big league. We are in the big league now and regardless whether we like it or not, we have to tag along and rather than be dragged screaming and crying, I believe we should take our rightful place. And in order to do that, we have to marshal the resources of those persons who are competent, who can provide some measure of assistance, some man power, some brain power and I would hope that the Honourable Prime Minister does not go out every time, but I am sure if he looks around there would be people whom he can tap.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to give support to the Maritime Bill, to the Merchant Shipping Act, and to say that I would hope that those Vincentians who sail on some of these ships are made aware of what we have done. For example, the Honourable Minister of National Security made the point that some of the people who sail on ships must know the conditions under which they work, because in the past where you had what was called flags of convenience, flags of convenience meant that the international standards did not apply to these ships, we are not travelling that road.

We are talking now of hours of work, about how much time a man must be on duty, what is required, his ratings, all these things we must have in place for people operating and working on ships that carry our flag, so these things must be known. Because the flags of convenience are flags on ships that do not comply with even the basic minimum standards that human beings ought to have. We have a deadline, and if we are to make the white list and not the black list we have to do what we are doing now. We also have a second deadline. And the second deadline is February next year when another white list would be produced, and I am sure that members on this side of the House would co-operate fully with the Government in ensuring that we pass the necessary measures and put in place the things that are required so that we can

continue to be in the first ten and at least try to advance a little higher up, and of course it will all rebound to the benefit of the Government and the country, where we would be able to get more resources from outside which would of course assist us in our foreign exchange problems.

So, Mr. Speaker, I wish to give my support to this measure and would hope that members opposite would take into consideration some of the points that I have made and take them in the spirit that they were made. I am getting a little fed up of this blame, blame thing that is going on.

HONOURABLE DR DOUGLAS SLATER: It is only one month and you getting fed up already.

HONOURABLE JOSEPH BURNS BONADIE: I am saying I am getting fed up of it. And what I am saying, I have given Old Labour the compliment of introducing this measure, but some members opposite do not want Old Labour to get the compliment because they are saying that is Old Labour, when I talk about the broadcast, you understand, but I am saying they had the foresight because it was an area where we cut out a niche for ourselves and we have to build on that, you would note that nothing was done by this administration to tamper with the Commissioner that was established under Labour Party, because competence is what existed over there and I am happy that it has gone full cycle and I am sure Maritime Commissioner would remain because she has been a competent person.

So I give my full support Mr. Speaker to the passage of this Bill, and look forward to the other regulations, which must be brought so that we can comply with the international regulations prior to February 2002.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Mr. Speaker, as the representative from the Northern Grenadines, [interruption] Mr. Speaker, the Member on the opposite side should show me the courtesy as a new member of the House of being friendly and welcoming, in the spirit of together now. As the Member from the Northern Grenadines, and as a Grenadines person, I think it is appropriate that I address this Bill, because as was noted by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and others who have spoken on it, it is a very important piece of legislation, which governs, or proposes to govern an industry. In the Grenadines we always knew that Maritime Affairs were important, but we have the statistic now from the Leader of the Opposition, that indicates that over 2500 ships around the world are registered under our flag. And no matter how much you might want to diminish the contribution that the NDP Administration has done, you would notice that most of those ships during that period were registered under the NDP administration.

It is an important piece of legislation because our country earns several million dollars a year out of the shipping registered business. The problems that were identified are problems which the previous administration was attempting to address. It is not true to say that nothing was done, as the Honourable Prime Minister said at one time, and at the other time saying that in fact the efforts that were made by the previous administration were not one that this Administration can agree with so therefore they had to scrap that and start over. Basically what that was, is a difference in approach, where you have two or more lawyers working on one problem, you have two or more opinions, therefore to correct the record it must be acknowledged the NDP administration was working on this legislation, and that efforts were being made to remedy the deficiencies which we are currently facing. This is why the Honourable Leader of the Opposition rose earlier this morning and indicated his support for the legislation, and this is why Senator Bonadie rose and indicated his support for this legislation, and this is why I also indicate my support for the legislation.

As I understand it, the problem that we face is that our domestic legislation is not compatible with the international convention on standards of training, certification and watchkeeping for seafarers 1978, as amended in 1995. And that the efforts that are being made now is to correct that deficiency, and that the first step is essentially to amend our governing act so the next step could be taken to adopt the regulations that have already been approved by the International Maritime Organisation. These are measures that would appear to me would address the concerns that were raised by our Maritime Commissioner, and the deficiencies that our legislation has with respect to the administration of the Merchant Shipping Act.

So, Mr. Speaker, it is important in the national interest that the legislation be moved through as fast as possible. We understand the dilemma that has been faced that the first white list that has been published by the IMO in November of 2000 does not include St. Vincent, that the second white list which is apparently to be published in May of 2001 we are hoping will include St. Vincent, because the next list apparently is not published until February 2002, in which case all those ships that bear our flag will be in a state of limbo. So, we recognize this important legislation, and the importance of it to the national interest, we do not intend to play politics with it, because it includes significant resources that are available to this country, and it includes efforts that have been made since 1982 to develop this important industry, one that is extremely competitive as there are other Caribbean countries around the world who are bidding for the registry business around the world. So in the spirit of the national interest, our party is supporting this, and I am supporting this piece of legislation.

There are other aspects of course which need to be addressed, most importantly is the regulations that must be incorporated in the legislation, and I am gratified to hear that the Prime Minister has noted that efforts would be made soon in the near future, in Parliament to recall the House to deal with the legislation to adopt the regulations that

would bring us into concordance with the international standards, and as Senator Bonadie has noted it is something that we can support, again in the national interest.

We therefore call on the government to continue to proceed with efforts to correct the problem and to move speedily with the adoption of the regulations that is my understanding that has already been drafted.

Now in comments that were made earlier today by the Honourable Prime Minister, indicating that this industry that we are dealing with, the Shipping Registry Industry is part of the service industry which we are trying to promote. In fact it was the Honourable Leader of the Opposition who first pointed out the connection and the importance of this industry to our service sector. It also is important because it demonstrates that we can compete in certain areas in the international environment without concessions, without an equal playing field, if we play our cards right and I understand this is what the NDP administration was attempting to do towards the end of its term, and I recognized that this is what the present administration is attempting to do currently.

In his comments, his comments about the service sector generally, the Honourable Prime Minister had cause to mention the incident with respect to the Vaughn affair, and as I sat and listened with some alarm, quite frankly to some of the comments that were made with respect to that affair. From what is known in the public realm, it would appear to me that the issue that should have been of primary concern is not the character of Mr. Vaughn, or the legal ramifications of the case he has filed in the court, but rather the status of the court order, which was at issue. There was a deafening silence on that side of the House and the other side with respect to that issue. What's more, the Prime Minister noted in his remarks. [interruption]

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Will the Honourable Member give way let me just say something about what he has commented upon.

Mr. Speaker, there is no deafening silence on the part of the Opposition. My friend the Honourable Member from the Northern Grenadines is a lawyer, though not I believe yet entitled to practice in this jurisdiction, but he would know from another jurisdiction it is not proper, in fact the Speaker would rule me out of order if I were to comment on any matter which is before the court, so I cannot comment one way or the other about any matter which is before the court in the House. In deed I cannot do so even in the public since it may amount to a contempt of court. And that is the reason why I think your Senior Member, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition did not comment on that, and your other senior colleague the Honourable Senator Bonadie, but I think this is an aspect of the rule perhaps which you have overlooked. So I mentioned it so that the public may understand what is at stake.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Mr. Speaker, I am well aware of the rule, what I will say however is that the issue of the Vaughn affair was raised by the Honourable Prime Minister. The conduct, -- well let me just get to the point, I am making more precisely. What alarmed me this morning was the comment that the Honourable Prime Minister made, that if the police had transgressed any rules, provisions, practices the law in respect to any national of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, then they would have to dance to the music, I think that was the phrase that he used. Any individual, the point is not whether it is an individual, or the police; it is whether it's a national or a non-national. I was of the view that anyone who was present in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, is entitled to the protection of the laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and perhaps this is something that the Honourable Prime Minister may wish to retract if the statement was misinterpreted or misstated, the point that was made was that if the person had been a national that the police or any individual would dance to the music. The other aspect of this issue that raised some concern again was the reference to the conduct of the lawyer who was apparently trying to defend the rights of his client in this case and the reference was ...[interruption]

Mr. Speaker, the Members on the other side give me the courtesy of at least listening as we did.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member let's allow the Member to speak in silence.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: What was stated was that if the lawyer in question could criticize the actions of the then Opposition party when they attempted to defend the interest of black people in this country when they did take certain actions, why then is this person taking actions in the defence a white man. I am not making this up. So the point I am making is that if the person in question were of a different colour, would it make a difference to the defence, or the entitlement that he has to protection of the laws of this country? Under the Constitution of this country, it ought not to make a difference. Which is why I was alarmed by the comments that were made by the Honourable Prime Minister. It sends a very serious and dangerous message to the international community whom we are trying to woo with respect to foreign investment, and with respect to tourism. These are industries which we are trying to promote in this country, they are very sensitive industries, they are industries in which the rule of law would play an important role because foreigners don't have to come here unless they feel that they are safe and protected by the laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. So, these are comments, Mr. Speaker, which I found very alarming today and comments which I feel that Vincentians as a whole would find very alarming and threatening quite frankly to the economic stability of the country, because it poses a great threat foreign investment and to our tourist economy.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate our support, my support for this legislation and to join with the Members on this side in commending the Attorney General in moving with dispatch to bring this legislation before the House. [interjection]

Mr. Speaker, I can take a joke. As I said earlier, in the Grenadines we take these maritime issues very seriously, they are part of our blood, my grandfather was a sailor. He was a boat owner. My father spent all his life when he was living on the sea. It is with great pride therefore that I take great pride in recognizing and in knowing that St. Vincent around the world is regarded as a maritime power, irrespective of our small size. Those flags are also ambassadors for us, so we have to ensure that the standards by which they cruise and the operators of those ships are governed, are standards that are within the realm of the international standards and one that will not bring disrepute to the name of St. Vincent and the Grenadines around the world.

So, therefore this is why we are supporting this legislation, and why I would commend the Government, commend the Minister responsible and the Attorney General for bringing it to the House, and why we would have proposed it.

It should be noted as well, in conclusion, that this is a measure, which the previous administration had in the works. We may differ on approach as the Honourable Prime Minister as a lawyer knows, in fact if you want two opinions on any issue you ask two different lawyers. So the difference here was about approach, not with respect to recognizing the seriousness of the issue and the importance of it to the country. When the matter was taken up with dispatch, the Government approached it in a different manner from the present administration, that is not to say that the previous approach would have been wrong, it is just simply one that the present government does not agree with, and we are big enough to accept that there are two ways to skin a cat. You can get to the same place even if you choose two different directions. We recognized in fact that this Bill will get us to the place where we want to be, and therefore we are prepared to support it. But we will not let the record go unchallenged that the NDP administration has not done anything in respect of this legislation. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker, I am a little bit astounded. I know the importance of this Bill. All the members who spoke both the Government side and the side of the Opposition know the importance of this Bill. There can be no doubt about the affects of being black listed, of what it can have not only on the economy directly, but indirectly. But yet despite the importance of this Bill it has taken over four years, and until like a pregnant woman that labour was not induced, the baby still would not have been born. So it is very important but nothing was done for four years. In 1995 the amendments came into being, I congratulate, and I am happy that the members on the opposition are supportive of this Bill, but you know the only thing that has a long

gestation period is AIDS. [Laughter] Because it has been in that period for a long time.

You know, I didn't want to touch on the matter of Mr. Vaughn. And I didn't want to say anything about legal counsel. And I don't want to deal about what is, may be what is sub-judice, or would be sub-judice because it is in the court, but I remember the Counsel kept harping about the \$100,000 that is lodged in the bank re: - the Offshore Bank that these persons constituted, and I couldn't wonder why, someone would practically commit suicide by throwing himself in front of a vehicle that was running, and the poor officer could have panicked and his foot come off the brake and on the accelerator, he would have been a dead man, and all that would have happened would have been death by misadventure, and I thought that was very stupid. But I won't have done it. But I understand the fee for defending this person was \$50,000, and so I could understand why these drastic measures, these desperate measures. And I could understand why this concerted effort to keep Mr. Vaughn here; because once Mr. Vaughn is gone, the fees are gone as well. So sometimes that is why we say you have to look in the mortar to see what is there beside the pestle. I would say no more on that, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the Leader of the Opposition realizes and I know he realized this long ago that we cannot continue the way we are going. You cannot tax a nation into prosperity. It is an old cliché, everybody knows this, and to give the old Labour Party the credit that my good friend the Senator Bonadie was speaking about, we say it, and we had the vision, that is why we had the Merchant Shipping Act and merchant shipping. We say it, and that is why we introduced offshore measures, obviously as the child, grows you have to feed the child and you have to buy more food, and the child would become more helpful, et cetera, I would not say that the NDP administration did not assist in the development of the merchant shipping. To have 2500 ships, of course, but what we have to understand is that more could have been done, I don't know, I am not saying that it is. But the question before us here is that through lethargy, and I did not say that it was in shambles that they left the industry in shambles, I never said that, I never said anything like that, what I said that, and I have it written here, what I said was that lethargic actions, those were my words, not shambles, and lethargy cannot mean shambles, all I was saying, and as some of the members spoke, if you are not really behind the Legal Department et cetera, and I know because I have been there before, that it is going to be very difficult to get things done very speedily, because lawyers are very cautious persons, sometime I usually ask why so much teratology, but they say they have to spell it out so that there is no doubt, so they are very cautious, and that is why I used the term lethargic and not shambles, or can't remember the other word the Honourable Leader of the Oppositions used, [supplied] disarray, exactly. That was not what I used at all. But it is strange that the realization is coming home to certain members now that they are on the other side that we have to move in other directions.

I remember the criticisms when we decided we must have shares in the Flourmill. We didn't put up a cent. But yet every year now, the dividends, we get handsome dividends and maybe a lot more than what a lot of companies pay here in income tax, that goes into the consolidated fund to help the country. When we were supposed to take shares in the brewery, which was agreed, to, where we would not have had to put up one cent, the cost of those shares would have been paid for from the excise tax that the brewery would have had to pay. Former Prime Minister, Sir James said he didn't want any. When I see and hear the quantum of dividends the Brewery is paying now, I could only sigh, because I know it would have been quite a help to us in this country.

When I look at the Mt. Bentick distillery that created and paid or could have paid big dividends into central government, I am still waiting to find out the reason why we sold it. Can't understand why. When I remember that the Marketing Corporation used to contribute up to \$2 million dollars a year to the consolidated fund, I shake my head again, but it is only that we are realizing that those were the ways to go, I hope that when we decide to expand in these areas, that we would get the support of the Members of the Opposition, because you can only reach a certain level of taxation before it becomes counter productive. It is not an easy task, because we all know this. The Honourable Prime Minister said that we would have to come back here again for other amendments, and maybe to incorporate the regulations into the Act, because I think this is demanded by the convention. So that we have to be mindful of what is happening. We have no intention of down grading the Merchant Shipping Act.

As a matter of fact, we have every intention of trying to step up its operations, if that is possible, whereas in the offshore sector now we collect something like \$6 million dollars, but to run the Trust Authority we have to pay something like maybe more than half of that, in the merchant shipping area the \$4 million or so we get those are funds that are net, so therefore we can understand the importance. I am not saying that the Offshore sector would not be build up, that it would far surpass this. But it is an important sector, and I think for the employment, and we have intentions of those ships that are carrying our flags and maybe trading in these parts or otherwise, to see whether it would not be possible to say well you have to a take a complement of Vincentians, whether it is one or two or whether it is on those ships, I'm not saying it is going to be a condition, but certainly by suasion or whatever it is, we should try to get as much as possible out of this sector, and I don't think that some owners will have any objection to this, they have to hire crews and we know that we have some of the best seafarers in the world in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, I thank the Opposition, and I thank the other members who support the Bill and wish now that that the House can convene into a committee of the whole House to study the bill clause by clause.

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

Bill reported, passed the Committee stage without amendments

HONOURABLE VINCENT BEACHE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Bill be read a third time by title and passed.

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

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

THE SECURITIES BILL 2001

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the first reading of the Securities Bill.

The objects and reasons are that this Bill seeks to make provision for the protection of investors in securities through a Regional Eastern Caribbean Securities Regulatory Commission. The Bill provides for the regulation of the securities market, exchanges, individual and companies involving securities, business, and the regulation of the public issue securities in the member territories of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank, (ECCB).

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

Question put and agreed to.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate to the House, well all we are doing today is the first reading. This is a very comprehensive Bill, and I think what we should do is to have it circulated to interest groups in the society. And we can have an extensive public discussion on the Securities Bill, and when we come back to the House after that discussion, we will address the second reading and then hopefully if the House agrees to appoint a select committee so that we can have this Bill thoroughly investigated because it is a very important Bill. And we know it is urgent, it is not of the same urgency like the one we have just passed. And I believe that the Leader of the Opposition would also concur with that mode of operation.

MOTION

CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move the first motion, the motion on Constitutional Reform which reads as follow:

WHEREAS the Government of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is of the view that good governance demands the active participation of the people in, and control over, the institutions which govern their day-to-day lives;

AND WHEREAS in pursuance of the quest for good governance and for active, popular participation in the state administration, the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are clamouring for appropriate constitutional reform;

AND WHEREAS the existing Constitution of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, despite its strengths, has shown its weaknesses and limitations;

AND WHEREAS constitutional reform, through extensive and intensive public debate between and among the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines at home and abroad, was a major plank in the Manifesto of the victorious Unity Labour Party in recent general elections of March 28, 2001;

AND WHEREAS the Opposition New Democratic Party has publicly stated its support for constitutional reform;

BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House directs the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to set up promptly a broad-based and competent Constitutional Review Commission to begin the exercise formally, of fashioning a new, more democratic constitution, as befitting a free people at the dawn of the twenty-first century.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move, this motion.

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

Motion put and agreed to.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, since 1984 there has been a demand in this country for a review of our Constitution. Indeed in 1984 a mere five years after the Constitution was brought into being on October the 27th 1979, within five

years there was a view among a significant section of the population that the Constitution ought to be reformed. Indeed a Constitutional Review Commission was set up in 1984 by the then newly elected New Democratic Party administration, there was an interim report to that Constitutional review. The terms of reference to that constitutional review however, Mr. Speaker, were very narrowly drawn, it did not address the constitution in its totality. There was an interim report; unfortunately nothing was done further, even in respect of that limited review of the Constitution.

Since 1984, over the last 17 years, it has become plain to all right thinking persons who indeed constitute the vast majority of the people in St. Vincent and the Grenadines have come to the conclusion that we need to revisit the constitution in its entirety. We in the Unity Labour Party in the 1994 elections, in the 1998 elections and in the recently concluded 2001 elections had this to say and Mr. Speaker, I will make this document the Manifesto of the Unity Labour Party 2001 a document of the House. And Mr. Speaker, just bear with me so that I can read what was said in the Manifesto.

“Under the rubric good governance the ULP believes that central to the idea of good governance is the active participation of the people in and control over the institutions that govern their day to day lives. Essentially the ULP sees good governance as the empowerment of the people, not a handful of political leaders. Good governance cannot exist amidst raging corruption in government. To ensure that the people are empowered to the fullest their democratic consciousness are to be raised through appropriate education and a system of government has to be reformed. Accordingly a ULP Government would set up a broad based and competent Constitutional Review Commission to begin the exercise formally of fashioning a new more democratic constitution as befitting a free people at the dawn of the 21st Century.”

The Manifesto goes on to say:

“The ULP is deeply committed to the Reform of the Constitution of St. Vincent and the Grenadines through extensive and intensive public debate between and among the people of our nation at home and abroad. To this end the ULP has already published a document on Constitutional Reform for initial public discussion that document is to be read as one with this Manifesto. A more deeply democratic and effective model system of governance will be fashioned in which non-governmental organizations, the traditional social partners and viable communities will participate in the legislative and administrative processes of government”

These commitments, Mr. Speaker, are what are contained in this motion. In the document entitled “The First 100 Days” of the Unity Labour Party Government,” it was, and this “One 100 Days” constitute an integral part of the Manifesto itself, because the

Manifesto incorporates the “One Hundred Days” document and Mr. Speaker, under good governance at page 4 it is stated:

“Within the “First 100 Days” of a ULP government, we will begin work towards good governance as follows:

1. Set up a broad-based high quality Constitutional Reform Commission to start the process of altering our country’s constitution for the better in a quest to improve our system of governance. To assist in this exercise of Constitutional reform, the ULP published on July 31, 2000, a document entitled Constitutional Reform: A Discussion;”

Mr. Speaker, we are keeping our promise to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. We are initiating the discussion. We are just one month old as a government and we are coming to the people to respect the commitment, which we made to them in a fundamental matter. And I beg leave therefore to table these two documents, “The First 100 Days of a Unity Labour Party Government” and “The Unity Labour Party Manifesto of 2001” as documents of this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I will also be tabling the discussion paper published by the Unity Labour Party in July 2000 and it is one of the appendices in a book published earlier this year entitled “The Politics of our Caribbean Civilization, Essays and Speeches.” A selected collection of speeches and essays written by me over a number of years. And this particular appendix is “A” but the entire volume relates to the discuss in many respects. I have paid the courtesy to the Leader of the Opposition of giving him a copy of this book autographing it and I would like also to make it a document of the House including the appendix addressing the issue of Constitutional Reform. But I would like to refer to it Mr. Speaker, and to the end I will formally lay it.

I should begin by saying in this regard, Mr. Speaker, that here we have a new party which has come to office on the basis of a clear mandate, an un-watered down mandate. We could have proceeded to simply set up the Constitutional Review Commission on the basis of the mandate we received, but we respect too much our Parliament and parliamentary democracy simply to do that, so we come to this House to begin the discussion in the House to get approval here in the House formally for the establishment of the Constitutional Review Commission. In this way, Mr. Speaker, the education of the public, on matters of Constitutional Reform begins today, after the general elections.

Before the general elections on July 31st we in the Unity Labour Party, we published a document in the News Newspaper which I’ve been told has a circulation of 10,000 in St Vincent and the Grenadines and more abroad. The summary, which was presented, of

this document, was broadcast live on radio and also broadcast on television. The issues were well canvassed in Town Hall meetings and on the public platforms during the elections. We are serious about this matter because this is a critical pillar in our quest to improve the governance of this country. And good governance is an issue, which is both political and economic.

As is well known, the European Union has incorporated in the Cotton agreement which is a successor agreement to LOME, a critical criteria to good governance for the receipt of AID. Every discussion that I have held so far in the month, and a few days I have been Prime Minister, every discussion with the Europeans, with the Americans, with the British, with the UNDP, with OAS the Organization of the American States. Every single one of them raises the issue of good governance. Good governance is intrinsically important for us, and beyond that importance it is critical for the receipt of AID.

I want to say to this Honourable House that financial provision would have to be made for the process of Constitutional Reform, because on engaging yourself on this exercise it is not going to come without a financial cost. But I am very mindful, and the Government is also mindful that given our slender resources, but equally given the importance of the exercise upon which we are embarking today, that I have already made important contacts with the Organisation of American States and with the UNDP on the issue of financial assistance to assist with the process of constitutional reform.

I have had discussions at the office of the Prime Minister with a senior official from the Organisation of American States from their office for the promotion of political democracy. The gentleman who was here as part of the team observing the elections -because as soon as elections were completed I saw to it that I had an audience with this gentleman, because I know we had this in our "100 Days" and it is an important plan in the overall platform of the Unity Labour Party.

In Quebec I had discussions with the Secretary General of the Organisation of American States, the former president of Colombia, His Excellency Caesar Gaviera on this precise question of assistance from the Organisation of American States for Constitutional Reform, and we have been given the assistance of receiving such assistance.

Last week I had discussion with the UNDP officer in Barbados, and Forester and again, I raised the issue in deed. I had been in communication with UNDP by letter, and also the Organisation of American States by letter on this question already. And the UNDP is prepared to give assurance, not for the establishment of the constitutional commission, but for the strengthening of civil societies capabilities to address the issue of constitutional reform. What they would do is to bring in experts from the University of the West Indies, we will have Town Hall meetings, and I have indicated to the

UNDP's official that in my capacity as Minister of Information, I would ask the National Broadcasting Board to make their services available to broadcast those town meetings live, so if they come and hold a half a dozen town meetings, the whole country would be able to hear the debates which are going on; because, Mr. Speaker, we first of all have to educate the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines on the current constitution before they can make the quality inputs to the commission in respect of submissions to that Commission.

The procedure which we envisage, Mr. Speaker, and it would be very interesting to hear in the debate other suggestions which we can incorporate, but you would notice, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, one of the limbs to the preamble to the motion states clearly that the Opposition New Democratic Party is on public record in favour of Constitutional Reform. So both political parties in the House are in favour of Constitution Reform. The issues therefore are getting the show on the road, and let us address this issue swiftly. We know that the process will take some time, but I am hopeful that the process will be concluded before the next general elections, and next general elections would be held under the terms of the new constitution. That is the pledge we gave the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and we keep our pledges.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say this, that I am prepared, and we here on the Government side we are prepared to consult with the Opposition and other interest groups as to the composition of the constitutional review Commission, and as the Leader of the Opposition knows that in the months so far since I have been Prime Minister, and I have had the opportunities to consult him, I speak to him frankly about where I think we should be going on a particular matter. And I give the assurance to Honourable House and to the nation that we will consult with the opposition in respect of the appointment of the Constitutional Review Commission.

In this country, there are many, many very important interest groups traditional social partners, labour, business, the wide range of NGO's community based organisations, youth organizations, and the like that we would very much like to have their own views on the matter, and one mechanism we can use to sound the various components which I have just referred to would be the natural economic and social development council which is one of the three bodies which we have set up, and on that body interestingly the government has one respective the Leader of the Opposition or his nominee, so there are only two politicians on that body. Oh you are not coming, O.K. well I hope you send a nominee. One politician, o.k. And every interest group would be there, so that we can, should there be two, rather than have a multiplicity of mechanisms to sound and advice, we can sue that same one, though it is not an economic or a social question in a narrow sense, it is as I have indicated addition to being political, it is a fundamentally social and economic issue too.

Mr. Speaker, the existing Constitution provides a procedure for the alteration of the current Constitution. And that procedure is set out in Section 38 of the existing Constitution basically in order for a new Constitution to come into being to replace the existing one it is required to pass the relevant Bill in the House of Assembly by a majority of not less than two thirds of the elected members, and thereafter to be approved in a referendum of the popular vote, nationally based on universal adult suffrage by not less than two thirds of the votes cast in the referendum. Section 38 lays down certain procedural measures and time frames for the fundamental alterations of the constitution, but those are not really necessary for us to address here, only to give the broad outlines of the requisite procedure.

So we begin the debate now, we will not conclude the debate today. I am hoping perhaps we can get it substantially on the way on Tuesday, and perhaps conclude it on Tuesday if we can. And then we begin the process of consultation on the Commission, that may take us a while, then we begin the process ongoing of education which is going to take a long period of time. Because when we are finished with this exercise I do not want any person in this country to say that this matter was done in a hurried way. That this matter was not given the full attention of the government. That the resources of the State were not put at the disposal of those concerned in respect of the alteration of the constitution.

Mr. Speaker, I must say this, that already the new government has been having very favourable commentaries on its position in relation to governance. And the Barbados Nation, the most widely read newspaper in Barbados, has an editorial in its issue of the 24th of April. Mr. Speaker, on the 18th of April, I addressed this issue, Mr. Speaker, in a speech at the University of the West Indies on the 18th April entitled "Restructuring Governance in the Caribbean in the age of globalisation. And the newspaper was very kind enough to be very approving of the speech, but all that I laid out was a wider analytical frame than what is the essence in our manifesto. And Mr. Speaker, I would make this editorial too, a document of the House.

The editorial reads, the heading

"Region forced to shape up." A recent lecture delivered by Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines addressed some of the very important issues which are at the core of the debate on strengthening our democracy in the region, and our approach to the question of restructuring governance in the age of globalisation.

These issues are important because, as a young newly independent region, we are faced with the prospect of defining our place in the world, at a time when globalisation threatens to upturn what should be for us a measure deliberate path to development.

Globalisation forces us to take stock not only of our predetermined position but more importantly, it is threatening or promising to stamp its design on future paths. Therein lies the importance of Mr. Gonsalves' lecture for facing the approach of globalization squarely and he cautions us that "Governments must take cognizance that the context in which they conduct business of Government has changed and that the too must change."

He calls for a restructuring of governance and for full popular participation in the state administration."

The editorial goes on to give a summary of what I stated, and ended off with this Mr. Speaker.

"This idea [that is the ideas which are being suggested for a new structure of governance] this idea is worthy of vigorous pursuit and we hope that the political as well community leaders throughout the region will grasp the paradigm shift which the newly elected Prime Minister is proposing. It is probably an idea whose time has come and nothing as we know is as powerful."

Here is a Barbadian Newspaper; the Prime Minister of St. Vincent is not yet three weeks old in the chair, and Barbados the most well read circulated newspaper is saying that the political and community leaders in the region, should grasp the paradigm shift the analysis which I was offering as to how we should proceed to the issue of restructuring governance in the age of globalisation. That it should be grasped. So the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is submitting a paradigm shift in the structure and system of governance.

Of course, whatever constitutional form and substance is proposed we, Mr. Speaker, have to persuade the electorate because we have to get a two-third in a referendum. We do have a two-thirds here in the house of the elected members, but I would not want and any one to push through constitutional reform which does not enjoy the whole hearted support of the House, and certainly of the people, so that it isn't a case where we are trying to go above the heads of the Opposition, because we have two-thirds in the House, we want to embrace the Opposition in the quest to restructure the Governance of this Country, and to have meaningful democratic constitutional reform where we can learn from our experiences.

Mr. Speaker, it has to be understood that one of the fundamental changes brought about by the information revolution is that it assaults hierarchy. Hierarchies of all kind is under attack. In business, in organization, even in families and certainly in government. Because people, when they have more information is no longer a question of the High Priest delivering to them knowledge or information, the information is more readily available to all literate persons, and more and more persons are getting educated and understanding the issues. That is why we begin the process today.

A typical voter increasingly in this region, and in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, is a voter who is becoming increasingly urbanized, more educated than his or her parents. Uses the telephone, has access to television and increasingly to the Internet. They read the newspapers, they read books. We are not dealing here with the typical cane cutter or arrowroot digger of 1950, we have come a long way in the last 51 years, Mr. Speaker, and therefore we have to begin to structure our governance on the assumption that you cannot have an elected monarch who is simply directing the show.

I know the current constitution makes me as Prime Minister a beneficiary of that sort of a system, but I am not interested in having preserve. I am interesting in having it changed. I want us in beginning the system of change early rather than late. Because it is human nature that if you stay long in a job where the constitution gives, for example, the Prime Minister so much power that after a while he may like it so much that he decided "boy it doesn't make sense to change this, you know, let somebody else change this if they want, I am enjoying this, it is too sweet." But we are a political party, and we are a government of principle and we are interested in having a more democratic constitution.

We have to make sure that in fashioning a new constitution, we deepen democracy, deepen accountability, make sure that government is more effective, strengthen individual rights and freedoms and their enforcements, make the government more representative than it is, and to fashion within the constitution mechanisms for a genuine, effective, democratic local government which is a separate exercise. Some of which can be done under the existing constitution, and also to strengthen the independence and quality of the judiciary. Those are some of the fundamental objectives, of constitutional reform.

You take for instance, Mr. Speaker, the electoral system. Surely we have to address the problem of the system, of the electoral system. We have first pass the post system, which in 1998 gave a result that was absolutely absurd. Fifty-five percent voted for the Unity Labour Party and 45% for the NDP but yet gave the NDP government. Now, what sort of representative government is that? And that is why you have a period of political tension, because the very political system itself and the electoral system returned the result where the government, however we twist it, would have been unable to survive, and if it survived, to govern with the consent of the people. And there suggestion how we can fashion an electoral system to accommodate our people's traditional connection to parliamentary representative on a geographic basis, but to import into it an element of proportional representation, to ensure that there is a fairer system of representation in the Parliament. And we do not have to reinvent the wheel; the German model offers a particular opportunity and occasion for us to examine it and for us to see how we can adopt it to our own

circumstances. Always with the caveat, if the people so determines because at the end of the day they have to determine.

So you take a proposition, which I have just stated, persons listening to me on radio would say, but what is the Prime Minister taking about, first-past-the-post-system and proportional representation, sounds like Greek. That alone requires serious education. That proposition alone. With some of us who have read up on the subject, studied it would know how it would function. But it is not the elites who are going to determine what kind of a constitution we have. The people have to understand it. So the exercise upon which we are beginning is an exercise, which requires tremendous education. How many people in this country understand our existing constitution?

This may shock people. There are lawyers in this country who have not read and studied our Constitution, that may shock some people. But I think that judges and magistrates before whom lawyers come can attest to that particular fact, and other lawyers who talk to lawyers would know that they have not read it, much less to study it. So if the lawyers themselves who make their living out of law have not really, some of them read the constitution and studied it, what about the man or the woman who is busy making his or her living as a stevedore, as an office worker, as a banana farmer, indeed as an accountant or a banker, so the education has to begin. And what we are beginning here is to just map the issues to set the frame, to give the government, the imprimatur of government. We have received the mandate from the people to go straight ahead and do the constitutional reform, but we do not want to do it that way. And the exercise is being facilitated by the broadcast of Parliament live, which in itself is a worthy good governance initiative, which Senator Bonadie has quite rightly commended the government for initiating.

The existing constitution has a number of strengths and weaknesses. Mr. Speaker, I did not note what time I began. I know I have an hour with the motion, when did I begin?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You started at quarter to four.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Fine, so I have another twenty minutes or so.

Yes, Mr. Speaker, among the existing strengths of our current constitution are those, which revolve around cold democratic principles, because we mustn't make it appear that the constitution that we have, has nothing, which is good in it, you know. Because the founding fathers of this constitution devised a liberal democratic document which provides for representative government which provides for a separation of powers more or less, between the executive and the judiciary and the legislature, though given the small size of the legislature, the executive pretty much dominates the legislature, because once we have agreed on something in Cabinet, it is unlikely that it is not going

to be past in Parliament. And I am being frank about the position, that is the situation with the last government, that is the situation with first government after independence. That is an incident of a small Parliament where you have very few backbenches, but yet there is nevertheless a measure of the separation of powers, and certainly one between the executive and the legislature on the one hand, and the judiciary. I cannot call a magistrate and tell him what decision I want him to give, or a judge; I mean that is unknown, that is something for which one should be impeached in the court of public opinion. You can't do that. And there is a certain amount of insulation of the judiciary from the executive and the legislature.

Also strengths in the existing constitution, there is a bill of rights, which protects our individual rights and freedoms. There is the existence of certain mechanisms such as the Constituency Boundary Commission, the Office of the Supervisor of Elections, to ensure the conduct of free and fair elections. There is an independent office of the Director of Public Prosecutions to keep the prosecution of criminal offenders out the executive or the legislature. And there is more or less a politically impartial and neutral public service, though some people may dispute that, but at least, in its broad formulation. But some of those very strengths hide certain weaknesses, for instance, many of our fundamental rights and freedoms are couched in languages which do not give the strength to the individual rights and freedoms as they ought to give, and then the enforcement provisions to the fundamental rights and freedoms have profound limitations, the way in which you can access the court, technical issues such as locus stand for certain matters.

The question is whether you can carry a constitutional motion to enforce your fundamental rights and freedoms, if indeed there is an alternative avenue for you to go to the court rather than invoking the provisions of the fundamental rights and freedoms section of the constitution. So there are all these limitations. There is a constituency boundary's commission, but the constituency boundary's commission is skewed in favour of the party in power. For example, we are having a census now, and under the law we can redesign the boundaries. I have to advice the Governor General and the Chairman, that's as Prime Minister, and then as Prime Minister and leader of the political party I have a right to a member, and then the Leader of the Opposition has one. So there is an inbuilt basically two to one. And after the census we can redesign the constituency boundaries to keep the NDP in opposition almost to perpetuity.

In addition to the fact that we are performing well. But the point is this I am offering the opportunity to the Opposition for a new dispensation. The likes of which you have never seen before in Caribbean politics. And that is why when I say "together now" some of our supporters, my own supporters would say the Prime Minister is carrying this thing a little too far. But I know from a clear sighted analysis the challenges that are facing this country and how we have to make up time on the economic questions we have to do at least 12 to 15 years work in 4 years but we have to restructure the

governance if we are going to be able to tackle those problems effectively. That is how I see it. Now there are people out there who would say well that you won under the system, it gives you all the power, why don't you keep it so, as indeed my predecessors were attempted to do. And in fact did. But we are a different breed. Entirely different. And this is why the hand of friendship on these matters should be grasped firmly, quickly, because really this is the lifeline for the NDP, this is the lifeline. They smile knowingly, they know what I am saying is the truth.

Mr. Speaker, we know, and we have analyzed the different alternatives for instance, in proceeding with important matters, what role should an opposition truly play in a new constitution. Currently the Constitution enjoins me as Prime Minister to consult with the Leader of the Opposition on the appointment at least one and up to three members of the Public Service and the Police Service Commission. All it requires of me is to consult him, which means talking to him or writing to him say I consult him. I must say that my immediate predecessor on one occasion he had he called names to me and we discussed names as indeed on this occasion when I called him I discussed names with him. But neither of us is required to do that. He was not required to do that when he was Prime Minister and I am not required to do it. It could have been done in the way that Sir James did it.

“I hereby consult you under Section so and so of the Constitution, regarding appointment of members to the Public Service Commission.”

And call that “George” and leave that, that is why when it is done that way you can have a member of the Public Service Commission being a member, but fundamentally because he is an NDP man gives to a radio station a Cabinet memorandum about some suggestion for the appointment of Permanent Secretaries. Of course it is a criminal offence which he has committed, but I am not interested in having people prosecuted for these matters because we have to put everything in a larger context, but of course, I know that while I put these matters in a larger context I hear the talk if I may say parenthetically “they’re in government but we run things.” You hear that talk on the ground you know, ULP in government but NDP run things. Well, you know I usually wait in the fullness of time to see the breadfruit full before you roast it. I never like to roast soft ripe breadfruit, or half full breadfruit. Fluxy breadfruit is to boil, and I like roast breadfruit. So I say that by way of a caution to those who argue like that. Not a threat just a caution, because an event took place on the 28th of March and you can disrespect me but don't disrespect the people who voted on the 28th of March.

So that I am cognizant of all that is being said because I am not a cocoon in the office of the Prime Minister. I know what is happening, and I know what is being said. And sometimes some of my own supporters would say to me don't you know what is going on, this and that, and I would say it is all right man, don't worry take it easy. But all of

us together would have to bring a different approach to the governance, and the reason between 1998 and the elections of 2001 is because the NDP regime could not, properly speaking, have had any legitimacy among the people despite its legality, and in December 1998 when I became leader of the ULP, when Sir James and I spoke, and when we more or less agreed that we will set up a time table for constitutional reform, the next thing I knew he went on the radio in January and said those who want fresh elections before 2003, they have a pipe dream and so on, and so forth, and cast out of the window practical terms the issue of constitutional reform.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, we have to decide among other things, when we come to the new constitution whether we are going to have a republic, or whether we are going to have a continuation of the Monarchical system of government. And we have to decide whether we are going have an executive presidency, or along the lines of the United States of America, or we are going to have a ceremonial president along the lines of India, Dominica or Trinidad and Tobago. I must say for my part that I am very wary of an executive presidency in a small island, because it can give even greater powers to the number one man than the office of the Prime Minister, so I am very cautious about that. For my own part I see we can have a republic with all respect to Her Majesty, someone who has served the Commonwealth and St. Vincent and the Grenadines very well. And the rules of the House enjoin me not to say anything against Her Majesty, and I am not saying that, but as a policy issue that is one that has to be under consideration, and I have to determine how, what is the mechanism by which we select a ceremonial president.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Five more minutes.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, then we have to look at how we incorporate the non-governmental organizations and the community based organizations in a system of local government, and even government at the central level. Indeed even before we have constitutional reform, even if the opposition agrees with the government on certain bills at the committee stage of the house, complex bills, we can amend the rules of the House in such a way to ask one or two representatives from the NGO community, or from labour, or business, depending upon the nature of the bill, to come and give us their views right here at the committee stage of the House, and certainly if not here at the committee stage of the House certainly to incorporate them to present evidence at select committees of the House. In other words, we have to look for innovative ways, even whilst we are engaging in the process of constitutional reform to show our bonafides.

Mr. Speaker, as I am winding up today, I want to say this, and it has to do with how we proceed with this motion, I had indicated to the Leader of the Opposition that I'd like very much if we could adjourn the House certainly by 5:30 p.m. because I have to attend a swearing function for new members of the Public Service Commissions at the General's Residence and then at 6:30 p.m. many of us including the Leader of the Opposition, I believe have been invited to attend the function of the National Development Foundation (NDF). It is a rough day. This is how it has been for a while. So I envisage that perhaps after my own presentation, Mr. Speaker, may be there would well be no other contributor to debate this evening, given the time frame. So perhaps it might be appropriate when I conclude for us to consider the question, perhaps of the suspension of the House to a date early next week.

I want to urge Members of the House, and particularly those in the opposition, to support this motion. The operative part of the motion is very straightforward. To direct, we have received a mandate from the people already, but we are saying, Honourable Members, direct us to set up promptly a broad-based and competent Constitutional Review Commission, to outline the procedure, the way in which I see us moving. No doubt Honourable Members from the Opposition would have other ideas as to how, perhaps we can proceed, and I would listen very attentively, to see our mode of proceeding, because I want us to work hand in hand on this issue of Constitutional Reform. I am obliged Honourable Members.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I beg to move that this same meeting of this House continue on Tuesday 8th May, 2001 at 10:00 a.m. I know that normally we sit on Thursday's, but this is, we have to get this matter going, Tuesday 8th May, 200. Another full day may be from 10:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. or 6:00 p.m. on that day, because it would be an exhausting debate and I so move the continuation of this meeting until Tuesday 8th May.

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

***Question put and agreed to
House suspended at 4:45 p.m.***