

**No. 7**

**THURSDAY**

**First Session**

**6<sup>th</sup> September, 2001**

**Seventh Parliament**

**SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

**THE**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES  
(HANSARD)**

**ADVANCE COPY**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

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**THE**

**THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE SEVENTH 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.**

**ELEVENTH SITTING**

**6<sup>th</sup> September, 2001**

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

The Honourable House of Assembly met at 9:00 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 6<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2001**

### **PRAYERS**

Mr. Speaker, read the Prayers of the House.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Prime Minister Dr. The Honourable Ralph Gonsalves and Mrs. Gonsalves, His Excellency Premier Chang Chun-hsiung and his delegation, Leader of the Opposition Honourable Arnhim Eustace, Honourable Members, members of the diplomatic core, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, this is a historic moment to commemorate the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of diplomatic relations between the Republic of China on Taiwan and St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I welcome His Excellency Premier Chang Chun hsiung and his delegation to this special sitting of the House of Assembly. It is my honour and privilege to call on Prime Minister Dr. the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves to address you.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, our special guest, His Excellency Chang Chun-Hsiung, Premier of the Republic of China, and our other wonderful friends who make up His Excellency's delegation, the Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Members, the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the wider Caribbean, today is a magnificent and historic day.

Mr. Speaker, the test of any good relationship lies not only in its longevity, but in the capacity of those involved to look beyond the factors which separate us to those which link us together to bring us mutual happiness, joy, fulfillment, peace and love.

Today is an outstanding gift of "Together Now" as joy cometh this morning!

Our country's twenty-year relationship with the Republic of China, which we commemorate today in a special way, has indeed stood the test of time.

Twenty years ago, or more specifically on August 15, 1981, hands of friendship reached across thousands of miles of the world's seascape and landscape from the

Republic of China to offer assistance to a new and fledgling democracy, known as St. Vincent and the Grenadines, small nation-state just entering into the forays of international diplomacy.

This gesture, this visionary move, brought together two civilizations, those of the Caribbean and China, with different cultures and distinct political and historical experiences in a bond of friendship which has been mutually rewarding. The ancient Chinese civilization of which your country, your Excellency, is its finest political expression, and our relatively young Caribbean civilization of which our nation is a most worthy component have joined hands and hearts in a remarkable act of political collaboration.

Today's event would have been a joyous and momentous one for the Founding Father of our Nation, the late Robert Milton Cato, whose vision for the future of the newly independent St. Vincent and the Grenadines opened the way for the establishment of diplomatic relations with the Republic of China on Taiwan in August 1981. Sadly, Robert Milton Cato and another pioneering giant in our diplomatic relationship, Hudson Kemuel Tannis, are no longer with us today. But our Founding Father's widow, Mrs. Lucy Cato, is with us; and I acknowledge her presence. [applause] So, too, is the venerable statesman, Vincent Ian Beache, the Minister of National Security and the Public Service who is the only Parliamentarian in this Honourable House today who was part of the then Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines which established diplomatic relations with the Republic of China. [applause] Indeed, the Honourable Vincent Ian Beache, was part of the first official delegation from St. Vincent and the Grenadines ever to visit the Republic of China.

It is the memory and outstanding political acumen of Robert Milton Cato that we in part salute today, as we welcome to our shores and to this Parliament for an historic first time, His Excellency Chang Chun-hsiung, the distinguished premier of the Republic of China and his delegation.

Your Excellency, the high esteem in which your country and people are held was reflected in the lavish welcome accorded to you and your delegation at the E.T. Joshua Airport yesterday. I am sure that you took especial note of the enthusiasm with which the children and the young persons greeted you.

Today, we turn yet another page in the history of our close friendship, when shortly, you will address our Parliament as our specially invited guest. I have been advised that never before in your country's history has such an honour ever been bestowed upon any of its leaders. We feel privileged and humbled to be first in this regard.

The Ground-breaking Ceremony which follows at Murray's Road to mark the construction of a New Public Library, in commemoration of our long and enduring

friendship, will establish for all times, a monument symbolic of our mutual respect for, and commitment to, the educational, social and cultural advancement of our peoples.

The Cultural Rally, which will be held this afternoon at the Victoria Park will in a real sense represent a blend of our two rich and distinct cultures, and put the people-to-people face to our relationship.

Accolades are not enough with which to express the heartfelt gratitude of the Government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines towards the Government and people of the Republic of China for the invaluable technical, financial and other assistance and benefits which we have derived from this partnership. The impact has been felt in almost every sector of the economy: in agriculture, health, education, culture, security, information technology, small business, as well as in infrastructure development.

Moreover, many of our nationals in the public and private sectors, at government and community levels, have been exposed to training in the Republic of China, and have witnessed first hand the and near miraculous achievement of your people, won through hard work, tenacity and a strong determination to succeed; and this notwithstanding the challenges of your historic past, and the ever present threat across the Taiwan Straits. [Your Excellency at this very moment the Director of Youth Affairs in the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Mr. Carlos Williams, is on his way to the Republic of China for observation and education and training in comparative matters relating to youth development.]

The Communiqué of Kingstown which Your Excellency and I signed yesterday on behalf of our respective countries resonates with our solidarity and friendship in the interest of our peoples humanization.

Despite the ever-present challenges, your Government has resolved not to be shaken from its democratic ideals, and to seek to make its contribution, wherever possible, to the promotion of those ideals. In this regard, your personal odyssey from distinguished lawyer, scholar, and human rights activities to leader has demonstrated your personal commitment to peace, democracy, freedom, justice and prosperity the world over.

Your own role in the development of the Democratic People's Party (DPP) and in the consolidation of parliamentary democracy in your country is now a matter of historic record. It can truly be said that you, Your Excellency have been beaten on the anvil of political experience and forged in the cauldron of struggle. In that regard I feel a profound personal bond with you through in a different land and in different historical circumstances.

In at least one other respect, your Excellency you and I share a commonality: Our first official visits overseas have been to our respective countries. In May 2001, mere weeks after my elevation to the office of Prime Minister, I visited the Republic of China where my delegation and I were accorded a welcome of exceptional warmth by your esteemed President, by yourself and your entire government. Now in September 2001, the celebration of our twentieth anniversary of diplomatic relations is the occasion for your first official visit overseas. The Government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines feel deeply honoured thus to host you and your delegation.

I wish to reiterate to Your Excellency our Government's support of the will of the 23 million people of Taiwan to be recognized, and to be afforded membership into the many international institutions in which it can play a very meaningful role. We will continue to promote your cause whenever and wherever the opportunity presents itself. That is our resolve; it is our commitment. And today in our nation's highest political institution I renew that pledge on behalf of our nation, at home and in the Diaspora. This is a matter upon which our people and their representatives are fully united, "Together Now"!

On behalf of the Government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, I ask that you convey to your esteemed President, His Excellency Chen Shui-bian, our very best wishes for his continued good health, and for the prosperity of your country.

I trust, your Excellency, that you and your delegation will take back fond memories of your brief but historic visit our Little Hairouna, Home of the Blessed, our Youlou and the Begos, the Land of Peace, the alternate names which history informs us that the indigenous people of our nation, the magnificent Caribs of Callinagoes, called our country. I wish you and your delegation a wonderful stay among our people. I wish you all, too, a safe journey homewards, and God speed!

Long live the peoples of the Republic of China and St. Vincent and the Grenadines!

Long live the strong bonds of friendship between our two peoples and nations!

Long live the further ennoblement of the Chinese and Caribbean civilisations! Thank you.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** With delight I now invite the Leader of the Opposition the Honourable Arnhim Eustace to address you.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, Prime Minister Gonsalves and Mrs. Gonsalves, Your Excellency Premier Chang Chun-hsiung, and your delegation, Members of Parliament of both countries, distinguish ladies and gentlemen, I take

great pleasure in welcoming you and your delegation to your beautiful country St. Vincent and the Grenadines, in commemoration of twenty (20) years of diplomatic relations between our two (2) countries.

We on this side of this Honourable House are particularly pleased to extend the warmest of welcomes because for approximately seventeen (17) of the twenty (20) years that we now celebrate, your country worked closely and cordially with a New Democratic Party Administration.

We are therefore Mr. Premier, very conscious and deeply appreciative of the contribution that your country, the Government and people Taiwan have made to the Government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, since 1981.

In many respects, the contribution that your Government has made to us is both unique and special. It is unique because given the many thousands of miles that separate us, we have developed a close relationship akin to what one finds in a family.

Our relationship transcends the mere diplomatic and has entered the realm of the persona. We have become deeply concerned about each other's well being. It is that concern for your brothers and sisters that prompted the previous New Democratic Party Administration to make a financial contribution like the proverbial widow's mite when Taiwan had that terrible earthquake just a few years ago. As it is with a family we all felt your pain.

Our relationship is special for a different reason, and that is, the significant financial and technical assistance that your country has provided to us over the last twenty (20) years. Unlike other traditional donors you have provided assistance in virtually every sector of our economy, whether it be in agriculture, health, infrastructural development, including roads, vegetable markets, airports, in education, in sports and culture and national security to name a few. But equally important if not more so, your technical assistance and diplomatic personnel have demonstrate to us certain values including most importantly the type of work ethic, which has made your country one of the most successful in today's the world.

And what have we offered to your country and its official? Despite our cultural differences our people have demonstrated that all of your staff have been able to integrate fully into our communities and that without much difficulties. Your children have attended our schools and have done well, and have become in many ways Vincentian and treated as such, you are at home here.

I believe also, that our tradition of parliamentary democracy is something that you and the people of Taiwan have come to appreciate and perhaps will learn from our experience. I wish to assure you Mr. Premier that we on this side of the House like the

Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines pledge to continue our support for your country in all appropriate international forums. We will support all the initiatives aimed at improving your countries position in the international community. We are very committed to this and we have demonstrated so in the past.

Mr. Premier, I close these brief remarks by again extending a very warm welcome to you and your delegation, and I am delighted and honoured that you have agreed to address our Parliament this morning. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** It is my distinct pleasure to call on his Excellency, Premier Chang Chun-hsiung to address this Honourable House.

**HIS EXCELLENCY PREMIER CHAN CHUN-HSIUNG:** Thank you, thank you very much. Prime Minister Gonsalves and Mrs. Gonsalves, Honourable Arnhim Eustace, Leader of the Opposition, Honourable Louis Straker, Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Honourable Hendrickson Alexander, Speaker of the House of Assembly, distinguish guests, ladies and gentlemen, good morning.

I feel very honoured to address you today in this august House. First of all, I would express my sincere appreciation to Prime Minister Gonsalves for his kind invitation. It was my great pleasure to meet you, Sir, and your colleagues in Taipei in last May, and I am delighted to have this opportunity to return this visit to your beautiful country.

It happens that this is a very auspicious year, as we mark the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Republic of China on Taiwan and the St. Vincent and the Grenadines on August 15<sup>th</sup>. I think it is fitting for us to take a moment to commemorate the wisdom of the late Prime Minister Milton Cato, who took that important decision! Honourable Vincent Beache and Honourable Hendrickson Alexander, now Minister of National Security and Speaker of this House respectively, also played an important role in that diplomatic decision-making process. Twenty years later, you both seem still young and energetic. And it certainly makes me feel great about our meeting each other after 20 years.

Today, when we reflect upon the remarkable achievements made by the joint efforts of our two countries in the past two decades, this anniversary is truly a worthy moment to celebrate.

Indeed the success of this diplomatic relationship is obvious. On the one hand the co-operation between SVG and the ROC has led to tangible economic results. For example, in the past we worked together to open the Union Island airport, and now we are working on a package of other infrastructure projects to improve the domestic transportation network. Last year, another co-operative venture, the SVG Tennis

Centre hosted its first international tournament raising the level of support facilities and generating new tourism opportunities.

In keeping with the goal of developing an information-based economy, which both our governments have declared as a national priority, we have assisted in upgrading computer facilities, and later today we will break ground at a site of the future National Library. In addition, Taiwanese specialists in our technical mission have been working hard to transfer their valuable professional knowledge in agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry, building under similar climates of our two countries. On the other hand, our interaction has also galvanized the counter exchanges and the mutual understanding between our two peoples.

Like St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Taiwan is an island country, and like yours, our land is beautiful and mountainous, but also subjected to hurricanes, especially at this time of the year. Up until the 1970's Taiwan was a significant beneficiary of international aid. Since then our small and medium enterprises and the hard work of our skills and educated the work force have brought us rapid economic growth, and the rising standards of living. We therefore feel it is our responsibility to share our development experience with other countries especially with our diplomatic allies, and we sincerely hope that this experience can provide useful assistance. [applause]

Today, I am very impressed to see what has been achieved by the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in recent years. I trust that with leadership of the current government and hard work of all Vincentians, the economy of your country will soon achieve great success. In this respect the Republic of China on Taiwan will be glad to be part in your endeavours.

The Republic of China is a sovereign State with 23 million people but we are excluded from important international organizations. Even though we have created economic and political miracles, but the 23 million people in Taiwan have no representative in the United Nations and many other important international organizations. It is unfair and unreasonable that the voice of 23 million people cannot be heard in the international society.

As a member of the global village, the Republic of China is willing to, and capable of making contributions to the International society. We have already extended our helping hands to people in El Salvador when earthquakes happen there, and in the Caribbean region when hurricanes hit these areas.

The Republic of China is never been absent from the international work, but our rights have been deprived of at the United Nations and other international organizations.

Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to express our sincerest gratitude to the people and the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines for their continuous and equivocal support for our bids to join these bodies. We treasure these supports very dearly.

Both Taiwan and St. Vincent and the Grenadines are island nations, and we share common values, upholding human rights, freedom, democracy and peace. Not only the Government relations between us are close but also our people treat one another just like brothers and sisters.

I would like to reiterate that this visit is my first overseas trip since I assume office as Premier of the Republic of China last October. I firmly believe that after this visit our relations would be further strengthened. Let us pay our highest tribute to those who in past and present have contributed to fostering this time honoured diplomatic relationship. Let us hope that the brotherly love between our two countries will continue to grow and prosper under solid foundation of our common values.

The Government of the Republic of China will offer its utmost help to work with you hand in hand. To share with you our experiences and create a bright future for both countries. Once again on behalf of the people and the Government of the Republic of China I would like to express our deep gratitude to you for your firm support of our international participation.

Thank you, and God bless you. [Applause].

## ADJOURNMENT

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I beg to move that this Honourable House do stand adjourn until October the 16<sup>th</sup>, 2001.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Without putting the question I now say that this Honourable House adjourns until the 16<sup>th</sup> of October, 2001. Thank you.

***House adjourned 9:55 a.m.***