

**No. 4**

**Tuesday**

**First Session**

**24<sup>th</sup> May, 2011**

**Ninth Parliament**

**SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

**THE**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**ADVANCE COPY**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

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**THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

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

**TENTH SITTING**

**24<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2011**

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

The Honourable House of Assembly met at 10:10 a.m. in the Assembly Chamber, Court House, Kingstown.

**PRAYERS**

**MR. SPEAKER IN THE CHAIR**

Honourable Hendrick Alexander

**Present**

**MEMBERS OF CABINET**

Prime Minister, Minister of Finance,  
Economic Planning, National Security,  
Grenadines and Legal Affairs  
Dr. the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves

Member for North Central Windward

Attorney General  
Honourable Judith Jones-Morgan

Minister of Education/ Deputy  
Prime Minister  
Honourable Girlyn Miguel

Member for Marriaqua

Minister of Housing, Informal  
Human Settlements, Physical Planning,  
Lands and Surveys  
Honourable Clayton Burgin

Member for East St. George

Minister of Agriculture, Forestry  
and Fisheries and Rural Transformation  
Honourable Montgomery Daniel

Member for North Windward

Minister of Tourism and Industry  
Honourable Saboto Caesar

Member for South Central Windward

Minister of Health, Wellness and  
The Environment  
Honourable Cecil McKie

Member for West St. George

Minister of National Reconciliation  
Labour, Information and Ecclesiastical Affairs  
Honourable Maxwell Charles

Member for Central Leeward

Minister of National Mobilisation,  
Social Development, the Family,  
Persons with Disabilities, Youths,  
Sports and Culture  
Honourable Frederick Stephenson

Member for South Windward

Minister of Transport and Works, Urban  
Development and Local Government  
Honourable Julian Francis

Government Senator

Parliamentary Secretary in the Office  
Of the Prime Minister  
Honourable Elvis Charles

Government Senator

Honourable David Browne

Government Senator/ Deputy Speaker

## **OTHER MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE**

Honourable Arnhim Eustace  
Leader of the Opposition

Member for East Kingstown

Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday

Member for Northern Grenadines

Honourable Terrance Ollivierre

Member for Southern Grenadines

Honourable St. Claire Leacock

Member for Central Kingstown

Honourable Daniel Cummings

Member for West Kingstown

Honourable Roland Matthews

Member for North Leeward

Honourable Nigel Stephenson

Member for South Leeward

Honourable Vynnette Frederick

Opposition Senator

Honourable Anesia Baptiste

Opposition Senator

**ABSENT**

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade  
And Consumer Affairs

Government Senator

Honourable Dr. Douglas Slater

# SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

## HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY 24<sup>th</sup> MAY 2011

### PRAYERS

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Hendrick Alexander, read the Prayers of the House.

Be seated. Honourable Members, as I have observed and I wish to state that we have a convention in this Honourable House as far as seating arrangements are concerned and I noticed that the Honourable Member for Central Kingstown and the Honourable Senator Baptiste are not sitting in the conventional arrangement and I am asking them please to change their seats immediately. You sit here in this House according to seniority and that makes you. So could you kindly Honourable Member for Central Kingstown and Honourable Senator Baptiste would you kindly please change your seats?

I would ask again, Honourable Member for Central Kingstown, Honourable Senator Baptiste, would you please change your seats? We have to maintain order and decorum in this Honourable House. Please change your seats. Honourable Member for Central Kingstown, again, I am asking you to change your seat. You are not maintaining the seating convention in this Honourable House. Could you do that for me please?

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK:** Mr. Speaker, I really did not have any intentions to have anything to say in this House today and I am sorry that we have to start this way, but this is precisely the problem we speak about, your inconsistencies. It is very normal, very, very normal that Members on the other side from top to bottom sit all over the place. It happens over on every single sitting of Parliament. It does not represent a problem to you, today I choose to sit here momentarily, it becomes an issue to you and that is the problem we are speaking about, your inconsistency, Mr. Speaker, and we need to get this right. They do it all the time with impunity, you never, ever drew it to their attention, my ten years in this Parliament, today it becomes an issue. [Interjection] when Mr. Speaker, when, when, when will we get some consistency in this House? That is all I am asking for you know. The Prime Minister sits in the gallery, he comes back in an open impunity, and you never draw it to his attention. He takes seats, others move up and down, what is the big issue, Mr. Speaker? Why me?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, if I can speak now, because I think you have made a point you say. Is that so, if you can tell me which of the Members of this House at the beginning of this House who has not established his seating position then I will agree with what you are saying? What happens here from time to time and the public would know, because you seem like you want to make a public display on this matter, is that if a Member wants to have a certain exchange with another Member during the process of the

meeting, they may go there and sit near that person that does not means he has taken up that permanent position there, it may just be simple temporary situation. I am saying the meeting of the House has began and your position is you sit where you have been appointed to sit as it were and I want that sort of tradition maintained. If you want to exchange a short temporary conversation with somebody, and I have seen it done, you yourself have done it, you came close to another Member, sat in a seat close to you, and so what you are talking about inconsistency, what we are talking about? Would you please move now?

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK:** May I, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** This thing, we cannot continue, there is a long agenda here and we need to continue with the meeting, just go and sit on your seat and then you can...

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

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I will not listen to you from that seat. Come and sit on your seat and I will listen to you. We need to have discipline in this Honourable House.

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK:** It starts from the top, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable, you are tempting me.

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK:** so are you, Mr. Speaker.

## **OBITUARIES**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, yesterday in a solemn and moving funeral service and ceremony we paid our last respects to Margaret Rose Cato nee Daniel who had been an honourable member of this House for the period 1974 to 1984.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to repeat what I said yesterday in my tribute, but it is important for us to acknowledge in this Honourable House that Margaret Rose Cato was a nominated member from January 1974 until the commencement of the independence Parliament, well the dissolution of the pre-independence Parliament for the General Elections, sorry Mr. Speaker, until the end of the pre-independence Parliament and then she was appointed as senator after independence in October 1979 and after the elections of 1979 December she was again reappointed and remained a member of this Honourable House until 1984. It's a woman of rare distinction and I want the matter to be recorded that we all in this Parliament really consider that we are missing an icon.

Mr. Speaker, if I may just say something, yesterday in that funeral service I was sitting..., we are all sitting on the left side, I was sitting in the front pew with the Eulogist Joseph "Burns" Bonadie, immediately behind me Mr. Speaker were yourself, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister

and immediately behind were the Honourable Minister of Culture and the former Minister of Culture Rene Baptiste and Mr. Speaker, when we began together singing the Our Father Prayer and I heard that everyone was singing so lustily and with meaning, the prayer that Jesus taught us I felt good for St. Vincent and the Grenadines. There was in Margaret Cato's death a sense of unity and I felt the moment. I do not know if other Honourable Members did, and it impacted on me and it means something to me and if in her passing and at her funeral service our civilisation was able to transmit that to each of us in that moment of solemnity I am thankful and I am grateful.

On behalf of Members of this side of the House and I believe the entire House, certainly on behalf too of the party which I have the honour to lead and on behalf of the Woman's Arm of the ULP, the successor to the Women's League of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Labour Party want to yet again extend profound condolences to the immediate family and friends of Margaret Rose Cato. I am obliged.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to three prominent Vincentians who have recently passed on. Firstly, yesterday as indicated earlier by the Prime Minister, we all attended the funeral of Margaret Cato, a former Member of this Honourable House. I know Mrs. Cato very, very well. Her family and mine were very close during the earlier years of my life. We attended a lot of social activities together and I had both an official reason and a personal reason for making sure that I attended that funeral. Her sister Pauline Sandy and her other sister Mrs. Hamlett, Michael Hamlett's mother, "Vee" as we call her and my mother made numerous cakes for weddings all over St. Vincent and the Grenadines and will move from house to house to make those cakes. Sometimes it is our house, sometimes at the Cato's house, sometimes at the Hamlett's house, so there was a relationship that went over many, many years. I attended her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday party some few years ago and I was really saddened at her passing. Of that group of eight individuals all have passed on and to me there was a kind of void when I look back at the past to know that all of them had passed on and Mrs. Cato survived the longest. May God have mercy on her soul.

I also want to pay tribute Mr. Speaker, to Raymond Knights who served this country in more than one capacity, he worked with what we know as VINLEC, long before it was VINLEC and he served there for over 40 years in the technical field.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** His correct name would be Raymond right.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Yes, Raymond, in the technical field and in addition to that he was one of the cultural icons of this country in terms of his participation and leadership role both in pan and in carnival. It is significant that his son is head of the Youlou Pan Movement and in fact during the service his grandchildren performed on the pan and they themselves are like a whole pan side and he was devoted to carnival where bending was one of his specialties. He also had a side which some people would have known about and that is he was a member of the Gideon's in the distribution of Bibles, a member of the Men's Fellowship of the Methodist Church, a very devoted Methodist and the turnout at his funeral must be testimony to recognition of the contribution that he has in fact made to St. Vincent and the Grenadines, to this nation of ours. May he also rest in peace and my condolences to his family.

I only learned yesterday evening of the death of a gentleman I used to call computer Bailey who served in the public service of this country for many, many years in the area..., it was plenty part in the Ministry of Finance, he lives at Arnos Vale there on the flat not too far from the Gas Station and I was unaware of his death until yesterday and he in fact will be laid to rest this afternoon. I want to say that he was a gentleman in the truest sense of the word. He lived very quietly after his retirement and I am sure that a lot of people were unaware of his death, but that is the nature of the man, very quiet, very gentle, and very unobtrusive. I wish to say to his wife and to his children, we feel their loss and may his soul rest in peace. I am much obliged.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Any further obituaries?

### **CONGRATULATORY REMARKS**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable..., no, let me recognise the Honourable Member for Southern Grenadines.

**HONOURABLE TERRANCE OLLIVIERRE:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I wish to firstly congratulate the Easterval Committee for having again produced another successful Easterval 2011. It is a very young committee, Mr. Speaker. Indeed, they are faced with many challenges, but they have sought to overcome those challenges in order to make sure that the festival in Union Island survives. They have indeed attempts of reintegrating the cultural aspects and the sporting aspects back to the festivals. As we know a number of participants also take part in this festival from..., we had participants this year in Ms. Easterval from Barbados, as far as Grenada and the other neighbouring territories of Grenada, Petit Martinique. I will just like to congratulate all the winners and wish the committee future success in their endeavours.

I will also like to take the opportunity to also congratulate the Mayreau Regatta Committee, they too also held their Regatta a week after the Easterval Committee with participation with boats from Carriacou, Petit Martinique, Canouan and of course those from Mayreau. The Mayreau Regatta is turning out to be one of the better Regattas of the islands and indeed we know they need all the support that they can get from the Ministry of Tourism and the other relevant Ministries. This year we had a good time. I could have been better as I said, once we have the input and a number of persons who travel from the mainland to the Grenadines during this time, it shows the importance of these festivals and there is the need for us to ensure that they have the maximum resources in order to be successful. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yes, Honourable Member for South Central.

**HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring congratulatory remarks to several persons and organisations. Mr. Speaker, I would first like to begin with the Easterval Committees in Union Island, Mayreau and in Bequia. I must say that this year was an extremely outstanding year. I would have seen the resourcefulness of persons in the private sector working very closely with the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourism Authority to ensure that these festivals were indeed successes.

Mr. Speaker, in the same light I would just like to just if I may, encourage more persons to support these local festivals. Many parents they usually allow their children to become acquainted with the streets of New York, the streets of Montreal and Toronto, well how many of our parents would take us to Mayreau for Easterval or to Union Island. So I just want to use the opportunity to encourage persons to support local tourism.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Bequia Sailing Club on their celebration of 30 years in existence, definitely the closing ceremony was well attended and we would have seen persons participating this year from around the region and around the world. Definitely the sailing club has brought many persons to our shores and it is definitely an enhancement to our tourism calendar each year.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate the Tourism Authority on their successful launching of the new logo. I have travelled to a few OECS meetings since then and everywhere I go persons are making high praises for the excellent work done by the Tourism Authority in St. Vincent and the Grenadines in the rebranding.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to congratulate the National Trust. I have had the opportunity with the Minister of Culture to work very closely with the National Trust over the past few weeks and they have successfully completed the reopening of Fort Duvernette and this is definitely going to play a very important role for heritage tourism in this country. They have rebuilt the jetty, they have restored the steps and the cannons and in the same vein, Mr. Speaker, I would like to say special thanks to the Government and to the people of Finland who would have financed this project. Mr. Speaker, I am obliged.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Let me recognise the Member for..., oh sorry, South Leeward. I thought you say you were giving way.

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to offer congratulations to the organisers, the coordinators and the executive of the New Democratic Party's Young Democrats for successfully staging its inaugural public speaking competition. It was a competition that was keenly contested and I could understand the difficulties that the judges would have had in coming up with a winner. I really would not have like to be in the shoes of those judges, but at the end of the day there could only have been one winner. So I just want to give special congratulations to the representative from the Southern Grenadines, Ms. Lavern King, for being the first winner of our public speaking competition and Tricia Gabriel from Central Leeward, she came in second and she also got the price for the best topic and third was Shaneil Hull from the Northern Grenadines. The best impromptu speech was taken by Mr. Lesley Bascombe of West St. George and the best elected topic by Ateika Frankly of North Leeward. It shows, Mr. Speaker, that in the New Democratic Party there is depth, there is a future and there is definitely continuity and I want to say to the public out there that there is a continuity programme with the New Democratic Party, because we recognise the fact that politics as Major Leacock always says, it is an in and out club and when we are out, we have no difficulty at all in terms of vacating, because we recognise that there are people in the New Democratic Party who are well able to carry on from where we leave off.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to say congratulations to the members of the South Leeward Sports Association for having completed successfully its 5<sup>th</sup> competition with respect to trade different sporting disciplines namely

football, cricket and netball. I know that there are some organisations who find it very difficult to complete or to successfully stage one particular sporting discipline, but they have done so with not one, but three. So I want to offer sincere congratulations to members of that executive, particularly Elroy Paul Boucher, Keith Ollivierre, Wayne Grant, Kelvin York, and Othniel Douglas. I want to congratulate those persons who came out to watch from time to time even though, Mr. Speaker, that they have been playing under some very, very bad conditions.

I recognise last Sunday there was the final of the cricket and football, I actually came out a few times and to play the cricket, albeit I only made one I saved my duck, but Mr. Speaker, the point I want to make here is that the condition of the field, I mean you can actually hide in the field. The grass is so high, it is not properly kept and I am hoping that in the future we are going to see some changes there. The pavilion itself that houses the spectators, it is in a dilapidated condition and I am hoping in the not so distance future that that pavilion is going to be \*recognised.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say congratulations to a gentleman who was the best man at my wedding. He is also one of the better coaches that we have in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, I am talking about Godfrey 'Fuzzy' Harry for taking everything that he has learnt and imparting it to the students of the Thomas Saunders Secondary School and I want to congratulate Mr. Harry and the school for participating in the Penn relay. We know, Mr. Speaker, that they would have taken St. Vincent and the Grenadines to another level, but I believe that our athletes could do a lot better if we have better sporting facilities in our country. So again, Mr. Speaker, without saying much, I am hoping and I am keeping my ears and my eyes wide open for the day when we will have that national stadium. I am much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to offer congratulations to three organisations, one of course to join my Honourable colleague, the Member for South Leeward, to congratulate the young democrats on their inaugural public speaking competition which was well run, fairly competed and a tremendous success for the young people in the New Democratic Party and the young people in St. Vincent and the Grenadines as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, it is very important that we instil in our young people the seriousness of politics that the matters of the public business is also their business and that they have a role to play in shaping public opinion when it comes to important matters of governance and the affairs of our country. I think it is a very good example that was set and I encourage not just political parties but other civic organisations to do likewise to encourage our young people to engage in serious public debate and personal development.

Mr. Speaker, I also wish to congratulate the Bequia Cricket Association for the commencement of the 5<sup>th</sup> consecutive Bequia Cricket Association Hairoun 20/20 competition. It has been sometime, Mr. Speaker, since there had been competitive cricket in Bequia and this organisation has done a tremendous job over the past four years to bring it to a level of serious competition where youngsters are aspiring to being good cricketers where over the hill players like myself still go out and enjoy a day in the sun and Mr. Speaker, where the community comes out and supports good sportsmanship and good competition. We have had to work of course under very difficult circumstances, because as the Honourable Member for South Leeward has pointed out, our playing fields really need some attention from the authorities. But the Bequia Cricket Association has done a

tremendous job in cleaning up the playing field and its surroundings and maintaining the stadium and the washroom facilities to make it comfortable for the people who come out and support the teams and support the cricketers.

It is also very good to see that even though we have had a transition into a new executive this year that the people who have served on previous executives continues to work along with the present executive, which is not something you see very often in organisations, to build and to offer their experience over the past four years to the new executive to build the association and to promote cricket and sport in our community in Bequia and the country as a whole.

I wish also, Mr. Speaker, to congratulate the Bequia Sailing Club and the community for another successful Easter Regatta. This is a major economic sporting and cultural event in our country and it is amazing, Mr. Speaker, how much is accomplished by so few people and people who give their time, their expertise without expecting more than a thank you and the satisfaction of knowing that it is again a job well done. And I wish to encourage those people who are continuing in the sailing club and for those who are outside, admire what they are doing to also to lend a hand to become involved, to ensure that this event grows from strength to strength and that the country as a whole benefits as much as possible from this important economic activity. We look forward to their service over the course of the year and to another successful event when we will have the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual Bequia Easter Regatta. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to say heartiest congratulations to the St. Vincent Girls High School. This school opened its doors on May 8<sup>th</sup> 1911 under the leadership of Ms. Mary L. Ince, a Barbadian National amidst the social bias against the education of females. Mr. Speaker, there is an old adage which runs that good leaders cannot and must not be forgotten and so I would take this opportunity to name those Headmistresses who served over the years. And after Ms. Ince we had Carmelita Went, Ms. Muriel Went, Ms. Laura Smith-Muffet, Ms. Maude Ellison, Ms. Jesse Bucchan, Ms. Barbara Headle, Ms. Millicent Byron, Ms. Margaret Forder, Sister Philomena Anderson, Mrs. Norma Keizer, Mrs. Lorna De Bique, Mrs. Jeanne Horne, Ms. Joy Browne, Mrs. Susan Dougan and Mrs. Andrea Keizer-Bowman who has been serving since 2004 to the present time.

Despite the challenges of an almost century old building, limited classroom space, a high staff turnover, especially in the sciences, the school continues to do well. The current enrollment is 701 girls. Currently, a staff of 50 on site and the 2 at the Kingstown Technical Institute works assiduously to ensure a continued tradition of excellence despite the challenges of competing values in the home and the society. Congratulations St. Vincent Girls High School on your 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary, your record is unmatched. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker [applause].

**HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to offer congratulatory remarks to first of all the Thomas Saunders Secondary School, the Buccament Bay Harlequin Resorts and last but not least, to the Unity Labour Party staging their Miss Unity Youths 2011.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the Penn relays is the oldest and largest track and field competition that is held in the United States of America and it is hosted annually since April 21<sup>st</sup>, 1895 by the University of Pennsylvania at Franklyn Field in Philadelphia. Mr. Speaker, this event attracts more than 15,000 participants from high schools, colleges and track clubs throughout North America and abroad, notably Jamaica. Mr. Speaker, Jamaica has been participating in these events for over 30 years and this year 2011, Mr. Speaker, St. Vincent and the Grenadines with the Thomas Saunders Secondary at the 116<sup>th</sup> edition of the Penn relays made our first appearance at these Penn relays [applause].

Mr. Speaker, when the Unity Labour Party came into office in 2001 and their intention was to take the Richmond Hill Primary School and improve upon it as a secondary school, we had lots of talks and the naysayers commented, they commented on the principal, some people cried rivers of tears that that was their Alma mater and that is not what they wanted for the school, but today we can be very proud as Vincentians that we had made it thus far attending the 116<sup>th</sup> edition of the Penn relays. Mr. Speaker, in the heats, the 4 by 100 meters relays, and our team did it with a time of 44.25 seconds and in the 4 by 100 relays, in a time of 3 minutes 28 or so seconds. Mr. Speaker, despite the fact that they won their heats, they came first in their heats, you know because you competed among a number of schools, their time was not of the best to take them to the finals of these relays, but they did an extremely great job in putting St. Vincent and the Grenadines on the mark of the Penn relays as I have said before for the first time. I want to congratulate the principal Mr. Renton [applause] the coaches and more importantly, Mr. Speaker, the relay team.

Mr. Speaker, secondly, when the Buccament Bay Resorts came to St. Vincent and the Grenadines with an intention of building a modern hotel facility here on mainland St. Vincent and the Grenadines, we knew of the outcry. It is a phantom project, but today Mr. Speaker, I see people working there. Many persons from own constituency of South Windward who are working happily at the Buccament Bay Harlequin Resorts and today, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Harlequin Resorts and Buccament for bringing to St. Vincent and the Grenadines last Thursday a football match, the Liverpool F. C. under 19 team to play against the under 20 team of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, this is a great feat. It is the first time in the history of St. Vincent and the Grenadines [interjection] you could keep that, is the first time in St. Vincent and the Grenadines that St. Vincent and the Grenadines are hosting an international team despite the fact that we lost 4/1, but it was a wonderful day for St. Vincent and the Grenadines and [applause] the Harlequin Resorts Buccama Bay, they have a young team, Mr. Speaker, that they are grooming from the four schools around that area and we have several Vincentian Coaches who are working at the Harlequin Resorts to train our young footballers here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Last but not least, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Unity Labour Party for successfully hosting the fourth anniversary of the Miss Unity Youth Show 2011. Mr. Speaker, this show is second (I wonder if to say that?) only to the Miss SVG Beauty Pageant and we must congratulate the [applause] Unity Labour Party for putting on such a great show. This year [interjection] the Youth Arm sorry. This year I want to congratulate Miss East Kingstown, Jasmine James for winning the pageant, second runner up was Miss Nekianna Williams from West Kingstown and third Miss Cilicia Nanton from North Windward. Mr. Speaker, this Unity Youth show has been greatly helping our young women here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines in their overall development. Actually this year two of the participants in the Miss SVG show came out of the Miss Unity Youths and last

year's winner of the Miss SVG, Miss Afisha Matthews was a runner up in the Miss Unity Youths. Once again, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the Unity Youths for the wonderful job that they are doing in the development of our young ladies here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker [applause].

**HONOURABLE ANESIA BAPTISTE:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to give congratulations to few persons who have accomplished great things in recent times. First of all, I wish to congratulate, to join my colleagues in congratulating the young democrats of the New Democratic Party in having staged their inaugural public speaking competition. I am really satisfied as a young person myself to see that despite the view that many feel that we are living in a society today where fear stalks the land, the young persons are not afraid to express their views even on political and current issues that are affecting us and I want to congratulate them and to encourage them to continue to be expressive and not let any situation deter them from saying how they feel about anything.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Inaudible.

**HONOURABLE ANESIA BAPTISTE:** I also wish, Mr. Speaker...,

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member,

**HONOURABLE ANESIA BAPTISTE:** If you want to ignore what the people of this country are saying and feeling that is your problem, not mine.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, please let us continue with the congratulatory remarks.

**HONOURABLE ANESIA BAPTISTE:** I also wish to congratulate, Mr. Speaker, another young person, another young son of this soil who despite adversity has like the motto of the Girls High School who recently celebrated 100 years, through difficulties to the stars has risen and I speak of none other but Mr. Curtis Bowman of the constituency of Marriacqua who despite circumstances where after running on an NDP ticket in the recent general elections, having lost and having attempted to be reemployed as a pharmacist for which he is qualified, he was not given such an opportunity, but despite that he persevered and pursued and with the help of God and support of friends and family including his NDP family, he recently opened the newest pharmacy in Kingstown, Bowman's pharmacy and I wish to say a hearty congratulations to Mr. Curtis Bowman and family and to wish them all the best.

I also wish to congratulate the current Chairman of the New Democratic Party, Dr. Linton Lewis who was recently elected as President of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Bar Association, congratulations to you Dr. Lewis and we wish you all the best in your tenure as President of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Bar Association. I am much obliged.

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK:** Mr. Speaker, I know you have an abiding concern with the accuracy of the records and statements in the House and only this morning we heard the Honourable Member for South Windward proclaim that it was the first time an international football game was being played at Arnos Vale. Now, it may have been his first visit to the Arnos Vale Playing Field for an international game, but he must not mistake that personal tragedy by...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Congratulatory remarks.

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK:** Misstating the records. In fact the venue has hosted several international football games and the games last week was not the first. He may want to correct himself, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Let us get on with the congratulatory remarks please. That is it [interjection] oh, correcting a congratulatory remark. That is it? Madam Clerk, it seems to be the end of congratulatory remarks.

### MINUTES

Mr. Speaker, if I may just say, if you may permit me, Minister Leacock is correct that there has been other international games stage at Arnos Vale. They had World Cup Games, Preliminary..., I mean World Cup Preliminary for instance, Mexico came there, played St. Vincent that is an international game for example and so on and so forth. But I understand the point that the Minister of Sports was making about a football team out of the United Kingdom, albeit, not the senior team and the enthusiasm.

The Minutes of the sitting held on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> April 2011, copies of which had been previously circulated were taken as read and confirmed without amendments.

### ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** No announcements.

### STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I have brief statements to make on three subjects to bring this Honourable House up to date on first of all the British American CLICO issue. I believe Honourable Members would be aware that on the 18<sup>th</sup> May, 2011 there was the formal launch of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union, British America Insurance Company held support fund in the sum of \$5 million

which would take account of all the claims in respect of the health insurance which have backed up for the last two years.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make the point that we are talking about the Health Insurance Fund and not persons who have health problems and who would wish to use their annuities to pay for the health condition. I am talking about the health insurance.

Mr. Speaker, I outlined along with the technical head of the committee, I of course head the Ministerial Subcommittee of the Monetary Council of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union in respect of Insurance Matters, most specifically British American and CLICO and would just indicate how we are proceeding. I may say, Mr. Speaker, in relation to the health fund, the claims can be made through the British American Office and someone has been engaged to provide the information on an ongoing basis and I think you would have seen advertisements in the newspapers and you would have a lot of information coming more to the public.

In fact, there is a lot already in the public domain and I am asking persons with their claims for health insurance from British American to make those claims. Sometimes they are just few hundred dollars, but they are of importance to persons who bought health insurance policies. So we have established this health support fund.

Mr. Speaker, we have thus far addressed the property insurance of British American. We have hived that off and sold it as a going concern and persons have there policies. And that is important for the mortgage market and it is an important issue to reduce to some extent any systemic risks as a consequence of the collapse of British American. Now we have addressed the health fund issue. This ought to have been dealt with a little earlier, but there were some unexpected technical difficulties which held us up.

Mr. Speaker, as Honourable Members are aware, up to this time last year, because today is the anniversary of the Trinidad and Tobago Elections. There was a plan A where British American was going to be continuing as a going concern and I have spoken on that particular subject at length. I do not want to retrace the issues therein and by the end of last year it was cleared that the new Government was not interested in plan A, the new Government in Trinidad and Tobago that is, that we began to look at plan B but within the context of it being a regional problem requiring a regional solution and the Caribbean Development Bank has been engaged. In fact the Development Bank is the Chair of a CARICOM wide technical committee involving technical people from the subcommittee which I chair plus persons from Trinidad and Tobago.

And how are we proceeding? The two important areas of British American Insurance Company remain to be dealt with, one the traditional life. The traditional life policy has 22,000 policy holders and what we are doing is to capitalise that traditional life, US\$40 million would be the costs, we would take those monies from that which we have at the Central Bank which I had persuaded Prime Minister Manning at the time to make available, the US\$50 million from the CARICOM Petroleum Facility and that we in the OECS decided to put it there to support the insurance rather than to use it in a normal way and capital projects.

And then our intention is to sell the capitalised life policy to another company again to keep the life policy holders, strengthen the systemic base of our financial system and certainly to limit the extent of any risks to

that financial system and then we have remaining after that the annuities. We have 11,000 annuity holders. These really are banking products in essence which you had interest rates about 8 – 9 percent of course interest rates above banking product, way above banking products. I am not speaking now about institutional annuity holders, I am not talking about those who have invested like national insurance services, indigenous banks, pension arrangements through institutions like VINLEC or any other including other corporate pension arrangements, I am talking about individuals. You have 11,000 policy holders across the currency union who are annuity holders. Interestingly when you disaggregate them, 80 percent of those would be below EC\$32,000 per persons. Relatively small sum, some people have \$500; \$1000. I use the figure \$32,000 because as you are aware, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has paid out TT\$75,000 which is the equivalent of thirty add thousand Eastern Caribbean Dollars. I am saying that any sum in excess of that they are hoping to recoup in the future from in the case of Trinidad, CLICO investments.

When a similar analysis is done here for British American we see 80 percent of them..., 80 percent of the annuity holders below EC\$32,000 that will take about US\$20 million and then the others if you are to pay the other 20 percent above that amount, above the 80 percent, the other 20 percent, but you pay them flat, \$32,000 you will require a sum approximating a further US\$30 million. I am not talking about paying them all their monies; I am talking up to \$32,000. So that there is a proposal which is coming from the Caribbean Development Bank to us and to Trinidad in relation to some kind of an arrangement like that. Clearly if we are successful in that regard and this involves very much the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. There is still the extent to which we can accommodate persons beyond that and of course then the institutions, so that even if we were to come to this solution with the individual annuity holders there has to be litigation and at the moment, I can advise this Parliament that my committee is actively pursuing the retention of senior council in Trinidad and Tobago.

Honourable Members would see the systematic way in which we are seeking to proceed. I know some people make comparisons with say the United States of America, they say banks and insurance company has failed and President Bush and then President Obama supplemented it, the tarp, the so called tarp funds. The only problem with that the tarp funds in the United States to address their problem was less than 1% of the Gross Domestic Product of the United States of America. We will require to fix the BICO problem, a fund approximating \*\$1.8 million, because it is 16 percent of GDP. If it was a 1 percent problem, the problem would have been solved already. It is because it is 16 percent of GDP why it is such a significant problem and this issue admits not to simple solution. Hopefully tonight after this meeting I go to Trinidad depends on how early this meeting finishes today, if not, tomorrow morning because the meeting of the Central Bank, sorry, the Caribbean Development Bank and among the reasons, I am going really would be to see if I can have some side meetings on this particular issue. I know this is a time a celebration in Trinidad after the first anniversary and also for another country I want to help that other country with some discussions on a banking issue which they have so I can give of my own experiences in relation to what we did here from the National Commercial Bank. So that is where we are on that matter in a nutshell. I wanted to bring us up to date.

Mr. Speaker, may I say this? I read a lot of stuff, I hear a lot of stuff and I see to some proposals akin to those proffered in the Wild West by snake oil salesmen. I cannot do that. I have to be very focused in this issue, have a responsibility. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, where are we with post Tomas matters? I just want to indicate, you

know, on post Tomas I put also what was happening since April 11<sup>th</sup> when we had this freak storm, freak set of landslides in the middle of the dry season. As you know we have restored the main bridges temporarily along the main highway, particularly at Byera and Basin Hole and we are doing a lot of work on roads and bridges in Congo Valley and Perseverance and we are continuing to do some work on houses post Tomas, but the problem is huge. I want to indicate to Honourable Members this, it is known that we got about \$9 million from Venezuela to help us with housing in post Tomas. We got the five point something million dollars out on materials, from Tankweld out of Jamaica and some local spending maybe the sum \$17, \$18 million in all, but about 6, 8 weeks ago I was given a thick book by the General Manager of Housing and Land Development Corporation about people's request up to that point amounting to \$41 million. Well the truth is this, I cannot solve, the Government cannot solve a \$41 million problem in housing request, so I have asked that they seek to trim that down for me to those which are in the first case very terrible cases, maybe \$5 million.

Let me address those for which I can raise monies practically, you cannot ask me to deal with a \$41 million problem in those circumstances, because there is simply an issue of the scarcity of resources that is the long and short of that matter and we are doing our best in that regard. I want to say Mr. Speaker, already for those who scoffed at the figure that I used tens of millions I want to say already what the officials have presented to me, and certainly the figure is in excess..., the figure is in tens of millions. You take for instance even what has been submitted as practical projects for roads, and bridges in excess of \$45 million. And that is not all of the work; I am talking about what has been submitted as practical projects for us to set about doing. In relation to Forestry it is \$21 million that is on top of \$31 million from Tomas, not a figure..., there are some persons who think that the damage to the forest was only in Tomas, the damage to the forest was considerable during the freak storm \$21 million. So if you look at Forestry alone you are looking at \$52 million and the people in Forestry tells me that that number may well be a conservative one. I know I went up in the air in helicopters and I have been way up in the top of Perseverance and way into the top of Congo Valley and up in Jennings and I can tell you, it is a real terrible disaster of near Biblical proportions. It is not easy problem to solve at a time when we are in a very special period, particularly given the economic challenges externally which impact upon us.

Now I know what is going through people's minds, Prime Minister where are you going to get money to deal with some of these problems? It is my duty to tell you what I have been receiving and how I am proceeding and these are in addition to local resources. I have a loan project of US\$12 million going to the Caribbean Development Bank Board Meeting in July. I had a project of US\$5 million after Tomas, but given what transpired after April 11<sup>th</sup> when the Caribbean Development Bank people came, they suggested, look let us put everything together, because if we were just under \$5 million we would have been going to the Board sometime in May, but we have taken their advice because some of the very work which we are doing we had to do over, because some of the areas worsened after Tomas, so as a US\$12 million project.

The emergency project after Tomas from the World Bank that became effective from May 4<sup>th</sup> US\$5 million and the staff they are proceeding with dealing with all the issues of procurement and the like to flesh out, to implement actually the particular programmes under that soft loan. We had received some rapid credit facility monies from the IMF after Tomas. The IMF people are recently here and I am seeking to get a further US\$3 million from them. If I get that money and it looks as though I may well do though..., to get twice of the same

type and the same year in one year in a 12-month period, it is often problematic but it seems as though we may manage. If we get that that is good money because it is zero percent until December 11; 0.25 percent maturity 10 years, 5½ years grace.

Then in respect of the European Union Brussels has signed off and should be in our account sometime before the end of this week hopefully \$4.8 million Euros that is about EC\$14; EC\$15 million we can spend it anywhere because that is budget support monies. I signed off this morning at 4 O'clock on \$1.9 million Euros for the B envelope and that is being sent off today to the European Union and then of course, we are almost getting there for the \$10 million Euros there about for the 10<sup>th</sup> EDF which we are focusing on health. We have US\$2 million grant from Taiwan as a result of the visit I made. We have unlocked US\$8 million in loans and programmes, specific projects are being put forward for those and Qatar we have received already the US\$1 million and EC\$2.7 million and \$2 million going towards housing and \$700,000 thereabout should go towards non-banana agriculture. All the documentation is ready now in respect of the US\$20 million loan from ALBA Bank. We have received as we know monies out of Australia, Brazil, Libya, Mustique Company, LIME has pledge \$500,000 and I want to say this Honourable Members that a number of individuals have written cheques, persons here and from abroad, small cheques you know, \$200; \$300; \$400 US, Canadian and the like towards the fund for rehabilitation. I am very happy that one of my brothers and one of my sisters and my sister-in-law involved also in this particular exercise in this area of generosity.

Mr. Speaker, we have to appreciate and I think the country appreciates that given the preexisting economic challenges arising to us from overseas and then the two back to back disasters Tomas and April 11<sup>th</sup> this year, we have had to take a fresh guard so to speak in going forward. I have been advised by the Deputy Prime Minister and by NEMO that things are proceeding well with those who are in the shelters and we are seeking to make them as comfortable as they possibly can, Mr. Speaker, that is in summary as to the situation immediately after.

I want to say that one matter I want to speak on for the farmers, the banana support..., the income support. We have just paid another tranche for income support and I want to explain to Honourable Members why this payment was not made a little earlier. The list which were prepared before and persons were paid there \$400 per acre, given free fertilizer, paid income support, but clearly you cannot pay several months of income support without people going back and check the fields, because there are some persons who took the money for rehabilitation or replanting and some persons who received income support did not do anything, clearly you cannot continue to pay them. They would have taken the money to do other things, but I will be responsible as Minister of Finance, I am not living on Mars, if I know cases where this has happened, I have to have a review. Well that review took a little longer than it should have taken and then I raised the question for instance, there are some public servants and the Minister of Agriculture agreed with me, and some persons who had other independent sources of income who were fighting up for income support. The Minister himself said he did not want his name to be on top of it and I agreed with him. But you know to get off some people names, some people have vested interest you know and it was not easy and I will say this, sometimes there is something which you may call malicious compliance, some persons may say okay, the Prime Minister wants certain names to be off because you cannot have civil servants for instance having an independent income or a teacher, or some other independent source, the income support is not for them, the income support is for persons who

depend largely on their farming income. But you know what some people who are dealing with names do, they say well okay, you want our names off, we will teach you a lesson, teach me that is nah that is how I interpret it. So they take off some other people names so that they think they will give me a political problem, but I am an ancient warrior. I will know what is happening and I will insist on the list being properly done. So I want to assure those persons who are *bona fide* farmers whose names were taken off, your name will go back on and I have given instructions to the Ministry of Agriculture in that regard and I have given instructions to all the relevant officials.

Sometimes you know persons do not know some of the battles we have to fight, but I am going to do what is right, have to do what is right, so I just want to give that assurance..., a woman who happens to have I believe an acre of land on which she makes a living, but she has some non-contributory pension, so you going to take off her name because she has an independent source, what you do, punishing me? Or somebody who gets a job with his pick-up truck to do some clean up after the April 11<sup>th</sup> disaster, they may make a \$500, so you are going to deny income support because they make an extra \$500 somewhere? In other words, they took a sensible principle which I articulated and try to apply it in a manner which produce absurd results and that is why I have dubbed that malicious compliance. But it will be put right because after all, I am the person whom the Governor General swore in as Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and I do so with a quiet resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to mention one last thing about cocoa. On Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> April this is one of the matters I went to the United Kingdom about, I had discussions, the High Commissioner to the United Kingdom Ambassador Cenio Lewis, High Commissioner Cenio Lewis and I we held discussions with the General Director of Cocoa at Armajaro that is Mr. William Venables and the Chief Executive Officer Mr. Anthony Ward and there are four pages for the report of those discussions. In fact, we were in the discussions from 10:30 in the morning until after 4 O'clock with a break for lunch where we discussed acreage supply, training of farmers and assistance, traceability, issues relating to concessions by Government, possible role of WINFRESH, a series of matters as to how we would proceed. Armajaro considers the project to be feasible.

I just want to say this, Mr. Speaker, you know while I was at my office one morning, a gentleman came to see me an elderly gentleman, he brought a series of books for me on cocoa and one of them is called, "a guide to the growing and cultivation of clonal cocoa, Department of Agriculture 1956." This is the booklet. I have sent copies to everyone in the Ministry of Agriculture, I have sent a copy of this to Sir James also; he is not the author of this, because he was involved after this. But it is a very practical blueprint including a plan as to how you grow it with all sorts of things in it and I often..., I asked myself the question when I saw this, in the Ministry of Agriculture in 1956, you probably had one university graduate. You had a few technical people, some who had gone down to Trinidad at the Imperial College to do a year programme and the like and I have studied this work. It is clear that some of the matters here, our experiences would have taught us certain things that we will have to amend, but why we do not do more of these things since independence? We have so many university graduates up there.

In this special period all of us have to lift up our game. That is the reality, the serious reality in this very small country which is our own. It is the only place we have on God's earth for ourselves. We are going ahead with this project because we does not depend upon us alone, we have to wait until we see what the feasibility says

with Armajaro but I just want to give to the public what we have been doing and all of this material I have sent on to the Ministry of Agriculture and all other interested persons including the farmers organisations. I am obliged.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, I am aware of your ruling on Ministerial Statements, but I really would like to get clarification on two matters raised by the Prime Minister for a better understanding by myself and of course the general public. The Prime Minister indicated that there is a health support fund now of about \$5 million. What I want to understand clearly, this fund persons who have annuities and are unable to draw down their money are not eligible under this support fund, they are not eligible so I think we need to clarify that.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** These are for persons, if my Honourable friend would give way; these are for persons who have a health insurance policy. It is not for persons who have health problems and who have annuities. It is for those who are making claims on the health insurance.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** I just wanted to have that clarify because it could cause some public confusion.

The second issue which I find very interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that you have 11,000 persons policy holders who have the annuities in the OECS and you said in the case of St. Vincent and the Grenadines 80 percent in the OECS as a whole [interjection] okay that is what I want. So on an average 80 percent of those who hold those annuities are below \$32,000 and as low down as may be \$500 and the amount needed to clear those would be US\$20 million [interjection] yes, then you went on to indicate that in relation to those, the other 20%, did you say it could come to \$32 million or the total will be \$32 million?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** If you were to pay those, the \$32,000 each of those above, because the 80 percent even though you pay them some people have \$150; \$200; \$500 that is why the number is so small at \$20 million relatively speaking even though there are 80 percent of them. But if you were to go pay everybody above the \$32,000 you would require an additional \$30 million. That is the point I am making. Not to pay them the full extent of their annuities that is to pay them \$32,000 the equivalent of roughly TT\$75,000 because what we are seeking to do is to fashion something which Trinidad and Tobago may be able..., the new Government may be able to buy into. So it is a plan B plus, because you see right at the moment that cannot satisfy us completely that is a staging post, because the methanol plant is making a lot of money. There are other assets and I do not want to say whom all may be available to be sued, but we are reaching a point where we are engaging individuals, engaging senior council, putting a team together for either if we solve the other 11,000 or if we do not solve it, we still going to have to go to deal with some legal issues. Okay?

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Yes, fine.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, may I just say this? You know the currency union selected me to do this job, but I tell you, it is one of the most intractable problems to address and

it is extraordinarily time consuming and because the solution does not rest on us alone in the currency union and the sands get shifted you always have to be nimbly trying to look for solutions in other places. It is an extraordinary challenge to put it mildly as I believe those thoughtful persons in the community including Members on the other side of the House would appreciate.

### **REPORTS FROM SELECT COMMITTEES**

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to lay before the House minutes of the Select Committee appointed by the House of Assembly to examine the Architect Bill 2011 that Committee met on two occasions on the 21<sup>st</sup> April and 29<sup>th</sup> April and I lay before the House the minutes of those two meetings and a report of the Select Committee.

I wish to note, Mr. Speaker, one observation I made at the first meeting and the second meeting. As Chairman I noted the absence of Members of the Opposition for the meeting and enquired whether they had been duly informed and the reply was in the affirmative. Those persons from the Government side were participated, the Honourable Clayton Burgin, Honourable Saboto Caesar, Honourable Elvis Charles, Honourable David Browne, the Honourable Judith Jones-Morgan and we had in attendance from the Architects Mr. Moulton Mayers, Trevor Thompson, Simon Bailey, Morris Slater, Alistair Campbell, Allister Browne, Meryl De Bique and Carol Williams and they all participated in this. This matter would not be debated today, it is on the Order Paper, but we will not debate this matter today. I trust that the Opposition will find it convenient to take this on. Thank you very much.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** May I just indicate that in relation to the Representation of the Peoples Amendment Bill the report from the Select Committee is the same as the last time that the new date for the Select Committee which was announced on the last occasion is June 9<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m.

### **PETITIONS**

**HONOURABLE MAXWELL CHARLES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to lay before this Honourable House the humble petition of the Trustees of the Harvest Bible Chapel seeking incorporation as a body corporate. I lay the document before the House. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

### **QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWERS**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question no. 1 Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

- 1. The Honourable Arnhim Eustace, (Leader of the Opposition), asked the Honourable Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs.*

- a. *Has the Kuwaiti Fund been paid the arrears of interest and principal on its loan to this country's Government for the expansion of the Cane Hall Power Project; and*
- b. *When was the payment made.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I notice the Honourable Leader of the Opposition in the media and with the assistance of a tabloid which is interesting in sensational headlines called this matter a quote unquote, a disgrace suggesting that this Government had defaulted. Mr. Speaker, this Government during my time as Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, since 29<sup>th</sup> March 2001 and continuing to this present time, we have never defaulted on a loan. The only loan on which we sought to have a deferral was the outstanding EC\$180 million or there about which the Honourable Leader of the Opposition in his capacity as Prime Minister, Minister of Finance had left for me to handle and I have handled that well [applause]. I had it wiped off, just paid \$16 million for it, I repeat, was not defaulted on a loan.

Mr. Speaker, this loan to the Kuwaiti Fund FARAB Economic Development has been paid and I will give Honourable Members, what actually transpired. And you see, some of the very persons who may give him information, maybe some of the very persons who are supposed to do their job and did not do their job. The way in which this loan is being dealt with a remittance invoice would be sent and the remittent advice would be sent to the Ministry of Finance Officials, I do not see remittance advices that come to the officials, the officials send them to VINLEC and VINLEC advise the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank and they make the payment. If an official in the Ministry of Finance does not do his or her work and somebody in VINLEC does not do his or her work on a timely basis that is not the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

You see, it is easy to know this; the facts went to the General Director of Finance and Planning, copied to the Chief Engineer in the Ministry of Transport and Works. I do not know where the information came from. A lot of persons could have seen that. Every single year on March 1<sup>st</sup> and September 1<sup>st</sup> an installment is to be paid on this loan. The loan amount in EC dollars is \$3.22 million. The amount which we have repaid prior to the last payment, the 28<sup>th</sup> payment is \$2.9 million.

Mr. Speaker, we are to pay as I say on this loan in semiannual installments on the 1<sup>st</sup> March. The 28<sup>th</sup> payment was due on the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2011, but at that time VINLEC did not receive the normal remittance instructions from the Ministry of Finance Officials, but over at VINLEC the persons who was there also are sleeping on the watch, because it was not until the 11<sup>th</sup> April that they realised it was not paid and they wrote themselves, they wrote the Kuwaiti Funds to find out what is happening to the remittance advice and the Kuwaiti Funds said, what you are talking about remittance advice, we sent that remittance advice to the Ministry of Finance Official since January and that is all what has happened, a bureaucratic snafu. On the 27<sup>th</sup> April, VINLEC issued instructions to the eastern Caribbean central bank to make the payments and the payment was made on the 3<sup>rd</sup> May and the Kuwaiti fund acknowledges payment by letter the 16<sup>th</sup> May.

So you pay 27 installments before and we have not missed a payment, we didn't contract this loan, that is to say this government, it was contracted under the NDP administration. They didn't miss a payment and we haven't missed one until the 28<sup>th</sup> where the bureaucrats screwed up but very interesting I do not know where the screwing took place, if it took place at VINLEC, I hope they deliver electricity to us better and I hope they

inform the Leader of the Opposition better. If it takes place in the Ministry of Works I hope they are more attentive in fixing the road than they are not truthful enough and if it is in the Ministry of Finance well I will expect them to be more circumspect in making sure that things go out on a timely basis. I do not know where and I am not casting suspicions anywhere. Or it could be that in this day and age, is none of those ministries which gave them the information but you know sometimes faxes go awry for one reason or the other, coming all the way for Kuwait. I do not know, but the disgrace is leaving Ottley Hall for me, the disgrace is not paying \$9 million which is four years money to the university, four years money where the students were not going to go back to university, that is the disgrace and I tell the Leader of the Opposition that and I tell Shelly Clarke that.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Supplementary question.

### **SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** I just seek to clarify that the Public service is not part of the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** What's that?

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Is the Public Service not part of the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines?

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I take responsibility I do not take blame, so that a teacher is part of the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the teacher goes and beat somebody child in a manner in which they are not supposed to. Is Ralph fault, is the Ministry of Education fault? You know, there is a juridical responsibility but the point is this you are making it appear is a disgrace, you do not have any money to pay, that is the point you were making which is a wrong point, which is a wrong point and in fact all you needed to do was to ask a simple question as you are asking now, you would have find out, but you want a cheap headline, have it, and it blows up in your face.

2. *The Honourable Arnhim Eustace (Leader of the Opposition) asked the Honourable Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs:*

- a. *Has the Government made the payments on the \$5 million credit from the Jamaican firm for the Tomas Relief supplies; and*
- b. *When was the payment made.*

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the date on which the payment was due was on the 6<sup>th</sup> February 2011, the sum of EC\$5.83 million. My further arrangement on 16<sup>th</sup> February when payment was processed Tankweld was left outstanding \$600,000 from this amount for the final installment and they have agreed.

3. *The Honourable Arnhim Eustace (Leader of the Opposition) asked the Honourable Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs:*

*Could the Honourable Prime Minister please indicate the fiscal overrun for the period January-March 2011 as compared with the same period in the year 2010.*

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker may I say in a summary form that in the first three months of the year the fiscal situation deteriorated compared to the similar period last year. It was anticipated that by the year end the full stabilisation would recur.

	2011	2010
Revenue and Grants	\$98.46 million	\$104 million
Current Revenue	\$97.24 million	\$103 million
Total Expenditure	\$127.5 million	\$116.9 million
Recurrent Expenditure	\$125.4 million	\$115.4 million
Capital Expenditure	\$2.14 million	\$1.5 million

There were problems as early as this year with reportage of the capital numbers.

Current Balance		
Deficit	\$28.1 million	\$12 million
Overall deficit	\$29 million	\$13 million

4. *Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday (Northern Grenadines) asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, Airport and Seaport Development, Grenadines and Legal Affairs:*

*What is the accumulated debt owed by St. Vincent Electricity Services Ltd (VINLEC) for the purchase of fuel under the Petro Caribe Agreement.*

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** As of today's date all invoices have been honoured by VINLEC there is no accumulated debt owed by VINLEC for the purchase of fuel.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Is there any public debt then owed as an account of the Petro Caribe Agreement and fuel that is purchased by VINLEC?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** There is no public debt owed by VINLEC in respect of the purchase of fuel, I just answered that.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Is there any public debt, not VINLEC?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Of course there is public debt. It is listed in the public document of the Estimates, if you want to ask me a specific question frame your question properly and I will answer you.

5. *Dr the Honourable Godwin Friday (Northern Grenadines) asked the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works:*

- a. *Why was the work to repair the Friendship main road near Sugar Apple Inn stopped;*
- b. *When will it re-commence; and*
- c. *What is the new completion date for the work.*

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, I will give the straight answer as I got for BRAGSA. Works on the construction of a reinforced block retaining wall were temporarily halted approximately eight weeks ago. In constructing the said wall it was necessary to mobilize an excavator to excavate the foundation for construction of the wall footing, it was considered dangerous and risky to excavate it for the entire length of the wall hence it became necessary to remobilise an excavator for construction to the second or final section of the retaining wall. This exercise was slightly problematic as a flatbed had to be mobilised from St. Vincent to transport the excavator from Gellizeau to the site, a backhoe is not appropriate for the job. They need something on track. Just over a month ago all arrangements were made to mobilise the flatbed but during the same week the April 12<sup>th</sup> rain and flooding took place in the north windward area as a consequence this exercise fell of the radar. To date the wall is approximately 70% complete with approximately 120 to 130 feet of the total 190 feet of retaining wall already completed. Only back filling and some concrete road pavement additionally would remain once the wall is completed. Payments are not an issue on this project.

Plans are currently in place to mobilise the excavator during the week beginning 23<sup>rd</sup> May, the work should be completed by late June barring any significant unforeseen problems. Thank you.

6. *Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday (Northern Grenadines) asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, Airport and Seaport Development, Grenadines and Legal Affairs:*

*As the work on the Argyle International Airport Terminal building has been delayed repeatedly, will the Honourable Prime Minister explain:*

- a. *Why the delays continue;*

- b. Whether the funding for the terminal has been secured;*
- c. Will the Taiwanese be contributing; and*
- d. If so, how much.*

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, it is important as a back drop in answering this question to appreciate that this is the largest capital project since conquest and settlement in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. [Applause] This is a project which popularly elected government for 50 years have always been talking about including the last NDP administration and in the case of Sir James; in the 1998 election he had a US\$100 million in his back pocket for it.

[Interruptions from gallery]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** That gentleman who is speaking down there, could you please leave the chambers for me please...please leave the gallery. Proceed Honourable...

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, this is the same project which Sir James in his autobiography 'Beyond the Islands' expressed his profound disappointment in the lack of wisdom of his successor. He says it is his biggest regret in his entire life not to have something about airport development in St. Vincent and he spoke about the regret in relation to the lack of wisdom of his successor. In very colourful language I am just précising it. This is a project, Mr. Speaker, which the NDP opposed at every single stage until one week before the last election. Now I do not think they are in a position to lecture me or to pose question in the form of a lecture or lecture in the form of a question, but I will do my duty and I will answer.

Mr. Speaker we have explained that by July last year CECI Engineering Consultants of Taiwan had completed the designs for the terminal building and other land side facilities and that we had put the issue to tender. A tender for the construction for the facilities was issued on the 7<sup>th</sup> June 2010 with a tender submission date set for the 9<sup>th</sup> July 2010. All prospective tenderers requested extension; we gave the 16<sup>th</sup> August as another extension. Some of the same prospective tenderers requested another 10 to 12 weeks extension after the revised deadline, IADC did not give any but set about negotiating with Overseas Engineering Construction Company Ltd of Taiwan which has done work here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines for instance on the building, they built the library, and the 30<sup>th</sup> November 2010 the Board of Directors at IADC took the decision to award the contract to OECC. OECC communicated its acceptance of the contract in principle and then protracted negotiations began. These negotiations are now complete, in fact every time we thought that there was an agreement something else came back.

I do not know whether the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines had ever been involved in a contract for a building beyond his house but if he was ever involved in any he would know all sorts of issues which will come up for instance, contractors never really like to pay performance bonds and then the extent of the performance bonds and what is to be taken for the performance bonds, should it be cash, should it be a bankers certificate of some kind, should it be equipment. So it is not like...you are not building a three bedroom house you know. We have finally agreed on the price of \$26.5 million this covers the cost of constructing the

passenger terminal building, electrical substation, and external signs. We are expecting some time before the end of this month and I went to Taiwan, this is one of the reasons I had asked that the chairman of OECC meet me and I requested of the office of the Foreign Minister in Taiwan to have him invited to a lunch and we expect that OECC is to be mobilised to begin construction work within a month of signing the contract, that is by the end of June this year, that is what they had said to us.

The contract requires OECC to complete the construction of the terminal building within 28 months after which there will be a financial penalty. But OECC has a record of completing contracts on time so assuming that they begin next month it means that the terminal building and the other facilities will be finished by September 2013. In the meantime other works are going on, for instance the earthworks are going on and we anticipate that the earthworks for the runway would be over 90% completed this year and if I may say just parenthetically this morning I signed with the CARICOM Development Fund, the agreement for the loan and for the grant of US\$4.2 million to buy the stone crusher and other equipment relating to paving the runway. And if I may say further, Mr. Speaker, two meetings of this House we passed the law here giving the Government the permission to borrow from the CARICOM Development Fund that is the time when you had a lot of bassa bassa in the House when certain people were seeking to delay us in our work. Seeking to delay us in our work you are trying to delay the airport and you are coming to ask me about delay.

In terms of financing, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will recall that the Government of Taiwan had pledged US\$30 million for the design and construction of the terminal building that is EC\$81.5 million. I signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of the Republic of China on Taiwan on the 7th June 2006, they pledged a grant of \$15 million and a soft loan of \$10 million and then one year later on the 31<sup>st</sup> July when I went back to Taiwan I signed another MOU, another Memorandum of Understanding where Taiwan pledged a further \$5 million in grant, so Taiwan's total contribution to the project is \$30 million. But we have had to draw down some monies including monies for CECI Engineering Consultants for the design. \$5.8 million have been drawn down so we have \$24.2 million to pay for the construction of the terminal building and other land side facilities as contracted. So we need another \$2.5 million on top of that to complete the work contracted by the Taiwanese company.

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that even after we have done that Honourable Members will appreciate that there are still more land side facilities like the Fire and Rescue Station, Cargo Terminal Building, Control Tower and those it is estimated will cost a further US\$7 million. IADC is doing the internal drains and roads and the like from its own resources. I think I have given the full answer on this. I just want to make one further point, in the memorandum there is a clause which says that if the situation arises Taiwan promises to give favourable consideration to providing an additional grant or soft loan to help St. Vincent and the Grenadines meet the high rise in cost of building the airport facilities and that was signed on July 21<sup>st</sup> 2008 by the new Taiwanese Government. So pretty soon we should be on the road. I just want to make one final point Mr. Speaker, a project of this magnitude from time to time would have some delays outside of our control. The National Insurance Services Building cost about \$20 million to build and equip, I know it is a building. The contractors in St. Vincent and the Grenadines delivered it to us two years after the time, now I would say that we are going pretty well at the airport and I know from the utterances of some members of the Opposition, I am not saying whether they are the Parliamentary Opposition or otherwise, I am just saying some members of the Opposition, so I do

not want anybody to get up to challenge me, what I am about to say, it is as though some people in the Opposition are willing the project to fail just like some of them were willing the Rabacca Bridge to fail, willing the one laptop per student to fail, well, we have come this far and it is too far to turn back now. Thank you very much.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

**DR THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker, in light of the fact that the terminal building is expected to be completed in September 2013, and earlier this year in January the Prime Minister had said in response to question that I asked that the project will be completed in 2012 and operational by the end of 2012. But I wish to know, was the Prime Minister aware at that time that the terminal building will take 28 months to complete, which would take us beyond the completion date he gave in that answer and what is the new proposed completion date for the airport.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I would like my Honourable friend to bring the Hansard to show me that I told him the end of 2012, when in January. If he has that I would say to him, well I misspoke, is 2013, but you know like just now I said, finishing September 2011 when meant 2013, you know from the sequence...Mr. Speaker, the kind of a thing which you are getting from the Leader of the Opposition, I mean sorry the Deputy Leader on that side of the House, the Member for the Northern Grenadines, I do not want to offend anybody by calling them the Deputy Leader, I am sorry, I do apologise. Like those who...you know, like the fella recently, Mr. Speaker, the uncertified evangelist who look in the Bible and find a day on the 21<sup>st</sup> for the rapture, it was coming at 6 o'clock, that is the sort of a thing you expect. We are looking at the end of 2013 and I believe if we finish the airport at the end of 2013 the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines will be very grateful, because we would have started it in the middle [Applause] we would have started it in the middle of August 20...wait in the period which is very special, a special period where you have problems in the international, all the rains and storms we are having and all sorts of things. In fact it is a heroic thing that we are attempting here [Applause] and rather than being praised and lifted up for our heroism, they trying to pull us down and pull down the country.

*7. The Honourable Terrance Ollivierre (Southern Grenadines), asked the Honourable Minister of Education:*

*Students from the Southern Grenadines; mainly Canouan and Mayreau, face various problems in the access of quality secondary and post education in particular suitable accommodation, adequate supervision and high transportation:*

*What measures have been put in place to ensure that these children have easy access to quality secondary and post secondary education available in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.*

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I would have answered this question already, I guess that the Honourable Member does not remember I am my usual self I make no joke when I have to serve the people and so I will shed some light on this.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, feasibility study was conducted by the Education Planner, Chief Engineer and other Technocrats from the Ministry of Transport and Works to date the following have taken place: Some preliminary sketches were drawn up, an additional four classrooms were to be constructed adjoining the office of the Canouan Primary School to accommodate forms one to three. This two storey structure was to be constructed on the left of the Principal's office running along the boundary of the school. Another suggestion was to have another building constructed at the site of the existing lounge, this was not the ideal site because of competing interest.

Mr. Speaker, in life if we fail to plan we plan to fail, as part of the study the Ministry looked at the student population and in particular the number of students writing the Common Entrance Examination, the mean class size is 17 and only in 7 out of the 21 years was the class size greater than 17. It was observed that prior to 2005 when the students passed the Common Entrance Examination depending on their ranking they opted to attend the school on the mainland.

Mr. Speaker the Ministry of Education is not giving up on the people of Canouan or elsewhere. We are a plural country, we have many constraints which challenge our work but we are resilient. Mr. Speaker in speaking of access to quality education we continue to say it is quality education for all. And Mr. Speaker, I wish just to let us know how the parents have chosen to send their children to various schools on mainland St. Vincent. From Canouan we have two children at the Intermediate High; we have one at West St. George; one at St. Joseph Convent Marriaqua. In the Bequia Seventh Adventist School none; Union Island, three; George Stephens Secondary, one; Bethel High, five; Emanuel High Mespo, one; St. Vincent Grammar School, eight; St. Martin Secondary, five; Dr. J. P. Memorial, three; Bishops College Kingstown, five; Thomas Saunders Secondary, eight; Mountain View Academy Richland Park, four; Buccament Bay Secondary, two; Girls High School, one; St. Joseph Convent Kingstown, five. 55 students from Canouan are accessing quality education [Applause].

Mr. Speaker, it is important to look at the cost that can be incurred in constructing a secondary school in Canouan. We look at the capital cost, Mr. Speaker, the capital cost which will be significantly in excess of that required for mainland schools and I look at what we spent in Union Island. Union Island Secondary was constructed at a capital cost of EC\$12.1 million and equipping the school cost an addition amount of 0.5 million Euros. Construction cost on Canouan will not be much lower as the secondary curriculum will require science and computer laboratories, specialised rooms and other supporting facilities for extra curricula activities. We must also, Mr. Speaker, look at the recurrent cost. The recurrent cost associated with operating a new secondary school on Canouan will include teaching staff, utilities, and communication expenses. In the present economic climate such a project to accommodate 55 or 60 students is not financially feasible. The Ministry of Education is reviewing the proposals for forms one to three being added on to the existing Primary school as well as retrofitting or upgrading of the Primary school. Discussions began on the 16<sup>th</sup> May with Canouan developers aimed at a joint approach to effecting the required changes to the Primary facility.

Mr. Speaker, what holds for Canouan holds for Mayreau and I would like to let this Honourable House know that the population in the Mayreau School is 31 students and they have six teachers. Mr. Speaker, I am obliged.

8. *The Honourable Terrance Ollivierre, (Southern Grenadines) asked the Minister of Education:*

*Pre-school education is essential to the building of a strong foundation in the quest of academic success. This form of education has been absent on the island of Mayreau for some years now. In view of the fact, that Government has been moving to provide early childhood education in some schools.*

*Could the Honourable Minister please state;*

- a. Whether Mayreau is within this educational plan; and*
- b. If in the affirmative, when can such service be introduced to this land.*

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, the Government has articulated the policy whose objective is to achieve universal access to early childhood education. To date nine early childhood centres have been established with co-financing from government and regional and international partners including the European Union and the Caribbean Development Bank. Additionally privately operated early childhood centres have been established and upgraded with support from donors. The government through the Ministry of Education provides significant support to privately operated Early Childhood Centres in the form of subventions, supplies, equipment and training for Early Childhood Development Educators. Plans for the establishment of nine additional early childhood centres are under consideration at this moment. The proposed sites are the following for the second phase: Sandy Bay Government, Spring Village Methodist, Lowmans Windward Anglican, Calliaqua Anglican, Colonarie Government, Park Hill Government, Dickson Methodist, Rose Hall Government and Belair Government. The nine existing Government operated early Childhood Education Centres are Edinboro, Fair Hall Government, Argyle Primary, Cane End Government, Marriaqua Government, Langley Park Government, Owia Primary, Bequia Anglican Primary, and Troumaca Primary. What about Mayreau?

Mr. Speaker, I did some background checks and I would [like] this Honourable House to know that population of Mayreau is approximately 320, the population of the school is 32 students, the pre-school which was privately run in Mayreau up to two years ago operated from the old Head teacher's house, there is currently no pre-school on Mayreau. The Primary School accommodates the children who are just over three years old. There are currently three such children at the school who will be formally registered in September 2011. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Education is always willing to give guidance on the establishment of Early Childhood Centres as well to the criteria for qualifying for the subvention for operating the centres. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. [Applause] We move to question number 9, Honourable Daniel Cummings. The Honourable Member is not at his seat at this point in time, I guess we can move on then,

when he returns at an appropriate time we will take his question. So we move on to question number 12, we will come back to 9, 10, and 11.

*12. The Honourable Roland Matthews (North Leeward) asked the Honourable Minister of Housing:*

*In the aftermath of Hurricane Tomas, the Government embarked on a spate of repairing and rebuilding of some of the damaged homes. However, the repairing and the rebuilding process came to a halt in December 2010. Will the Honourable Minister please state:*

- a. When will work on these damaged homes be restarted;*
- b. When will the Government give assistance to persons who are YET to receive assistance; and*
- c. In the meanwhile, what is being done to relieve the affected persons.*

**HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN:** Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, it is necessary from the outset to establish the context within which the response to this question emerges. Our beloved country St. Vincent and the Grenadines was severely affected by the passage of Hurricane Tomas at the end of October last year and Mr. Speaker, in April of this year the heavens burst open and torrential rains added to the portrait of devastation.

Mr. Speaker, the houses which were completely destroyed during the passage of Hurricane Tomas were primarily wooden and concrete which structures which collapsed as a consequence of land slippage or retaining wall failures. In cases where the entire roof tops were blown off most household items which were not water resistant were destroyed. There was also case, Mr. Speaker, in which galvanise sheeting or asphalt tiles were thrown off by the heavy winds thereby rendering the structures inhabitable. In additional it was also noted that a range of outdoor latrines, kitchens or outdoor recreational structures were also destroyed. Mr. Speaker, one can never predict when tragedy will strike. Even though the Opposition has boldly proclaimed to the nation, to the region and to the world that the Honourable Prime Minister knew before hand that our blessed land was going to be visited by a disaster on that particular day and that he had procured the necessary materials in advance. Mr. Speaker, given that it is felt that there is someone among us who has the foresight to make such a prediction, should you not then be the person whom which we ought to embrace as our leader.

But Mr. Speaker, I stand here this afternoon to say with an enormous amount of pride that this ULP administration is always prepared to respond immediately to national and personal needs when disaster strikes. In fact it is widely known and understood that beginning with the eruption of La Soufriere Volcano in '79 until hurricane Tomas and the torrential rains in April of this year. This ULP administration is the only government in the history of our blessed nation which has crafted and implemented the truly successful recovery and reconstruction program following a disaster. [Applause]

And Mr. Speaker, this is indisputable and in light of our recovery and reconstruction programme the Opposition has labeled this ULP administration communist, voicing at every term that the state has a responsibility to provide those persons who have been affected with everything that they need.

But Mr. Speaker, may I remind this Honourable House that we live in a democracy which requires every citizen to assume some responsibility for the care and protection of their property and personal possessions. And Mr. Speaker, there are also those who told the nation, the region and the world that our immediate positive response to the devastation triggered by hurricane Tomas was politically motivated, how absurd. Nevertheless Mr. Speaker, permit me here to say that this ULP administration is indeed a caring administration, one which will always give immense consideration to needs of our people even more so in this time of disaster. The families whose homes were affected had to be housed, their accommodation was a front burner issue for this administration and we immediately put systems in place in our usual way to ensure that no one was left out or left without food, shelter or clothing. NEMO is the state agency which holds responsibility for the management of designated shelters following a disaster and the officials in that agency as well as other public servants steamroll the engines and facilitated to transfer families to designated shelters.

Mr. Speaker in our usual style of lending assistance to more people, some persons were also offered shelter with families, friends and neighbours whose homes remain habitable. Admirably, Mr. Speaker, as potent demonstration of strength of character there were families who remained in their damaged homes primarily on the ground floor or in areas within their homes which were not leaking and life continued for them in the usual manner despite the disruption. A systematic approach reconstruction process was implemented in three distinct phases:

Phase one was marked by the immediate distribution of base materials: galvanise sheeting, lumber and plywood in every single constituency. No constituency was omitted Mr. Speaker. And the beneficiaries at this stage were persons whose homes were slightly damaged who were able to persuade the officials at NEMO that they were capable of doing the necessary renovations by themselves with some supervision from technical staff from Housing.

Phase two involves either the renovation of homes or the construction of new housing units for persons who had been occupying the shelters. This became necessary, Mr. Speaker, because it was important for shelters to be returned to their usual required use, example, schools, community centers, learning resource centers. I am therefore delighted to state here this morning that we have been able to complete these two phases except for one individual from the North Leeward area and another from the North Central Windward area. Every individual and every family known to be affected have received substantial assistance to date. Officials from the Ministry of Housing, the Ministry of Transport and Works and NEMO have been working assiduously to lay the foundation for the commencement of phase three. And I note that the Honourable Member on the other side of this Honourable House has remarkable observed that there has been a halt in the reconstruction process, it is a wonderful observation.

But may I say at this juncture, Mr. Speaker, that there is indeed a reason for the pause in the reconstruction process. It is indeed a reason of monumental proportions, state officials and I here refer to staff in the Ministry of Housing and Transport and Works and NEMO have been on the ground working tirelessly to lay the foundation for phase three, a phase which requires the repairs of homes for persons who had moved in with their families. In this regard a list, and the Prime Minister mentioned that list, of 1,200 households with a range of hurricane related damage has been crafted and costed at an estimated value of EC\$41 million. Members of

the Opposition are reported to have said that the estimated cost of the damage was inflated but the record is available.

Mr. Speaker, there is nothing sinister about the perceived halt in operation, some persons simply fail to understand and appreciate that there is a process involved, that there are procedures to be followed and this administration always and undoubtedly seeks to embrace a systematic approach to operation. The reconstruction process cannot be done and must not be done and will not be done willy nilly. We are at a juncture, Mr. Speaker, in this third term which mandates that our operation must be done systematically. There can be no doubt that material assistance is being provided regularly to all citizens who have suffered some type of damage to their property and I am persuaded that by now these procedures are well known and our citizens are following them. I urge, Mr. Speaker, a profound sense of patience and understanding because the state officials who are directly involved in the construction process knows that accountability is crucial and Mr. Speaker, being in this special period we are asking persons to have some patience in essence everybody who has been affected in some way will benefit as the days go by. I am much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

*13. The Honourable Roland Matthews (North Leeward) asked the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works;*

*A portion of the North Leeward Highway immediately opposite the Cumberland Power Plant is slipping away and is a potential danger to the travelling public.*

*Will the Honourable Minister please state;*

*When will work begin to address this matter.*

**HONOUABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, the area that the Honourable Member refers to is just beyond Charles Village after you leave the Spring Village gap and go up the hill before you take the flat down at Cumberland. That damage to that road occurred before the first term, I recall us attending to that matter, but it seems to be more than just what meets the eye. I do not know...he has described it as a slippage but there is more settling than slipping, I do not know what is happening under there, the engineers have looked at it. It is uncomfortable right now for motorist but it is not impossible. BRAGSA has gone to see it, I think the public is aware of this because quite a few persons wrote letters last year when this thing occurred late in the year, I suspect must be something with water and the water table under that piece of road. We hope to do some necessary works in this matter around July to August but while we do that, to address the matter properly we will have to make arrangements to drive through the VINLEC compound because to get it settled and fixed once and for all we may have to excavate the whole area and arrangements we will want to make through the river of crossing just before the Spring Village Bridge and, well the crossing down on Cumberland and the Spring Village bridge above. So that will necessitate some inconvenience to the travelling public to North Leeward. And we trust that when this occurs and I do not get another question asking me how long the inconvenience will last for.

There are other problems like this on the Leeward Highway, Mr. Speaker, and I can think of the area of where we call... just outside Campden Park, Junker Rain, and Shuffler, they different names for the area, where that wall failed some time ago in the last term of the New Democratic Party or the third term of the New Democratic Party and some repairs were done to the wall, the base but I believe that there was movement after that and there is a depression there. You will observe, Mr. Speaker, that right now those of you who travel on the Leeward Highway, would see that we have cut across drain about 100 feet up the road from that and that is to take the excess water coming down from the mountainside where the old quarry was by Pointer church. To take the excess water off of that weakened area so we can then excavate and do some compaction. We have to check the structure of the wall and the structural integrity of the wall because naturally a vibrating roller will have to be put there and you wouldn't want to have a very excessive vibrator there with a weakened and questionable base for that wall because it may just turn out to be a larger problem than we anticipate but I believe that we can get them settled so give us the time and we will address both these matters. Thank you.

*14. The Honourable Roland Matthews (North Leeward), asked the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works:*

*When will work commence on the following roads;*

- a. The Hermitage Mountain Road;*
- b. The Jack Hill Mountain Road;*
- c. The Palmyra Mountain Road;*
- d. The Richmond Road.*

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, I delayed extensive comment on the two previous questions but obviously the Honourable Member for North Leeward had to fulfill his task of presenting three questions. I mean surely 14 could have been part of 13, it is North Leeward the first problem is in the North Leeward constituency and these four other roads are also in the North Leeward constituency, so had he combined 14 with 13 then he would have had to come up with a third question because his Leader would not have allowed him to bring only three in the House so [Interruption]

Mr. Speaker, I am answering, I am not giving way, oh I thought the Member was asking to explain. So I really do not understand why the separation but Mr. Speaker, you will recall.... I will answer it , in fact I will enjoy answering it, [Laughing] that is why I said I left my comments for the third one because I know you were going to walk easily into it and tell me to answer it so I will do it with joy.

Mr. Speaker, in the beginning of this question period a lot of emphasis is placed by the Opposition on a bill that wasn't paid to the Kuwait fund and moneys that we took to repair houses and bring in material for Hurricane Tomas. Well the Government is above board on it, all they want to know is what money they never asked how much money one of these roads going to cost. Mr. Speaker, the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of April there were severe devastation in the North Windward and North Central Windward constituencies, Larikai and Wallibou also

suffered but there is no question here about Larikai and Wallibou River. You going up in the back of Palmyra and bring me some mountain road or feeder road which has not been touched for years by any administration from the NDP right down. I am not asking you, while you were overseas doing what else you were doing I was in Palmyra, I know the last time Palmyra Road was fixed.

Mr. Speaker, no question has been raised about Larikai and Wallibou and they have suffered from the heavy rains in April, they have suffered. The river beds are jam chock with tree trunks like we had on the Windward side but we gave priority to the Windward side because in this area it is not a populated area with human beings, so the inconvenience to the public and the danger to the public do not really exist in Larikai River and Wallibou River but we will get there eventually. [Interjection]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member please, Honourable Minister please answer the question, Honourable Member please allow him to answer....

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** The Hermitage Mountain Road, Mr. Speaker, Jack Hill Mountain Road, Palmyra Mountain Road and Richmond Mountain Road are all feeder roads. If the Honourable Member looks in the Estimates he will see because you do not give information sometimes [Interruptions] [Knocking of Gravel]. You want to answer the question, I will give way. That is the problem with these gentlemen, they have the answer already but they still come and look for it.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Just a minute Honourable Member, you can ask a supplementary question, so could you reserve such a.....let go on please

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, not one single question in these 22 questions has been asked by the Opposition, what transpired between Byera Bridge and Rabacca Bridge.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member they are free to ask what questions they want....

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, I am just commenting as a prelude to my answer, I am answering the question. 15,000 plus persons Mr. Speaker, have been affected not a single Member of the Opposition have come to this House with any question or comments as to how we are dealing with those matters out there. It relates, Mr. Speaker, to this question because when you are in government and you are in management you have to settle priorities. Many things that were in the stream, Mr. Speaker, had to be put aside, as Brian George put it here with the Bequia wall. It fell off the radar, literally fell off the radar because when you wake up one morning and at 6 O'clock you hear there is a flood in Georgetown so I dress to go and address a conference for the Prime Minister at the NIS building and dressed appropriately for that but I thought I would go and do a quick visit and come back down. Mr. Speaker, when I got on the top of Barley Valley Hill and look down I nearly go back home because my clothes, my attire was not suitable for the occasion but I stayed. The devastation by those who sit in there arm chairs and laugh when they come to parliament and yet want to comment on it and they ready they take NDP t-shirts and go and carry it for the victims and put it on Facebook they will come to this parliament, Mr. Speaker, and ask all sorts of other questions except that one.

Mr. Speaker, after the first week I asked the Prime Minister, I said, “Prime Minister have you been up into the valleys”. He say yea he went up there in the helicopter. I say no, no, no, no, no, you have to go inside there to see, feel and smell what the disaster was. He said okay the cabinet will go on a tour on the Thursday and we went on the tour. Mr. Speaker, the resources that have to be diverted and the extra monies you hear the Prime Minister talking about, the Honourable Prime Minister, can’t touch what is happening in that area. We will be working in that area for the next 15 to 18 months, you had 27 heavy duty equipment mobilised in that area within three days. About 60 trucks and 400 individuals who are not associated with trucks and the equipment working in that area and that is still going on today. We are in Kingstown comfortable but those of us who know and feel and smell it everyday, the fogging machine had to go out last week because of mosquito and the dust problem has become an unbearable problem within the disaster area. Resources has to be concentrated in that area to return life to some level of normalcy for the people in those constituencies.

There are those who go out on weekends, I have seen them myself, pulling out from infinity vehicles used clothing and all sorts of things to give to the people. I want to congratulate all those who did and contributed to these people, Mr. Speaker, but I want to say we are concentrating on spending a lot of resources in that area and other things that were in the pipeline and were on the front burner unfortunately will have to be placed on the back burner. I would love to patch all the holes that have appeared on the Windward Highway that we have just built for over \$140 million, the same problem the Honourable Member have just beyond Charles Village we have in Stubbs, half of the road have been ripped apart by flood waters because of a poor drainage construction and a boulder that went down in it and blocked it. It is going to take us \$6,562, 000 to fix all the potholes from Kingstown back out on the Windward Highway including the Stubbs problem. And those funds are being lined up to get them done no sense you build a highway for \$140 million and then within months after you have to be tolerating potholes, you might as well fix those potholes, some as a fault of the contractor, some as a fault of, I would say technically incorrect areas not built structurally, weakened areas, but you get that in most Highways, even in North America when they do Highways you see them go back and patch it. But it has to be done, we can’t allow that to deteriorate. The Leeward Highway is in demand, from Hospital Corner to Buccament, we are at the design stage, Ministry of Works drop the ball on it for about 18 months, we are picking it back up and a contract has been awarded for the rehabilitation of the Leeward Highway. Surely it is not going to start this year, monies are there and the designs will be there, it has to be assessed and maybe by late year you will see some semblance of preparation for the Leeward Highway. So I am saying that to explain to the people of this country, not just the Member for North Leeward, on the matter of Hermitage Mountain Road, Jack Hill Mountain Road, Palmyra Mountain Road and the Richmond Road.

Mr. Speaker, there was road from Rose Hall that took you back down to Chateaubelair you know, there was a road there that the NDP totally gave up on. You can’t drive down from the back of Rose Hall to get down the Chateaubelair again, I want to do it, I try to do it in the first term but now I’m Minister of Works for the second term I want to revive that road because I remember driving down that road as a little boy with my father going to 4H meetings. But they abandon many of these feeder roads that we have had in this country. Mr. Speaker, I will tell you what the people of BRAGSA have to say about the four roads that the Honourable Member has asked, Hermitage Mountain Road, this road is a relatively long section of road. The road was significantly cleaned in 2010, December as part of the Christmas road cleaning programme, there are road surface issues which estimates are currently being prepared. This road has to be part of the feeder road development project

and would not be addressed under the regular road maintenance programme. Additionally during the passage of hurricane Tomas a significant landslide took place just beyond Spring Village on the road to convent Hermitage. The landslide had made the road vulnerable and is of great concern to VINLEC and CWSA whose staff regularly accesses the area. Plans are in place to excavate the upper embankment and widen the road; the embankment on the upper side is currently in excess of 20 to 30 feet. Similar work we just had to do in Congo Valley and Jennings Valley. When the side to the river giving away the cost of putting a back wall there to keep that road is as expensive as doing over the whole road so what you do, you going to the bank side and the top and you dig out the bank side so you avoid the weakened area. And that is the approach we have been doing to it, if not these feeder roads, when you have rains like that in these areas they take the river side bank all the time. So what we do, we go further into the bank side as we have done on the Windward Highway as well, we did it at Spring. It is proposed to have this work completed by the end of June 2011.

Jack Hill Mountain Road: this road is currently an earthen road, it has not been cleaned recently. BRAGSA is currently considering mobilising a grader to the area to clean, grade and stabilise feeder roads in that area, and upgrade on the road can only be done as part of the feeder road development programme due to other priorities. In other words we have a feeder road programme on the capital and when we get the release of funds on that we will be doing some feeder roads works.

Palmyra Mountain Road: more than half of this was asphalt surface however currently approximately 85% of that finished surface had been eroded and removed exposing only some base. But this is not something that developed now, this has been going, Palmyra Road has been going for years. This repair of the deteriorated road and upgrade of unpaved section requires a major project. Current priorities and available resources may militate against undertaking this work soon. The road currently requires cleaning of glass verges and there are some drains that are blocked and need cleaning and we will be addressing that in the road cleaning programme in the not too distant future.

Richmond Road: road cleaning is required from Dark View towards the beach, this shall be done over the next couple of weeks. Secondly in the vicinity of the academy along the beach sea erosion have encroached upon the road, this work is extensive as it requires sea defense. We cannot indicate at this time when this work will be implemented. Thirdly there is a new offline section of road that was created just over a year ago as a consequence of the sea erosion. It is an unpaved road taking persons to the river picnic sites. Half of this new road has been paved during 2010, the second half is proposed to be paved this year. The road is important for truckers and recreational visitors alike.

So Mr. Speaker, the opening comments I made was to lay the background basically for priorities. We are committed to providing good feeder roads, in fact, Mr. Speaker, we have taken the opportunity in the heavy agricultural belts ranging from Byera Mountain right up to Rabacca farms to use the grader and grade a lot of the feeder roads in there that are unsurfaced, those areas that are surfaced where the asphalt has been washed out, we try to get them back as comfortable as possible for the time being. The bridges that have been knocked out, Mr. Speaker, the bridge structure is there but both wing walls have gone. We have done temporary construction on those and we will have to do substantial improvement of those temporary works. But we making life in the farming community as comfortable as possible. Those farmers in the North Leeward area and

I mean, I am surprised that he didn't mention Farm Road, because I want to see Farm Road fixed, there are some beautiful lands up in Farm Road, the nutmeg trees and citrus trees you have is up inside there, beautiful agricultural lands and I will love to see Farm Road being fixed but Farm Road is a long unpaved road. We would eventually get there with a grader, grade it and put some form of base on the road so I want to assure the farmers in that area that this administration, we are aware of what the problems are in these feeder roads and it is the responsibility of your parliamentary Representative to bring it to Parliament and I will give the assurance that we will do the best we can in upgrading these roads and making them comfortable and motorable. I do not think the NDP has touched Farm Roads since the second term that they have been in office. We have been in...this is our third term we coming into now, Mr. Speaker, and I want to assure the farmers of this country that at the base of this Unity Labour Party Administration we are also farmers and we are very familiar with the farming practices. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, we want to return to questions 9, 10, and 11. The Honourable Member is now in his seat so question number 9 from the Honourable Member for West Kingstown.

9. *The Honourable Daniel Cummings (West Kingstown) asked the Honourable Minister of Health and the Environment:*

*A CT Scan machine was purchased last year with funding from National Insurance Services (NIS) and the former National Commercial Bank (NCB). Would the Honourable minister please state:*

- a. When was the equipment landed in the country;*
- b. Under what condition is it being stored.*
- c. For how long will it be kept in this storage environment; and*
- d. Where is the equipment to be installed and when.*

**HONOURABLE CECIL MCKIE:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, as a backdrop to my response let me say that we [have] taken quite a different approach to the previous NDP Government on the acquisition of a CT Scan Machine for the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. [Applause] Why? Because our vision is different and our policies are also quite different and I daresay superior.

Mr. Speaker, I draw this conclusion from comments by the then Minister of Health under the NDP regime, the Honourable Yvonne Francis Gibson who, when asked whether the then NDP Government would be purchasing a CT Scan machine responded, and this is captioned in the Hansard of the 12<sup>th</sup> December 1996, words to the effect that the CT Scan was a highfalutin machine despite the fact that CT Scans were in existence and around the region since the 1980's, that the then Labour Party Opposition had been looking at Chicago Hope and these type of movies on TV and felt that it was an easy thing, that our people were healthy and therefore was no need for them CT Scan machine. And that it was more cost effective to have our people travel to our neighbouring

countries to obtain this service. Mr. Speaker, a clear sign of shortsightedness and a lack of vision, and where there is no vision the people suffer first and then they perish.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the CT Scan was purchased with funding from the NIS and the Bank of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to a total of some \$1.4 million. Both institutions had been in fact advised that the journey in actually obtaining the machine was a very turbulent one. After much delay in the delivery the decision had to be made to send two officials from St. Vincent and the Grenadines to the suppliers in the USA, General Electric, (GE) to sort out the difficulty. Having done so, the CT Scan eventually arrived in St. Vincent and the Grenadines on February 11<sup>th</sup> 2011 and was handed over to the Ministry of Health and the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines on March 11<sup>th</sup> 2011. The machine is safely stored in boxes in a 40 foot container and so safely away from elements. I say safely as we receive guidance from the GE Engineers that it was okay for it to be stored in the container for length of time. In any event it is given ventilation from time to time. The container was recently moved from its location at the Victoria Park to the compound of the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital in preparation for physical installation at that institution in the next week or two. That is once the GE installation team of engineers arrive here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, we have waited a long time to own our own CT Scan machine, we do not think it as being highfalutin, we certainly do not take action based on movies that we see and we must admit that we have a vision which allows us to chart a clear way forward after consultation. Our people and the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, we have spent much money to send three to four hundred nationals to our neighbouring countries to obtain the service over the years. We have now taken action decisively, there are specific regulations which we must follow as set out by the suppliers and their team of installation experts. We must get this right and we are following there directions. Thank you very much.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** In response to question (d) could I ask again when, when is the equipment expected to be installed? I didn't hear a timeframe.

**HONOURABLE CECIL MCKIE:** I indicated in another week or two.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You answered the question, you said in another week or two. Okay, thank you.

*10. The Honourable Daniel Cummings (West Kingstown), asked the Honourable Minister of Social Development:*

*"Mr. Nathan (Casson) Thomas is eight-four (84) years old, left leg amputee and lives by himself in Edinboro. He is a self professed supporter of the New Democratic Party.*

*During the passage of Hurricane Tomas, his house roof was blown off. He has made repeated fruitless visits to NEMO and the Housing Authority, despite the millions of dollars spent by the Government for this purpose.*

*The Red Cross and other well wishers have recently provided him with materials that allowed him to put the roof back on his house. He is now in the process of continuing the work on his own.”*

*Would the Government find it in its heart to assist this needy elderly son of the soil to finish the refurbishment of his house by supplying the materials needed for the restoration of the ceiling, electrical, floor finishes and plumbing.*

**HONOURABLE FREDERICK A. STEPHENSON:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, this particular question in the House today was a subject of a newspaper article last week, headlines. Mr. Speaker, if anyone in St. Vincent and the Grenadines can speak about a Government with a heart is this Unity Labour Party Government. [Loud Applause]

Mr. Speaker let us just look at the tremendous work that was done by the Ministry of Housing and this Government in relation to Hurricane Tomas and the recent freak storm that we had. A number of homes were restored, roofs and buildings were also restored and persons have gone back to live in their homes. Thanks to the work of this Unity Labour Party Government. Mr. Speaker, I have been reliably informed that this Mr. Thomas has never gone to the Family Affairs division of the Ministry of National Mobilisation. Had he done so, Mr. Speaker, and if the person who is bringing this claim today would have done the necessary resource he would have found out that the Ministry of Housing, the Housing and Land Development Cooperation would assist in these matters, not the Ministry of Social Development. So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say that if Mr. Thomas and the persons who were helping him would have been properly directed they would have been pointed to the very relevant Ministry or Department that would give assistance in this matter. I am much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

*11. The Honourable Daniel Cummings (West Kingstown) asked the Honourable Minister of Health and the Environment:*

*The Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines through the Ministry of Health, last year boasted of its decision to place CT Scan purchased jointly by the NIS and NCB in the facility operated by Dr. Roslyn Ambrose. In response to a question raised then, the Honourable Prime Minister boasted of the advantages and ease to fit.*

*Would the Honourable Minister please state:*

- a. If this has been changed and why;*
- b. If the answer is in the affirmative, what if any is the indebtedness of the Government to the Caribbean Medical Imaging Company; and*
- c. Was any study done before the agreement was reached to locate the new equipment at the private lab.*

**HONOURABLE CECIL MCKIE:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I think we will all agree this ULP Administration is a responsible one [Applause]. Mr. Speaker, in my response to question 9 I clearly outlined the seriousness with which we continue to place on the placement and installation of the CT Scan machine. So serious was the fallout in the delivery of the machine and the delay created by the then agent who is based in Trinidad and Tobago that the suppliers General Electric severed their relationship with that agent and appointed a new agent which is based in Puerto Rico who we are now working through. We were able to benefit from this new relationship and our direct visit to GE in that they have committed to train two of our maintenance technicians in the USA for six months. This will therefore take us into the 12 months warranty period that will cover the CT Scan machine. When the new delivery details were finalized a team was established to review all the details relative to placement, installation, operation and maintenance. This process included discussions with the various stakeholders and partners which include the Ministry officials, the Purchasing Institutions, the principal of the private lab where the machine was originally intended to be placed, BRAGSA, Electrical Engineers, VINLEC and the Ministry of Works. What we realised was that the initial requirements provided by former agents differed from those provided by the new agents and that a complete new set of test were required. All the various discussions allowed us to make a final determination that the CT Scan will be placed at the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital in a location that has been declared suitable by the team of experts who visited three times over the past months. This, after examining all data and completing various tests. The export will come again to St. Vincent and the Grenadines over this and next week to ensure that our installation process is on track. A physicist should be coming over the next week or so to ensure that everything is in place for the final installation of the machine.

The Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is not indebted to the Caribbean Medical Company, as I indicated prior the previous agent would have examined and submitted the requirements at previously identified location at the private lab and upon the submission of the new requirements the decision was arrived at to locate at the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital. We have our committee in place and a clear course going forward as we move a step further in providing an improved delivery of Primary Health Care service to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Thank you.

*15. The Honourable Nigel Stephenson (South Leeward) asked the Honourable Minister of Community Development, Youth and Sports:*

- a. When will work commence on the rehabilitation of the Campden Park Playing Field; and*
- b. When will the Penniston Playing Field be completed and handed over to the people of Buccament Valley.*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I wish to advise the Honourable Member though if I may and I do so guardedly that there is no Ministry of Community Development.

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** The Ministry of Sports, it is appropriately mentioned there.

**HONOURABLE FREDERICK A. STEPHENSON:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, when we talk about playing fields and hard courts and so on, Mr. Speaker, I want just to go back a little to say that over the period we have built the North Union Playing Field, change room, wash room, pavilion, we have done work at Calliaqua the same way, we have done work at Richland Park, the hard court is lighted, we have done work at Oval Cane End playing field, pavilion, change room, Diamonds graded and grassed, Greggs hard court lighted, Park Hill graded and grassed and the list goes on and on. Mayreau state of the art facility down there in the Grenadines, Canouan state of the art facility, Daphne, Layou regressed, change room facility, Barrouallie Multi-purpose hosted several regional netball tournaments.

Mr. Speaker the National Sports Council is a state agency which is responsible for the development of sports facilities in the State with the exception of Victoria Park. Over the last 10 years the National Sports Council fully rehabilitated the Campden Park Playing Field on three occasions, this is with respect to the playing surface which has to cope with the recreational and social needs of the community as well as sporting activities, mainly football, and you know it. The Council had already put in place some management committee for the facility noticed that the respective of the programmes slated for the fourth quarter, the rehabilitation of the out field will be undertaken in September when it is anticipated optimal weather conditions will be available for the regeneration of a new savannah grass. Additionally the Council is gathering estimates for the construction of a change room, wash room facility to replace the existing dilapidated pavilion structure which poses great health hazard to users. The construction is targeted to commence during the last quarter of 2011, the outfield rehabilitation and the change room facility are budgeted to cost about \$200,000.

Part B; the development of their Penniston Playing Field and Hard Court is a Social Investment Fund project with funding from ALBA Caribe fund grant, a tune of \$250,000 was earmarked for this project. This project comprises the following components, leveling and grassing of the playing surface; construction of access road; construction of a players change room; stabilisation of embankment; completion of drainage; construction of hard court including fencing. Mr. Speaker all components of these project are complete with the exception of a change room which is approximately 90% complete and painting of the hard court. The project is expected to be fully completed by the end of June 2011 at this time the facility will be handed over to the residents there, in the Penniston Buccament Valley. I am much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

*16. The Honourable Nigel Stephenson (South Leeward) asked the Honourable Minister of Community Development, Youth and Sports:*

- a. Is there any intention to restore the roof of the Campden Park Community Center; and*
- b. If so, when can residents expect work to begin.*

**HONOURABLE FREDERICK A. STEPHENSON:** Mr. Speaker, yes there is intention to replace the roof of the Campden Park Community Center and (b) a design for the proposed roof and detailed estimates for the renovations for the building were done by BRAGSA. The proposed work estimated to cost \$137, 813.58, retrofitting on the centre will however not commence this year. This decision was based on several vulnerability

assessments coordinated by NEMO of building determine as suitable for use as emergency shelters taking location specific needs into consideration. Retrofitting works will instead be done to Rillan Hill Community Centre during this year unlike Campden Park which has other buildings that are suitable for use as emergency shelters. The Rillan Hill Centre is the only building within that community that can be used for that purpose hence priority was given to it. I am much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

*17. The Honourable Nigel Stephenson (South Leeward), asked the Honourable Minister of Community Development, Youth and Sports;*

*In the last quarter of 2010 work began on two (2) additional playing fields in North Leeward (Troumaca, Golden Grove and Chateaubelair) while work was in progress on the Cumberland Playing Field. It is now fast approaching five (5) months and no additional work has been done on these playing fields and they are now in deplorable condition due to recent rains.*

*Will the Honourable Minister please state:*

- a. When will work re-commence on the Troumaca and Golden Grove Playing Field; and*
- b. When will work re-commence on the Cumberland Playing Field.*

**HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON:** Mr. Speaker, it was out of the goodness of his heart with other community minded persons who wanted to see the further development of sports in these two communities namely Troumaca and Golden Grove that the then Honourable Minister, Dr. Jerrol Thompson proposed these two projects, and I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I believe that Dr. Thompson and the team of workmen should be complimented for their foresight in trying to help in the development of sports in these two areas.

Mr. Speaker, the works have since stopped on these two playing fields but the Ministry of National Mobilisation and the National Sports Council will continue to prepare the necessary estimates for the completion of these two playing fields and once these estimates are done the work on these two playing fields would continue. In relation to the Cumberland Playing Field, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, there are some funds available in the Estimates for the completion of the Cumberland Playing Field, maybe later on in the last quarter of this year. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

*18. The Honourable Vynnette Frederick (Opposition Senator) asked the Honourable Minister of Culture:*

- a. Ahead of this year's carnival celebrations have all winners and cultural practitioners who participated in the 2010 carnival have been paid; and*
- b. If not, please indicate those to which payments remain due and outstanding.*

**HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON:** Much obliged, Mr. Speaker. The Carnival Development Cooperation is a development organisation whose principal objective is to plan, organise and coordinate carnival activities in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Carnival has three main components pan, mass and calypso. To ensure carnival activities are successful the infrastructure has to be adequate. This infrastructure is broken down into various services which include light, sound, stage construction, security, utilities, electrical installations, media services and others. These services are contracted out to various persons during 2010. The cost for the Carnival Development Corporation amounted to over EC\$500,000 and payments were made consistently over the carnival period. To date all such payments were made.

**Winners:** Winners referred to the components of carnival who participated in the various competitions organised by the Carnival Development Corporation. Normally a prize giving ceremony is organised not later than two weeks after the last show of carnival. At this ceremony all winners are presented with their cash prizes and a trophy for their winnings. The cost to the CDC in 2010 was over \$530,000 all payments were made at the prize giving ceremony. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Question No. (19) Honourable Senator Frederick.

*19. The Honourable Vynnette Frederick (Opposition Senator) asked the Honourable Minister of Social Development and Family:-*

*Following the newspaper reports of underage children giving birth at the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital and public concern for the protection of children from abuse, statutory rape and other offenses; what legislative or other actions does the Government propose as a response to tackling these?*

**HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON:** Much obliged, Mr. Speaker. The Government of St Vincent and the Grenadines has been and will continue to be committed to the welfare and well being of this nation's children. My government formerly believes in vindicating the rights and protection of all of all our children. The Government strongly condemns any form of abuse meted out to our children within recent times. As such, the Government has successfully piloted and passed two Bills namely the Child Care and Protection Act and the Status of Children Act, which in essence deepened and enhances our capacity to protect our children from being abused especially sexually.

Last month, April the Ministry of National Mobilisation, Social Development, Youth, Sports and Culture through the Family Affairs Division spearheaded a national effort to observe that month as 'Child Awareness and Prevention Month'. Following on the heels of 'Child Awareness and Prevention Month' is the observation of this month of May as 'Child Month'. The Government has been and will continue to initiate, foster and sustain a strong integration and collaboration effort intra-Ministerially, through the individual Ministries and Divisions and inter-Ministerially. Example my own Ministry and that of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and within non-governmental entities including faith based organisations so as to inform educate and empower children, parents, teachers and other child care service providers to combat without fear and favour

the scourge of child abuse. It is our hope that once these perpetrators of such heinous crimes that are committed against these young children, innocent tender gems of our beautiful St Vincent and the Grenadines referred to in the question based by the Honourable Senator Frederick are identified, I can assure [you] that justice will be served.

And if I may here say that during recent times after we have had the series of programmes for 'Child Abuse and Awareness Month' a number of persons have been calling in at the Family Affairs Division and they are reporting many such cases of child abuse. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Supplementary?

**HONOURABLE VYNNETTE FREDERICK:** By way of a supplementary, the mention was made of the status of Children Act ... Child Care and Protection Act, does the Minister know whether any regulations mandating the reporting of any statutory births by children under age whether the regulations to these Acts have been done to mandate reporting by the authorities of these under age births? I appreciate that you might not be able to answer but I am advised that they actually were supposed to be regulations to that effect, so I am just asking whether that is so.

**HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON:** The Regulations are being prepared.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question No. (20), from the Honourable Senator Baptiste.

*20. The Honourable Anesia Baptiste (Opposition Senator) asked the Honourable Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs:-*

- a. Has the operation manuals for the Crisis Centre been completed and the stakeholder's protocols established; and*
- b. when will the Crisis Centre with the main objective to 'provide short-term assistance to victims of domestic violence and their children become operational?'*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister of Family and Gender Affairs.

**HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON:** Much obliged, Mr. Speaker. Part (a) the stakeholders protocols are 70% completed and the final draft consultation will be launched by June 17<sup>th</sup> this year. So far, protocols are in place for the Police Force, the Family Court and Gender Affairs staff. The manuals are in the process of being consulted upon and completion date will be approximately August 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

Part (b) of that question the Crisis Center is expected to be launched by the latest August 31<sup>st</sup> this year and one of the main prerequisites after the launch will be the training of the staff and then the Center will be ready for operation by September, 2011. Much obliged.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question No (21) Honourable Senator Baptiste.

*21. The Honourable Anesia Baptiste (Opposition Senator) asked the Honourable Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs:-*

*Have the three (3) Result Indicators under the subheading Ecclesiastical Affairs, as outlined on page 106 of the 2011 Estimates, which the Honourable Minister during the Budgetary Debate indicated would be achieved by the end of the first quarter 2011 been achieved: that is:*

- a. "Consult with the Attorney General's Office to produce and draft amendment to facilitate the Marriage Act by January 2011;*
- b. consult with the Attorney General's Office to produce draft regulations to the Marriage Act by January 2011; and*
- c. establish an Appeals Committee for the review of rejected applications for Marriage Officer's Licenses at the Ministerial level, January 2011".*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs.

**HONOURABLE MAXWELL CHARLES:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, consultation was made to the office of the Attorney General and work is in progress to amend the Marriage Act. For the information of the House, the amendment of the Marriage Act has four objectives:

**1. The Introduction of an application form for the Marriage Officers.**

And these have been worked upon. We want to bring the Marriage Act in St Vincent and the Grenadines up to standard as in most of our OECS Member States.

**2. The introduction of the Marriage Officer's Certificate.**

Currently applicants were granted Marriage Officer's status as so advised by letter, so we want to do it differently. These are some of the considerations that I have laid at the office of the Attorney General. We are also considering a special waiver for certain Marriage officers and the establishment of the ad hoc Appeals Committee this has not been done as yet, these objectives plus the establishment of the ad hoc Appeals Committee all will be done as a package. Mr. Speaker, thank you.

**HONOURABLE ANESIA BAPTISTE:** Mr. Speaker, supplementary question please.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Supplementary question.

**HONOURABLE ANESIA BAPTISTE:** Yes. In light of the answer given by the Honourable Minister of Ecclesiastic Affairs I would like to know if the Honourable Minister can give an indication as to when the draft amendments will be completed because he did say consultation has been done; work is in progress and also if he has an idea when the Appeals Committee establishment would be done.

**HONOURABLE MAXWELL CHARLES:** Like as I have said we are in consultation and as soon as I am so advised by the office I will give you a date.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question No (22) Honourable Senator Baptiste.

*22. The Honourable Anesia Baptiste (Opposition Senator) asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs;*

*Would the Honourable Prime Minister please:-*

- a. Inform the public of the cost, if any, to taxpayers for the St Vincent and the Grenadines delegation to attend the recent Royal Wedding; and*
- b. explain why, at a time when the country had just suffered, to quote the Honourable Prime Minister "tens of millions of dollars" in damage from the recent rains that produced flooding in the North is it prudent and justified to spend taxpayers money in that way.*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Prime Minister, Minister of Finance.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Senator Baptiste like many Members of the Opposition seemed to have an obsession with the Royal Wedding and the Royal Family. I believe that I am the only person in this Honourable House who knows Her Majesty personally and as an anti-colonialist; I can introduce the Honourable Senator Baptiste as somebody who is so steeped in colonialism to have defended the Colonial Constitution if she is so anxious and so obsessed with Her Majesty. Because the point is this, there was no delegation expressly to go and see the Queen or to attend the Royal Wedding. There was an overseas trip which had several purposes; the central one was to go to Taiwan on which other purposes were included, to spend a day with the cocoa people Armajaro and to address Vincentian Nationals. I spent a whole afternoon into the night in High Wickham with the Nationals, to hold discussions with some investors including one meeting with a gentleman an Englishman who has a house in Bequia and who wants to be involved with certain investment which would be of interest to a small man, a small borrower. So, the notion that there was a visit to a Royal Wedding is entirely absurd.

You know, Mr. Speaker, I want to make this clarification, from the time I am a young man I am profoundly anti-colonialist and I will remain so until I am dead and it is part of my teaching, but I happened to have a duty as Prime Minister under a Constitution which I sought to change. The Opposition campaigned to keep the Queen, the Queen is the Queen of St Vincent and Grenadines and as the Prime Minister there are certain matters

in which I have to do my duty. And I will say this, when I consulted the Cabinet including seeking advice from the High Commissioner from the United Kingdom our High Commissioner I was advised that since these young persons who were getting married are directly connected with Mustique and since I have a duty as Prime Minister and not to - I have been advised not to refuse the Royal invitation unless there is some overriding personal or other reason. I decided that the visit that I was going to go on to Taiwan rather than going through the United States, which is the usual way I asked the Taiwanese if I can route the visit through the United Kingdom and the principal reason for that is to save the expenses of the airfare, because the Taiwanese have always so long as we make official state visits to that country, they take care of the airfare. That is how it has been from the days of the Honourable Milton Cato until the present time.

So, I went on a visit including several purposes. So, this obsession that I went to a Royal Wedding is just completely out of order, it is the kind of idea where they want to bat on both sides of the wicket. They want to love up the Royal Family and then they want to oppose it and I understand that mentality because I have studied it well, I know it, it is an obsession and a craving but somebody whose mind is free by a process of conscientisation, I ...

**HONOURABLE ANESIA BAPTISTE:** I have a point of order please, Mr. Speaker, I rise on a Point of Order.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yes.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I am answering my question, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Let me just take it.

**HONOURABLE ANESIA BAPTISTE:** Thank you Mr. Speaker. I state my point of order, Order No (36) dealing with “Contents of Speeches” and subsection (5) if I could call it that or clause (5):-

**“No Member shall impute improper motives to any Member of the House”.**

I find it improper of the Honourable Member that in the face of my question which simply asks to state the cost to taxpayers if any, for SVG’s delegation to attend the Royal Wedding, I was not saying anything about visiting to the Royal ... I said attend, he did attend. I find it improper that he is imputing these motives of me having obsession and craving and all these things concerning the Royal Family because my question does not indicate that all. And I would appreciate, Mr. Speaker, some form of ruling on this point.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I do not know if somebody voted for a constitution, campaign for a constitution to keep the Queen [Interjections] [Knocking of Gavel] to keep the Queen that is what they voted for. They are on the same platform with Sir James when he says: “I love the Queen, I want to keep her”; and they lined up behind him. One and two of them would say something to the contrary here and there to confuse people.

**HONOURABLE ANESIA BAPTISTE:** You can come better than that.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** [Knocking on the Gavel] you moved ... just a minute. [Laughter] you moved a point of order, I am dealing with the point of order; if you interject I am just going to ask the Member to continue. [Interjection] He is responding I am listening to him and I will rule after; you do not tell me when I must rule.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, so the question which is asked the cost of the delegation to attend the Royal Wedding, I did not just descend on England as I am explaining I went on a trip so that there was no airfare charged to the Government of St Vincent and the Grenadines.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** All right Honourable Prime Minister let us, she has a point of order that you have been imputing improper motives, if that is the case I am asking that you kindly desist from doing so: that is my ruling.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I cannot impute improper motives to a Member of this Honourable House to say that she loves the Queen because she swears all the time to the Queen [Laughter]

**HONOURABLE ANESIA BAPTISTE:** [Inaudible] obsession ...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yes. Okay all right, she said the thought of being obsessed with the Queen.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Well, Mr. Speaker, I was making the point in the way in which the question is phrased.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Okay, all right.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** The way the question is phrased it is, Mr. Speaker, she knows from the public record that I did not simply go and visit the Queen, she knows that. She knows I did not just go to the Royal Wedding that I went on a visit but there is a double purpose:

- 1. The obsession I insist.**
- 2. A quest born out of seeking some tangential political advantage to say: that there is Tomas here and I gone with Queen Elizabeth, to be at the Abbey and of Buckingham Palace and forgetting the people. That is what the question is asking about.**

So, I am answering the question, Mr. Speaker, in an omnibus fashion and I am dealing with it explicitly and that is the point I am doing, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Continue, Honourable Prime Minister, and let us avoid any form of confrontation on these issues. Let us stick to the question and deal with it in its relevance.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, the question is also... underline it: it is that you are wasting money travelling, one question I got here, Mr. Speaker, from the House wanted to know what is my travels from January to the middle of May, I got it you know. I went for two days with CARICOM Heads of Government in the column, the status – no bills submitted, government paid the airfare, no bills submitted meaning anything which was out of pocket I bore it. I went on the night of April 11<sup>th</sup>, I addressed Cave Hill the passage was paid for again, out of pocket I paid for it. Between the 13<sup>th</sup> April and the 1st May, I was out of the country for seventeen nights, six of them were in London, and eleven of them were in Taiwan as part of the delegation which I led included Jimmy Prince of API, a personal Security Officer and my dear wife Eloise: they were the delegation with me. Jimmy Prince and the Security Officer, on their return came Taiwan-London; London-St Vincent without staying in London at all, because they had no business to deal with Armajaro because I had somebody there on the ground nothing to deal with the Investors and they were not attending the Royal Wedding. So, they, Mr. Speaker, had nothing to do with the England leg; the London leg of the visit.

And now on that visit I got US\$2 million out of Taiwan regarding the disaster of April 11th, EC\$5.4 million I know they say that I could have stayed in St Vincent and get that but I stayed in St Vincent after Tomas and the Taiwanese gave us \$200,000. I went and my representation brought \$5.4 million. [Applause] In addition, I unlocked US\$8 million in loans which are now being pursued that is EC\$20 million now being pursued by the public servants, I haven't unlocked it plus other things which I did in Taiwan which I reported upon. The cost of the visit the entire visit for the Government of St Vincent and the Grenadines as given to me by the officials is \$21,419.88. So, if I bring home \$5.4 million and spend \$21,000 well I will say that is not a bad deal at all. [Knocking on the desk] Mr. Speaker, you see and I underlined the question in (b) and this is why I started to say, Mr. Speaker and I am coming down between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> May I went on a Trade Investment Mission in Brazil, again, Mr. Speaker, I did not ask for any out of pocket expenses and people think it is easy. I left here on a Thursday morning, the first time I saw a bed was 12:00 o'clock Friday night. I was on the plane to Miami, changed the plane at Miami Airport and went down through the night to Brazil it is over eight hours to Sao Paulo.

When I arrived in the Monday morning about 7:00 o'clock I went to the hotel. I just had time to shower and change my clothes and go off to the meetings which I had. The next time I saw my bed as I said is midnight did a whole set of things in that one day in Brazil. You see there are persons they have this ... and I want, Mr. Speaker, and I am glad that these questions are asked because it provides me with the opportunity to answer. When I travel overseas, I want the country to know this, you know what my per diem is: my daily allowance, if I go anywhere in the Caribbean it is EC\$60.00, they pay the hotel and the meals EC\$60.00. Anywhere else I go in the world is US\$60.00 that could afford for you to pay things even what you have to pay the porters to take your bags up and down and give the concierge something for them to make a reservation for you if you are going to take some investors out to dinner out somewhere? Every time I travel, I am out of pocket, so this notion ... and we must grow up about these things: grow up. I know the Honourable Member for ... The Honourable Senator Frederick laughed when I said grow up because she is the only one laughed on that side

and maybe it is significant in that regard. [Laughter] [Interjection] Yes, Vynnette Frederick, I said Michelle Frederick?

**HONOURABLE VYNNETTE FREDERICK:** No, you see my name is Vynnette Frederick not any [Inaudible]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** [Knocking gavel on desk] what is the relevance of that really?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I know your name is Vynnette Frederick.

**HONOURABLE VYNNETTE FREDERICK:** Bear that in mind.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** [Knocking gavel on desk]

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I always bear that in mind, in fact...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Let us move on with the question.

**HONOURABLE VYNNETTE FREDERICK:** Continue.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** You really want some attention in truth [Laughter]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member: Honourable Member.

**HONOURABLE VYNNETTE FREDERICK:** I know the child of attention [Inaudible]

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** You know Mr. Speaker, and that is the way this goes so when the question is asked further why I leave at this time: “Is it prudent and justified to spend taxpayers’ money in that way”? I mean when ... on the night of the 11<sup>th</sup> I was in Barbados, I arrived here the morning of the 12<sup>th</sup> I went out into the area. I spent the next few days addressing that problem putting things in place to make sure, and every day when I was away I spoke to the Deputy Prime Minister, I spoke to the Minister of Works, I spoke to the Minister of Housing and I spoke to the officials about what is happening. I mean really, after all the years, Mr. Speaker, that I have struggled forty something years, to have someone who is just barely scratching their introductory life to public service to talk about my commitment to the poor and about people. Well, really now, I mean, you know it is absurd in the highest degree. And I have taken sometime on this, Mr. Speaker, so that I hope we do not have to go through this kind of foolishness another time again. This sort of a question impacts only on small minds; when we have large issues to handle. I am obliged.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker, I crave your indulgence, I do not know if it is a matter that could wait. It is a ... the questions are finished there is no supplementary.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** The questions are finished.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker, when the Honourable Senator Baptiste moved on a point of order, I was waiting for your response.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You did not get it?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** And when you did not respond, I asked the question if there is going to be a ruling. I must say I was quite surprised by the tone of your response because what you said to me was I will decide when to rule you do not tell me when to rule or something to that effect. You know, and I am a Member who is elected to this House and the only person whom I am entitled to address a question to is you as the Speaker of the House. And when I ask a question, I asked it with the best intention expecting a response and a ruling. Not a dismissive way as to say, why you are asking a question of the Speaker. And I think that is not the attitude that I expect to be treated with in this Honourable House and the people who elected me to be here, Mr. Speaker, expect that I would be treated with the same respect that any other Member of the House would be treated with.

And that brings me to another point, Mr. Speaker, with respect to a ruling that I had asked for sometime ago and this is the question back in January on the issue of the Attorney General voting in this Honourable House. You would recall that I raised that issue and in my submission to you I said it was improper and it was in violation of the Constitution and you said that you would take time and review it and reply I assumed to this Honourable House. We have not had a response for that matter. [Interjection]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Just a minute. [Striking the desk with gavel]

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** The matter has been ventilated publicly and you had a lot of time to respond on the matter and we have not been given the courtesy of a response from the Chair.

There is also, Mr. Speaker, the outstanding matter regarding the statement that the Honourable Member for South Leeward; these are some matters that still have not been addressed was improperly made to withdraw from this Honourable House sometime ago, back in January 25th. And if I recall, and you may correct me if I am wrong, we raised the issue in this House as to the correctness of the statement he made in respect of persons who had gone into the hills and a statement that was made as to who would pursue them until they exist no more. The Honourable Member for Central Kingstown I recall said that he had a text and he could bring it to you. I asked you in the Honourable House, I said that I had a tape and I could present it to you, in fact you asked me to present it to you, and when I tried to do so you said, no you were not interested in it. That still has to be corrected on the record because the Honourable Member was made to withdraw his comment and those of us who supported him in the statement that he made were made to feel that we were wrong. We were called elements on the other side and this is a matter for the record of this Honourable House Mr. Speaker.

And if you wish I do have a copy of the statement that was made when the Honourable Member for Central Kingstown tried to say that he would read it out to you, you made a comment about whether the accuracy could be relied upon. Well, I can present it to you as a CD form of the recording of what was said here and what the Honourable Prime Minister said at the conclusion of Vincy Pac which was the statement that my Honourable

Friend was referring to and then you can make your own judgement. If you wish I can present that to you now, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, I wish to indicate to you that I have noted your comments and I would make my decision at some time. [Striking of gavel on desk] Thank you very much.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Indulgence.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yes, Honourable Member.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Dr. Friday, Representative for Northern Grenadines just indicated to you his concerns about certain rulings that we expected. Today I had expected, maybe under the Announcement of the Speaker that we would have heard something in that regard, particularly with regard to the very first one about the voting by the Attorney General on the election of the Speaker. Based on your last comment there, there is no definite word as to when such a ruling is likely. In the circumstances the Opposition will not participate any further in today's proceedings. [Knocking on desk]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Okay.

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

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

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Suspension?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I was thinking that we have one ... Honourable Members may recall that on the last occasion we could have presented and passed the OECS Economic Treaty Bill but I said out of deference to the Leader of the Opposition who had supported in principle the Motion when we came here on Economic Union and we had endorsed the Treaty itself now we have to put the Treaty into a Bill and I do not intend, Mr. Speaker, to afford them a second opportunity. I stated why I was doing it because we have now, Mr. Speaker, to complete our work so that we will meet the date of June 18th.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** All right.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, if you are minded for us to take a lunch break and then we come back, but I myself in light of the fact that the Opposition is not here to participate, I do not know how ... Mr. Speaker, I am in your hands, I only ...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I would ... I understand what you are saying you want us to go through with this session and I have no objection to that but I would still want us to have a five minutes break for Members convenience.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Okay.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Five minutes break, Members convenience, and that is five minutes.

**House suspended at 2:25 p.m. (break)**

**House resumed at 3:10 p.m.**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Prime Minister.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to keep the force of Law to the Revised Treaty of Basseterre established in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States Economic Union and the Protocol of the Eastern Caribbean Economic Union in St Vincent and the Grenadines and for related matters be read a second time.

**Question put and agreed to**

**Bill read a second time**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Debate on the Bill.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, on the 5<sup>th</sup> April this year, this Bill had its first reading and the Opposition was absent. But because of the nature of this particular Bill a Bill which when it had come here as part of a motion for the purpose of its adoption in principle they gave their unanimous support, I felt that it is only right and proper that they be given an opportunity to debate this Bill. Sadly, on the most spurious of grounds absolutely, without any merit they have chosen to absent themselves yet again from this august assembly. Mr. Speaker, there is a certain boring and unreasonable even senseless repetition of this tactic of withdrawal.

One withdraws from the House on a fundamental matter which goes to the pith and substance of governance. One does not withdraw from parliament because of a pique. You do not do it in a fit of pique; you do not do it because you can do it. Because fundamentally the people of this country have voted us in free and fair elections to be in this parliament to represent them; to represent their interest, to represent the nation's collective interest. It is entirely improper for the Opposition because they have a quarrel over a minor matter with the Honourable Speaker that like little children they take up their stumps, their bats and their balls and gone; *or you playing*

*marble, you tek up the gumpa and go 'bout dey business.* This really is a kind of infantilism which is quite dangerous to the body politics and I am hoping that the people of this country are paying attention. Politics is serious business to be conducted by serious people; it is not a branch of the entertainment industry. I know carnival is coming on but it is not a place for mass, whether old mass or Tuesday mass. It is a place where we deliberate and make decisions. It is a deliberative and decision-making body: a law-making body.

Today, Mr. Speaker, I watched with absolute astonishment that they re-entered the Chamber and offered no reason as to why they re-entered. The last time they stayed away, the time before they stood to disrupt the Parliament and when their planned disruption did not have its desired end, they publicly proclaimed that they will not be coming back into the House. And in the words of the Leader of the Opposition they will be protesting every single day parliament meets but as the numbers dwindled, they had no choice but to crawl in back today. But they crawled in, in a manner where they offered no justification to their supporters or to the people of St Vincent and the Grenadines as to why they left in the first place. And clearly from their attitude from the very beginning seating arrangements and the manner in which they wanted to conduct themselves give all the vibes that they were spoiling for a fight waiting for an opportunity to see if they could ramaje'. They had none, so they actually had to try and create one.

Well, today I heard one Member of the Opposition asking a question of the Honourable Minister for Social Development and Family Affairs about children and the question in part connected to the status of children; but they stayed away from the debate on the Status of Children Bill, these are not serious people. We have before us a Bill which strategically is one of the most important to come to this parliament certainly in the last ten years. A Bill which contains a Treaty a Revised Treaty of Basseterre, which Revised Treaty has already been ratified and has commenced its operation as a Treaty between consenting states from January 21<sup>st</sup>, this year. But we have set ourselves a deadline for June 18<sup>th</sup>, this year the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the original Treaty of Basseterre where we would want to be at a position where all the Member States have put that which has been ratified into domestic law and therefore having the force of law.

Mr. Speaker, this Treaty, this Revised Treaty addresses matters of governance, it addresses the functional integration purposes of the OECS and the new areas of governance and restated areas of functional cooperation and expanded areas of functional cooperation but very decidedly the Protocol which is appended at the back of the Treaty itself. This is the meat of the Economic Union, the Protocol of the Eastern Caribbean Economic Union and the countries which have ratified the Treaty for the purpose of the Economic Union are the six independent countries of the OECS and the three non-independent British territories of Anguilla, British Virgin Island and Montserrat that they are engaged in the OECS in the functional aspects and in the case of Anguilla and Montserrat they are involved in the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union because the BVI uses the US dollar as its currency.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this Treaty strengthens the OECS as the most tightly integrated mechanism in the Caribbean much more so than Caricom, or Caricom has functional cooperation, coordination of foreign policy, coordination of security policy and we have those in the OECS. And Caricom has economic integration but only in so far as it relates to trade and the Single Market, but the OECS Economic Union goes to a single economy that is why it is called an Economic Union, which stage Caricom can only aspire. And for practical purposes in Caricom it is a dream which is on pause; that is to say the single economy.

Mr. Speaker, the highest decision-making body in the OECS under this Revised Treaty remains the OECS Authority which consists of the Heads of Government. And we have the OECS Council of Ministers and there is an Economic Affairs Council but there are two institutions which are new in the governance arrangements in this Revised Treaty. One of them is the OECS Assembly, and the other one is the OECS Commission. The OECS Assembly is a consultative body not legislative. The OECS Authority has been accorded legislative competence in certain areas by virtue of delegation. And where matters come before the OECS Authority, where rules or laws are being made, it is necessary for a process of consultative filtering to take place through the OECS Assembly, which OECS Assembly is come about not by direct election, but by indirect election with two members from the Government side, and one from the Opposition.

And the OECS Commission is very important in helping with the management of the OECS administration, and very much so with implementation. The OECS Commission as you would look in Article 12, I believe of the Revised Treaty, (let me make sure) yes Article 12 because we all need to know this Treaty in very much the same way that we, those of us who are Christians have gotten to know the Bible. We have to know it well, and if I may say parenthetically, this year, this month in fact is the four hundredth anniversary of the King James Version of the Bible. And the OECS Commission consists of the Director General who is the Chief Executive Officer of the Organisation plus the other Commissioners each of whom is an Ambassador or holds an ambassadorial rank: one person from each of the six territories; and together they form the Commission. The Director General will chair the Commission and the Commission is responsible for the overall administration of the OECS. Clearly the Director General is responsible for the day to day administration because that person is the Chief Executive Officer but the Commission is responsible for the overall administration: the general administration of the Organisation as stated in Article 12 (1).

And as you go down further in 12 (4) and 12 (5); you see the functions which really are a series of oversight, reportage and review functions. In other parts of the Treaty you will find an important function of the Commission is to prepare the draft agenda. Currently, or at least before this Treaty the Director General in consultation with the Chairman of the Authority for the time being would prepare the agenda; but now the Commissioners have to be involved in the preparation of the Agenda; which means that the Agenda would be something more than just what the Organisation Secretariat wants; that it would be ... you have the Commissioners who would be very much responsive not only to the regional concerns: the sub-regional concerns, but to individual national concerns.

Now, the Commissioner does not stand alone in the case of St Vincent and the Grenadines and this is the model which is being urged to be replicated. We have an Ambassador a Commissioner who heads the Regional Integration and Diaspora Unit. There are eight members of staff five of them are University graduates, this is a serious business and the purpose of that body RIDU is to ensure implementation on the ground, but also to feed into the decision-making and for implementation throughout the sub-regional level. So, when you have a meeting of the OECS Authority lots of different subjects would be covered touching and concerning several different Ministries. There is an Inter-Ministerial body which interfaces in St Vincent and the Grenadines with RIDU with the Commissioner who is Ambassador Ellsworth John and the persons who are in RIDU they are the hub, they are the fulcrum around which the organisation; the implementation and the preparation for the OECS revolve: they are the axle.

It is very critical this work of this unit because we must remember the OECS Economic Union is a strategic path to assist us in these small vulnerable countries to enhance our capacity, to address more efficaciously the challenges from the external environment in the interest of our people that is what it is fundamentally about. So that a strategic quest for an economic union is to ensure that we are lifting the quality of life of people through a number of decisions which we will take in education, in health, in the judicial system, in employment, in investment, in trade and so on and so forth. Now, there is Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, a range of areas identified for functional cooperation, we know the range of areas already, they are repeated and they are listed in the Treaty and as to the purposes, I think we find them in Article 4, The Purposes and Functions of the Organisation. We see (a) to (g) the main purposes and in 4 (2) we have items going down to (w). So, there are twenty odd specific areas of functional cooperation covering the whole gamut of the public policy and socially economic and political policy.

But I want to draw the attention of Honourable members to Article (53) which addresses the issue of delegated legislation as outlined in Article (14). But this is done in a manner where the Treaty has to be consistent with our existing constitution as stated in Article 5 (4) and when we look at Article 14, we see 14 (1) - Areas of Legislative Competence for the Authority: the common market including the Customs Union. Monetary Policy: which is exercised through the Monetary Council; Trade Policy, Maritime Jurisdiction and Maritime Boundaries and Civil Aviation Exercise through the Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority. These are areas in which the authority is accorded by virtue of section (53) the delegated powers and with the areas of legislative competence.

In 14 (2) there is legislative competence too in common commercial policy, environmental policy and immigration policy; now, already one can see what is the architecture. The Commission and the Assembly being very important institutions in building the government apparatus and then we see greater authority being given to the OECS Authority, which is the Heads of Government to make delegated legislation. This is akin to a statutory body which may make delegated legislation or indeed a cabinet itself of St Vincent and the Grenadines, and you do so within a framework of an enabling statute. The Lawyers will tell us whether in addition to this Revised Treaty we need to have specifically an enabling statute to ground some of these other matters. Mr. Speaker, I want to touch on an area which will be absolutely fascinating for the persons who are looking for real bread and butter stuff: the Economic Union. I want to zero in right away on Freedom of Movement of Persons Article (12) in the Protocol that is at page 42. Article 12 in the Protocol is not to be confused with Article 12 in the Treaty itself. The Protocol is different to the Treaty; the Protocol is the attachment to the Treaty addressing the issue of the Economic Union.

It begins by saying,

**“Under the rubric Freedom of Movement of persons,**

12 (1):-

**freedom of movement for citizens of protocol member states,**

Those are the six independent countries of the OECS.

**shall be secured within the Economic Union area”.**

Straight off; 12 (1):-

**“Freedom of movement is secured”.**

The Honourable Minister of Agriculture has in his hands the Treaty of Chaguaramas, if he passes it and lends me I will draw immediately at Article 45 in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas you will see the difference in this CARICOM Treaty and in this one the OECS Economic Union Treaty. This one says:-

**“Freedom of movement of citizens of protocol member state shall be secured”.**

It is not a goal, it is not a dream and it is not a quest: “Shall be secured”. Now, what does Article 45 says in the Revised Treaty of Chaguaramas:-

**“Member states commit themselves to the goal of free movement of their nationals within the community”.**

So, this one has free movement as a goal, this one has it secured, right away, fundamental difference. Then Article 46 in this; then it goes on to say in the Caricom Treaty, it says:-

**“As a first step we accord the following categories of community nationals’ the right to seek employment in their jurisdictions”.**

And what are those?

- University graduates
- Media Workers
- Sports persons
- Artistes, and
- Musicians

And since then the Heads of Government have added:-

- Non graduate teachers
- Non graduate nurses
- Artisans;

if you have the Caribbean Vocational qualification, the CVQ qualifications.

- Domestic workers

if you have the similar CVQ qualifications for those areas. Those are the only categories for which you can get freedom of movement in CARICOM. And you have to have what is called a Skilled National Certificate, issued by anyone of the states to those persons who qualify, what is said here in Article 12, the OECS Economic Union Treaty 12 (2). Remember 46 says here as a first step these categories; we see 12 (1) says, "It is secured"; 45 in CARICOM says, "It is a goal". What do we go on to say in 12 (2):-

**"Such Freedom of movement shall entail the abolition of any discrimination based on nationality between citizens of the protocol member states as regards employment remuneration and other conditions of work and employment".**

So, if you take an agricultural worker, if you take a clerk who is not qualified to hold the CARICOM Skills National Certificate, if such a person is trying to travel through the CARICOM Member States let us say Barbados or Trinidad and they turn up at the Airport they can question them and they can do all sorts of things with them to deny them entry. But if a Vincentian goes to Grenada or Antigua or a St Lucian comes to St Vincentian, a Dominican and they turn up at the Airport and the Immigration Officer says, they are OECS Nationals and the Immigration Officer says what are you coming to St Vincent to do? Or in the case of St Lucia they ask a Vincentian: "What are you coming to do"? Any Vincentian or coming into St Vincent any Grenadian or Dominican. You say, "Sir, I am coming to look for work", they cannot deny you entry but they can deny you in the CARICOM. All the Immigration Officer will say, "Well, okay fine, you are coming to look for work, how much money you have in your pocket"? You say, "I have \$200 in my pocket". He says, "All right, you should be able to get a catch by a friend and look for work for a few days and so on. You have some means to start a search". That is the difference, of course if you are a criminal and your name is on the police watch list (and there are lists), they would say, "No we have our own homegrown criminals, but we do not need any technical assistance, so you cannot come in". [Laughter] That is how it is going to work.

I want everybody to understand what is the difference, I want everybody to understand the difference between CARICOM and what is the OECS. Now are they going to be teething problems? Of course, they are going to be teething problems but what we are doing we are seeking to break new ground [applause] In relations to trade and all other matters we are trying to make ... the Protocol makes it one, trade and one economic and one financial space in the way in which CARICOM is not. And imagine you do not debate this because the Speaker did not give you an answer eh! Is the Speaker, of the House the giver of grace? He is on a throne; you can't come here and articulate your position? Or you are so wrapped with vanity that vanity has gotten the better of you. I was in opposition and I had a Speaker, who ... 'Nolly' Mc Dowall ran against me, I defeated him he got 18% of the vote but he came here he was my boss here: he was my boss here. I cannot say that I am not accepting it because I defeated him. When he told me to sit I would sit, I may give him a back chat and I may raise this and that point of order. On one occasion he says, he will name me and he will throw me out. I took up my things and left everybody else, I said, "I will not give you the privilege of naming me I gone". [Laughter] But I am coming back because I have the people of Colonarie and Park Hill, South Rivers, Georgetown and Byera, Chester and Gorse, Mangrove and Belview to represent, eh! I am not going to allow 'Nolly' Mc Dowall to stop me talking. And when I see anything I know how far to go and how far to pull back. That is how mature and sensible people do it. But no, they have some beef real or imaginary with the Speaker and then what

happens? They stop represent their constituents. I have never seen something like that since I born. This law would be passed when none of them can tell their constituents that they were in the House making a contribution to deepen the integration system. Can you imagine that?

Economic Union is a matter of existential importance for small states; without it we cannot survive and thrive in the challenging world in which we are in. And not only are we in a challenging world, we are in a dangerous neighborhood and we are in a dangerous world and we have to work with one another. To tell you that I feel very badly for them for having taken such an unwise decision but they have made their own choice.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill there are a few just minor typographical errors on pages 4 and 5 which have been circulated, the pages dealing with the contents and they are just put there for the purpose of drawing attention to Honourable Members. Mr. Speaker, the Economic Union Protocol addresses: air transportation, it addresses telecommunication, human and social development, tourism, education, agriculture, fiscal policy, trade, income policy; *ah* mean it's ... the whole gamut of issues. And we just had the first meeting of the OECS, the first substantive meeting of the OECS since the ratification of this Treaty on January 21<sup>st</sup>. A lot of work is being done currently, Mr. Speaker, to operationalise this Treaty. Tremendous amount of work is yet to be done and to that extent it is a work in progress, but we have the framework for doing better for our people.

Mr. Speaker, as I said in answer a little earlier today, in answer to a question, I am now in this regional vineyard, political vineyard for 42 years not 42 days not 42 months it is part of my life work. You know, Mr. Speaker, in ... and I must put it in the record here. In 1971 there was a university lecturer named Vaughn Lewis at Mona and there were four students from the Eastern Caribbean Dwight Venner, Swinburne Lestrade, Bernard Marshall of St Vincent of blessed memory and Ralph Gonsalves. The four of us and Vaughn Lewis we decided to embark upon a project in the Windward and Leeward Islands to deepen the integration movement: make our contribution. We were to write papers - public education which was done.

One of the papers was written by Swinburne Lestrade and myself called the Political Aspects of Windward Leewards Integration. All those papers were together published in the celebrated Journal know as Caribbean Quarterly done in 1972. Nearly 20 years later a noted Caribbean academic Dr. Pat Emmanuel of blessed memory decided to study seven approaches to West Indian integration, he studied approach from Eric Williams; he studied approaches from Sir Authur Lewis, from Professor Telford Georges, seven. One of the seven which he subjected to study was the approach outlined by Gonsalves and Lestrade. I was a youngster when I wrote that paper, when I drafted it in 1971 and I was not yet 25 years of age. I did not say that to boast, I said that to point out the journey that I have trod and my sweat equity in this business called OECS Economic Union and when I see people including some young ones on the other side being misled and being wrapped up with everything other than seriousness about public policy I forgive them, they know not what they say, they know not what they do.

OECS Economic Union is not a panacea it is a framework to help to strengthen our social and economic development in the interest of our people, especially the poor. Mr. Speaker, I thank Almighty God and the people of St Vincent and the Grenadines for giving me the opportunity to be here today to lead the debate on this Bill. When I wrote what I wrote in 1971, and there are many since, many articles, many publications since

then which I have written on this subject but when I wrote that in 1971 I did not know, I did not dream that forty years later I would have been here in the Parliament piloting the Revised Treaty of Basseterre establishing an OECS Economic Union. I am obliged. [Knocking on desk]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Further debate? Honourable Member for South Central Windward, Minister for Tourism.

**HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR:** Mr. Speaker, it would have been remiss of me not to speak on such a very important topic, such a very important issue at this juncture of our development, not only as a nation but as a sub-region and as a region. Mr. Speaker, today I want to focus on three issues and three issues of general misconception when it deals with the overarching issue of regional integration. And the first one, Mr. Speaker, has to do with how some persons misconceive and misconstrue the topic known as sovereignty. There are many persons who oppose for opposing sake, many persons who are anti-regionalism because they have a very narrow view of the subject matter sovereignty.

Mr. Speaker, when you look at our history, the history of our islands and you go as far back as 1834 and 1838 and you address issues of emancipation and apprenticeship and we come up to the period where we have the growth and the formation of nation states in our case in 1979; and the whole fight against colonialism; Mr. Speaker, some persons at the juncture of independence and the attaining of your political sovereignty are of the view that when you approach regionalism you are actually subverting the very sovereignty that you would have fought for. And Mr. Speaker that is something I want to address because I have heard it and it definitely pains my heart because sovereignty is not to be used as a sword, it is to be used as a shield in this case.

We have moved to independence but because of certain factors and unique descriptions for example our small sizes of the islands we cannot produce anything on economies of scales with the sizes of the factors of production that we have. So we have moved from emancipation and apprenticeship to nationhood; independence but we are now in a phase where interdependency is totally inevitable. We have to be dependent on our brothers, our neighbours and our neighbours will be depending on us. Mr. Speaker, if I may take a simple issue an issue which touches to the core; farming and banana production. A ship will not sail from the extra-regional market to St Vincent and the Grenadines only to pick up the bananas from Lauders, Lowmans, Mount Grenans, South Rivers and Sandy Bay. But when we come together as we have done in the instance of WIBDECO now WINFRESH we have seen where we could produce on greater economies of scales and we all know in some instances not even a merger of some of our factors of production would suffice for us to even make a profit. That is to tell you how important regionalism is and we are even taking it to a higher level today.

Mr. Speaker, the second issue that I would like to address has to do with tourism. I am not going to entertain a debate as to whether or not a future of our economic growth depends on agriculture or whether or not it depends on tourism, because the truth lies somewhere in the centre. Whilst we seek to diversify across sectors we also have to diversify within the sectors. But recently, Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to attend a Ministers' of Tourism meeting in St Kitts and it was there at that meeting that it came home to me in a very personal way, the fundamental and critical importance of the OECS. Mr. Speaker, if I may refer this Honourable House to Article 21 that deals with tourism, and in that meeting we were there in St Kitts with the other Ministers of Tourism in

the OECS to discuss the formulation of a common tourism policy. In this policy we were working out a general framework as to how we were going to address issues of marketing which is very expensive in the Tourism Sector.

Mr. Speaker, coming out of the meeting a conclusion was made and it had to do with the movement of yachts between St Vincent and Grenada. In fact, this morning the Minister of Tourism in Grenada called me because he is already putting his team together and we are having a meeting here at the Ministry in St Vincent on Friday, because we have to put a team together to deal with the issue of the movement of yachts within the OECS geographic space. And the model that we are going to use comes out of the geographic space between St Vincent and Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, the reality is this: if a yacht is being cleared from Carriacou and for those of us who are acquainted with the space you are here on Union, you look across by Tokyo and you almost either at Palm going over now to PSV to PM it is one very small space, very, very small space. And for many years persons have been going into these islands many persons break the law from time to time because you are moving from one to the other and break the law has almost becomes a way of life. For those who live within the space, you know they do it every day they get away with it but when a yachtee leaves from Germany it flies into Grenada, he takes his yacht up to Carriacou he has to clear his yacht in Carriacou, he goes right across there to Petit St Vincent and he is now in our waters. He has to first go to Union you know, if he wants to go to PSV and if he is in PSV and he wants something in Carriacou he has to go back to Union to exit before he goes to Carriacou. And I tell you to actually live the experience and I know that some of us here would have lived that experience.

We have a single geographic space, we have similar factors of production, and we have to put our minds together and our hearts in this thing in order to increase our productivity. The Ministry of Tourism we are working out various modalities as to how we can be fully integrated into any approach and any systems and all those systems which will come out of a single economic space and an economic union.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to turn now to the issue of the free movement of persons because this is also another issue which has provided fertile grounds for many misconceptions. It is usually the talk that once we have regionalism and integration then the Grenadians will come to St Vincent and take all the jobs; and the Grenadians feel the same way. The St Lucians are of the belief that St Lucians would go to Antigua and take all the jobs, and the Antiguans are thinking about the same thing about those persons in the BVI. And that has been a serious impediment at the highest political level and definitely it has acted in an adverse manner against many persons who are fighting for integration. But what I may say is this, our geographic space is very small and as much human resource that we can have in this space it is going to be better for us as small islands.

Mr. Speaker, we have suffered in this sub-region from several levels of dislocation in terms of skill sets and that is what this integrative process is here to address. Mr. Speaker, it is in this vein that I would like to thank many persons who would have worked through the years. There are many leaders in the past who would have dedicated their life's work towards the integrative process. I would like to thank the Prime Minister of St Vincent and the Grenadines for doing an excellent job in charting many journeys forward in instances when many persons are seeing shadows of darkness. Mr. Speaker, regional integration, regionalism, the OECS and

CARICOM they are not the sexiest topic on a political platform. When you go on a political platform in Diamonds, Earlene Horne's square you do not really want sometimes to be speaking about some of these heavy issues but Mr. Speaker, the future of St Vincent and the Grenadines and the future of our region depends heavily on this integration process.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation is long overdue and it is really sad that whilst we are discussing such an important matter that the Opposition would have chosen such an important moment to stay away that says a great deal. Mr. Speaker, I wish the integration process whether it is at the sub-region level or at CARICOM; I wish it all the best and I intend to be a part of the way forward and I just want to challenge many of the young persons out there. It has always been my cry that if we are to build a modern St Vincent and the Grenadines there is a need for an exceptional cadre of multi-talented persons who are not only looking inward but looking regionally extra-regionally and internationally as to how we can develop our resources here at home. For far too long too many persons are writing in the newspapers only about events, so you pick up a newspaper and you see we are going to have a show tonight or a motorcar knock down someone last week. Yes that is part of the news but we have to start to think conceptually, we have to lift our game as a people. And these issues concerning regionalism, I am encouraging our young people and I am also encouraging myself to take a bigger bite at these very important matters. I am obliged. [Knocking on the desk]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Further debate? No further debate, Honourable Prime Minister.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Member, the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Industry for his very important contribution. Mr. Speaker, to show the extent to which regional integration forms part of what we are doing, last week two days of my time Thursday and Friday were taken up with the OECS. Saturday and Friday I was in Guyana for a special meeting of CARICOM, tomorrow and Thursday the Caribbean Development Bank. This morning I reported on British American Insurance Company, the strides which we are making to solve that problem is intractable, difficult as it is we are only making some headway because we are working together as an integrated whole, the same thing, policing, the OECS education programme which contributed so much to our Education Revolution all of these things: everything we do. We are doing something on climate change now, the OECS; the global warming does not know any boundaries between ourselves and Grenada or St Lucia. And we really here are a very small village and these are matters which we have to reflect upon.

Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to see that Members of the staff of RIDU are here, the Public Service Reform Unit because these are matters which touch and concern them. I see also the Chief Immigration Officer I believe he came in here, if I am not mistaken, if I saw correctly, but that is an area where a lot of work is going to be done or has to be done because they have to address the immigration issues and they have to know the difference between the OECS treatment, CARICOM and other people. It is the world in which we are now and we have to think about these things very seriously and most of all we have to remember the deep and abiding values: tried and tested values of our Caribbean civilization.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House ...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** It went to Select Committee right?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** No. this did not go to Select Committee, we just had the first reading.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Oh! Oh!

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I beg to move that this Honourable House resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider the Bill clause by clause.

**Question put and agreed to  
House Resolves into a Committee  
House resumes**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, I have the Honour to report that a Bill to give the force of law to the Revised Treaty of Basseterre establishing the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States Economic Union and the Protocol to Eastern Caribbean Economic Union in St Vincent and the Grenadines and for related matters has passed the Committee stage without amendment.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to give the force of law to the Revised Treaty of Basseterre establishing the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States Economic Union and the Protocol of Eastern Caribbean Union in St Vincent and the Grenadines be read a third time by title and pass.

**Question put and agreed to  
Bill read a third time by title and passed without amendments.**

4. Christian Pilgrim Faith Incorporation Bill, 2011.

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

5. Gospel Halls of Saint Vincent and The Grenadines, Incorporation Bill, 2011

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

6. Faith Pentecostal New Covenant Ministries Incorporation Bill, 2011.

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

7. Our Lady of Guadeloupe Home Incorporation Bill, 2011.

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

8. Green Hill Pentecostal Church Incorporation Bill, 2011.

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

9. St Peters Spiritual Baptist Church Incorporation Bill, 2011.

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

10. Good News Bible Church St Vincent and the Grenadines Incorporation Bill, 2011.

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

## **RESOLUTION**

### **REHABILITATION OF OFFENDERS (EXCLUSIONS) ORDER 2011**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move the Resolution which is standing in my name on the Order Paper Negative Resolution of this Honourable House requiring no debate:-

**WHEREAS**, by section 4 (4) (a) of the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act it is provided that the Minister may by Order make provisions as appears to him to be appropriate for excluding or modifying the application of any or all of the provisions of subsection (2) of section 4 of the Act in relation to questions put in the circumstances as may be specified in the Order;

**AND WHEREAS, BY SECTION 4 (4) (b)** of the said Act it is also provided that the Minister may by Order provide for the exceptions from the provisions of subsection (3) of section 4 of the Act as appears to him to be appropriate, in the cases or class of cases, and in relation to convictions of such a description, as may be specified in the Order;

**AND WHEREAS**, section 4 (4) provides further that such Order shall be subject to negative resolution of the House of Assembly;

**AND WHEREAS**, an Order was made and published in the Gazette on the 26<sup>th</sup> of April 2011;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that this Honourable House of Assembly do pass the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exclusions) Order 2011 by resolution.

Mr. Speaker, may I just simply say to draw to the attention to the Lawyers, all citizens and the police, this statutory rule and order No. (6), of 2011 which is made under my hand; making certain exclusions in respect of the Act itself and the Act, Mr. Speaker, and these Orders now be operationalised; so that we will have the provisions put in place for the rehabilitation of criminal offenders. So, some of the persons who for very minor matters they have had to bear the pain of not being able to get a job because they have a record they cannot get a visa because they have a record or they cannot get a police certificate that we can now have a police certificate even though you have certain minor offences. And the people at the CRO (Criminal Records Office) would have to bear all this in mind now. We have had some difficulties in that regard. [Applause] So Mr. Speaker, this very important law and piece of resolution.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member since no debate is required on this it is important that I read the operative part of it and it is:-

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, that this Honourable House of Assembly do pass the Rehabilitation of Offenders (Exclusions) Order 2011 by resolution

**Question put and agreed to  
Resolution passed**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, we are at the end of May and then, we know there is going to be ... if we were to give the Attorney General some time for some Bills she has we would have had to go close to Carnival, and I do not believe that we would have the listenership to the House which is necessary and desirable.

Accordingly, I beg to move that this Honourable House do stand adjourned until Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> July, at 10:00 a.m.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

**Question put and agreed to  
House adjourned at 4:25 p.m.  
Until Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> July, 10:00 a.m.**