

**No. 2**

**Tuesday**

**First Session**

**25th January, 2011**

**Ninth Parliament**

**SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

**THE**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**ADVANCE COPY**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

**CONTENTS**

**Tuesday 25th January 2011**

Prayers	5
Motion	5
Announcements by the Speaker	5
Appropriation Bill, 2011	6
Hon. Arnhim Eustace	6
Hon. Clayton Burgin	42
Hon. Elvis Charles	54
Dr. the Hon. Godwin Friday	63
Hon. Nigel Stephenson	73
Suspension	84

# **THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

## **OFFICIAL REPORT**

### **PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE SECOND 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.**

**FOURTH SITTING**

**25th JANUARY 2011**

#### **HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

The Honourable House of Assembly met at 9:15 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 Fredrick Stephenson	Member for South Windward
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade And Consumer Affairs Honourable Dr. Douglas Slater	Government Senator
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

# SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

## HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY 25<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2011

### PRAYERS

Honourable Mr. Speaker read the Prayers of the House.

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

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

### Question put and agreed to.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Madam Clerk, before we embark on the Orders of the Day, I wish to indicate that for the Honourable Members of this Honourable House and for the general public that the proceedings from Parliament are being carried to the public by several Media Houses and their internet services. We have been joined by API; channel 75; NBC Radio, 107.5; and the other frequencies FM, Star Radio, 98.3; and its other frequencies, WE FM Radio, 99.9; IK Television, channel 45.

Yesterday we had ... and I do not see them here today. We had what we call Caribbean Online Cinema through their live streaming via their website [www.betheretosee.com](http://www.betheretosee.com) and they carried the Honourable Prime Minister's presentation yesterday. I am not too sure if they are continuing today. I have not seen them as yet. But I wish to thank all those Media Houses who helped to enhance the democratic process here in the Honourable House of Assembly here helping us to bring all the proceedings to the public there so that they can follow and I am sure in some ways can appreciate what takes place in this Honourable House.

It is also incumbent upon each of us that we are, as it were, in the open public and; therefore it is for us to ensure that we continue to uphold the dignity of this Honourable House in the way we perform and such like. I wish to also show each Member that the democratic process as far as we can would be upheld here in this Honourable House. The debate, the response from the Honourable Prime Minister's presentation would be done by the Leader of the Opposition which traditional it is or whosoever he appoints to do that, but traditionally it has been done by him and in his presentation; he has four (4) hours to make do his response. We would deal with the other Members as we go along in terms of their own time and so on. Honourable Member for Central Kingstown.

**THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK:** Thank you for obliging me, Honourable Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, yesterday I wavered as to whether I should have made the request that I am making now with respect to the presentation of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Last year we had forty-three (43) interruptions,

Mr. Speaker. Yesterday we did the Honourable thing of obeying the House rules that a man would be listening in silence. I know we must have some cross talk but by and large it would be good if there could be some reciprocity that you know there is a fair amount of flow in the presentation of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and so we on this side had that sort of concern. We are making an application to you for some consideration. Thank you.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, as you know, once the Leader of the Opposition does not say anything that could be challenged in terms of its... the rules of the House, then by all rights according the rules he should have free flow in terms of his presentation. We do get accustomed to the ... by now, it is traditional, the cross talk is something that we very often have here not only in this Parliament but Parliaments throughout the world and I have looked at some Parliaments and as a matter of fact I have seen cases where shoes have been pelt across the Parliament House. I have seen water taken from a jug and threw at members of the House. We do not have that kind of ... and the Honourable Member for West Kingstown is also showing me that his paper weight. Are you indicating that you might use it? [Laughter]

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker is not a stone. [Laughter]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** So you know, we have ... And we have to come to get accustomed to these kinds of things because they happen in Parliaments all over the world and I do not want to call names. I can because I look at them from time to time. We see them on the BBC, we see them on CNN, we see them all over the place and you know when you come here of course it is a place for serious business, but we cannot because of the competitiveness of politics. We cannot avoid, we just cannot avoid sometimes these cross talks, but I would implore Members. I would implore Members to let us be reasonable, let us be reasonable in our various responses and so on.

I also would ask that Members be responsible in the things that you say while you are making your presentations because if statements are made and they cannot be proven then members may suffer the consequences of it. Members may suffer the consequences of it because if you are called upon to prove a statement that you have made and you cannot do so I may have to ask you to take your seats. So let us be very responsible in the things that we do. Let us try and eliminate as much as we can, the cross talk or maybe unnecessary shouting. But we have a beautiful Parliament here in St. Vincent [applause] beautiful Parliament. I must say that. Thank you.

Honourable Leader of the Opposition I think we are ready for him right, madam clerk. Yes, we are ready for you and you have (fours) 4 hours to make your presentation, starting at 9:22 a.m.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I begin this presentation this morning, Mr. Speaker, I am referring to a statement made by the Prime Minister at our last sitting in which by implication the New Democratic Party, the Opposition in this present House, the Members seem to be implicated in some relationship with those who are involved in drugs and money laundering in this country. Mr. Speaker, I want to make it absolutely clear that the New Democratic Party Members particularly those Members of the House here gathered are not involved with those persons who are as it was put, money

launderers and drug dealers. Mr. Speaker, I take very strong, the strongest objection to that implication being made about our Members.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to make it absolutely clear that the New Democratic Party is not involved in any action related to the assassination or the death of the Prime Minister of this country. Any such implication that we are involved in any attempt aimed at the Prime Minister's life real or imagined we clearly wish to disassociate ourselves from any such remarks. This is not the nature of the New Democratic Party. I think we have demonstrated to the people of this country that we have been law abiding and I really must say to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines how disturbed I was on hearing the Prime Minister's presentation and as his usual, he was very contemptuous when I sought to seek clarification on the matter. The New Democratic Party is not involved, Mr. Speaker, in any such matter.

Mr. Speaker, I turn my attention to the budget. Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister delivered his budget address to the Parliament and to the people of this country and I regard it, the budget that was presented as a shameless one and in some ways, Mr. Speaker, an insult to the intelligence to the people of this country. It is impractical in a major respect, inappropriate and designed to take this country into further difficulty. I nearly said misery. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, this is a horrid concoction coming after the general elections. It is like a sort of humpty dumpty solution to the problems faced by our country. Mr. Speaker, these concoctions have only one objective and that is to concentrate even more power into the hands of the Prime Minister while he rewards his Ministers with tokens.

Mr. Speaker, this imitation budget will really do nothing much for the level of unemployment in this country. To do nothing to improve the productivity of the underemployed and will do precious little for the many public servants who are employed; will still find it a bit difficult to live. Mr. Speaker, I know of the fear and I know of the victimisation that has taken place in the public service. I have heard many stories of the bellicose conduct and comments that were made to public servants. But in fact, Mr. Speaker, the public service of this country and the public servants of this country have a very important role particularly in terms of the implementation of Government policy. And it behoves us Mr. Speaker, to treat the public service and public servants with respect. There are those who may not function as you might like but there are ways to deal with that, Mr. Speaker. The last thing we should do, Mr. Speaker is to treat any of them with contempt.

Mr. Speaker, it is this same attitude, contempt for others indeed some contempt for the law also that has triggered the decision to bring those two new bills that we have on the Order Paper which will further erode the rights of citizens in this country and to do so with retroactive effect that cause us to have a demonstration last week. These bills, Mr. Speaker, must not pass this Honourable House and I call, Mr. Speaker, on all Vincentians to join the protest against the passage of these two bills. We live in a democracy. We wish our country to remain a democracy and we will stand against all those who try to deny or subvert the rights, the constitutional rights, the God given rights of the citizens of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and even elsewhere, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn most of my attention today to the state of the Vincentian economy and to examine it in some detail. We have just completed an election which I have been hearing, have been touted as one in which we seem now to have one of the strongest Government in the world with the one seat majority and a very

narrow difference in the popular vote. The fact remains, Mr. Speaker, is that this economy is in need of restructuring and while, Mr. Speaker, you have indicated that the rules of this Honourable House will give me up to four hours to speak, I am bolstered by the fact that I have a much larger number of people to speak at this present time and there may be no need for me to speak for four hours. [Laughter] Because unlike others, Mr. Speaker, I wish the responsibilities that have been given to individual speakers, I wish to see them perform. There are no encyclopedias and copy books on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I think all of us know whether we try to deny it or not that this economy is in need of restructuring. It requires a proper blend of stabilisation and structural policies to ensure that this country is placed on a sustainable and I want to stress, Mr. Speaker, a sustainable growth path and in the long term to bolster resilience to external shocks. Sometimes the policies, Mr. Speaker, in this regard tend to run counter to each other but it requires, Mr. Speaker, a balance to be effected between posterity measures and those which induce growth. We cannot in the one hand, Mr. Speaker, without having such a blend compare ourselves to other countries, boast and brag about our performance in relation to those but as soon as something goes wrong we either blame 9/11 or the internationally economic and financial situation. We have to choose, Mr. Speaker, a blend of such policies to give effect to the possibility of our country returning to sustainable growth. And Mr. Speaker, I intend to say a lot about that today, because I heard some comments during the debate and the estimates which tell me clearly that some of us have a long way to go in an understanding of the priorities and the instruments needed to attain sustainable economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, the rate of joblessness and I will produce figures, Mr. Speaker, to deal with this later on. The rate of joblessness and underemployment and that is something that we do not pay much attention to, Mr. Speaker, in this country, the question of underemployment, but that rate, Mr. Speaker, of joblessness and underemployment is at a very high level at this time. We do not have any economic growth; we have not had for the last two years and for 2010. It looks like we will be in the same boat. And in that event, Mr. Speaker, it is difficult to make any dent on unemployment. You know we can lay out a whole string of initiatives; we can say for instance we raise public assistance payments, nothing is wrong with that, but it has other implications which you also have to examine because coming with unemployment we also have the need to put more people on public assistance but while if we have growth the likelihood is that you will get some people off of public assistance, because growth will come from employment.

So Mr. Speaker, there needs to be a blend. This is the point I am trying to make. There needs to be a blend. Mr. Speaker, I believe that we can come up with a mix of policies to secure a level of spending appropriate to ensure that we have macro economic stability in St. Vincent and the Grenadines when at the same time we are structuring our public expenditure to allow a sustainable growth rate through productive investments in both the public and the private sectors.

Mr. Speaker, whether we like to admit it or not, the level of public spending has gotten totally out of control where the recurrent outflows exceeds the recurrent inflows. Our expenditure, Mr. Speaker, recurrent expenditure is increasing at a faster rate than our recurrent revenue. And you know, Mr. Speaker, and I really want to spend some time on this, people say you do not need to talk about these things, but I am going to speak about them and I am going to speak about them every time I have to talk about the economy and the public finances of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, it is really a simple matter. You cannot indefinitely spend more than you earn. At some point in time you are going to have a situation where you end up in a death trap because you have to borrow more and more to meet your expenditures. Mr. Speaker, the international classifications followed by IMF, World Bank and others accepted in the countries of the United Nations indicated clearly that a recurrent surplus is your revenue, minus your expenditure assuming the revenue is higher. And you know what our main categories of expenditure are; we have dealt with them in the Estimates. But when we say we have a surplus on recurrent we do not count the payments that we have to make on the principal of our debt. We do not count the amounts we put there for the sinking fund and if you look at the schedule, Mr. Speaker, the financial summary of the Estimates you will see that there is some \$71; \$72 million there to pay the principal on our debt and another \$6 million or so to pay the sinking fund.

But the international classification Mr. Speaker do not count those as payments when it defines a surplus or a deficit under the recurrent budget, but because Government accounting is under a cash basis, it is on a cash basis out of your revenue you have to pay the seventy something million. And this we must clearly understand, Mr. Speaker, because you can have a recurrent surplus in this case for 2011, let us say about \$25 million, that is just your revenue minus your expenditure excluding the sinking fund and the principal, but when you add the fact that you have to pay the principal on your debt and you have to pay the sinking fund, you have to have that additional amount of cash to meet those payments and those payments will come from your revenue.

So Mr. Speaker, in the case of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the Estimates for the year 2011 we have a cash deficit of \$105 million. That is the extent to which our cash is short to meet our expenses. I think that it is important, Mr. Speaker, to make this point and to make it repeatedly, because is ignored all the time and it is a very serious issue. For the first time last year, Mr. Speaker, in the history of this country the post independence history of St. Vincent and the Grenadines we had a situation in which when you exclude the amortisation of the sinking fund, you still had a deficit. That is the first time, Mr. Speaker, in the post independence history of St. Vincent and the Grenadines that that has happened and this year is the second time. So out of the thirty years or so that we have been independent these last two years we have had that sort of recurrent deficit. It did not happen before. In the first eight years of the ULP administration it did not happen. It did not happen in the NDP administration. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, the tax commission report on the OECS shows that St. Vincent and the Grenadines had a recurrent surplus for about twenty years of 5.32 percent of the gross domestic product, every year until last year and again we are back under the same position this year. No self-respecting Minister of Finance, Mr. Speaker, can be happy with such a state of affairs. And steps must be taken, Mr. Speaker, to deal with this matter. I know as in all matters of finance and economics you have competing needs. There are things you have to do, there are things that are necessary and you have to do them and there are some that might not be so necessary and you may have to do without them.

If you take a decision that I have to increase payments for poor relief, you take a decision but there is an implication and something else may have to suffer or you borrow more. Mr. Speaker, that is why I say you know that we have to get out of this trap and we have to take..., it does not take, it is not a one track business. It takes time, Mr. Speaker, to get your finances into some sort of balance. Mr. Speaker, you can borrow, you can tax, and you can run down the country's reserves which is the same as borrowing. You can sell Government's assets, you can accumulate arrears, hold back from paying bills and I will come to that, and of

course, Mr. Speaker, we can beg. This Government has done all, every one. But Mr. Speaker, we will have two consecutive years of negative growth. 2010 is likely to show the same picture, unemployment has increased. So what have we done? What have we achieved? What benefit has been brought to all the people of this country as a result of this present state of affairs.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I really hate to have to do this because to me, Mr. Speaker, it is so fundamental an issue that so early needs addressing that we have now gone into another year and another set of estimates, another budget that ignores that fundamental reality. And you know, Mr. Speaker, in addition to that you know although funds are scarce we are going into all sorts of areas of expenditure that need not be necessary, just making the situation worse. When we take \$4 million and we use it for the “Yes Vote” and it was not budgeted it makes our situation worse not better. That was not expenditure that was budgeted for.

Mr. Speaker, Eastern Caribbean Central Bank which is the financial institution; a very important financial institution and who has a major role in the regulation of our financial system and the regulation of our banks, the supervision of our banks and so on. That institution over the years has advised us. There have been successes and there have been some failures, but that is normal. But one thing I know about them, Mr. Speaker and this goes back even before I came to this Parliament. One thing I know about them is that they use a lot of diplomatic language when they want to give you bad news. They are not alone in this respect. Many multilateral institutions do that. They find a diplomatic way to tell you that things are not good. And Mr. Speaker, I am going to quote on page 54 of the ECCB economic and financial evaluation for the first half of 2010 in relation to St. Vincent and the Grenadines economy.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Are you going to make it a document of the House?

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Yes, but I have to use it several times in this presentation, I will make it afterwards. Mr. Speaker, starting on page 54, first point, first statement is;

**“St. Vincent and the Grenadines experienced a contraction in economic activity for the first half of 2010.”**

A plain statement which I think all of us know and that decline, Mr. Speaker, was largely attributed to the developments in the main economic sector, so essentially they are saying that our main economic sectors do not perform well and that led to a contraction in the economy, contraction of the economic activity and therefore no growth, rather negative growth.

Second one, Mr. Speaker, the pace of activity in the transport sector contracted. This assessment was informed by a decline in the road and air transport subsectors associated in part with declines in visitor arrivals, departures by air and the volume of imports. And Mr. Speaker, when we deal with the figures for 2010 and 2009 I will show the actual figures that can back up these statements.

The third one, Mr. Speaker, manufacturing output is estimated to have been below the level in the first 6 months of 2009. So they are talking about 2010 and saying manufacturing is even less than it was for the first six months of 2009. It goes on to say, output of rice, packaging, galvanised sheets fell by 34.9 percent, 52.2 percent and 21.5 percent respectively; very significant declines.

The next point; activity in the tourism sector is estimated to have contracted in the first six months of 2010 and when we get to that we will deal with it. Output in the Agricultural continues to decline, influenced by a contraction in the crops and fishing subsectors. In 2010 also the consumer price index rose, prices rose in comparison with the previous 6 months of the year before. Mr. Speaker, the merchandise trade deficit went up, all a bit slightly but deficit increased to \$388.2 million. And Mr. Speaker, it goes on to say the overall balance on the central government's fiscal accounts showed the deficit of \$32.5 million in the first half of 2010 compared with one of \$21.6 million in the corresponding period of 2009. The widening of the deficit stemmed from a combination of a fall in revenue, recurrent revenue and an increase in expenditure. The current account deteriorated resulting in a deficit of \$10.4 million in contrast to a surplus of \$8.6 million the year before.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, these are the words of the Central Bank. And I have listened to comments from the Prime Minister in which they said by prudent management you can convert those deficits to surplus and that in fact happened he said. But I will deal with that just now because that is a figment of the imagination. Mr. Speaker, as we go on with the Central Bank ...

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I am not disputing what my Honourable friend in quoting the Central Bank report for the first 6 months, I take issue with that what I presented in respect of the outturn where he is discussing the overall balance and also on the current account that what I said was a figment of my imagination. The actual outturn shows that there was a surplus on the current account of \$1.3 million and on the overall account for the government \$12.5. Now, I just wanted to say that it was not a figment of my imagination. I just make that point. I am not disputing and I will explain, but I just want to correct my friend.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Leader ...

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, it is a figment you know because anyone can get a surplus by not spending and what happen the private sector has owed \$30 million in debt and if that had been paid we would be in a deficit in the financial outturn. That is the point I am making but I will get to that later on. It is a figment.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** But it is not a figment of my imagination.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** It is a figment

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

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Of something [laughter]. The point I am making is that you do not have no real surplus when you hold back payments of debts to persons. If you had paid them when due you would have a deficit. That is what the figment is. [Interjection] Well maybe I should not say imagination, I should say something else.

Mr. Speaker, as you can see, the economic indicators are all trending down. All of them are trending downwards. You can come out and say, oh, the world's economic situation is responsible for that. The fact remains, they are trending downwards and the bank goes on, Mr. Speaker, and I quote again, and this is the thirteenth point that they are making based on the outturn for the first half of 2010 and expected developments

for the latter half of this year. Remember they are writing as of June 2010. They expect economic output in St. Vincent and the Grenadines overall to decline in 2010.

Fourteen declining construction activity is likely to continue in the rest of the year. Fifteen, in the manufacturing sector the adverse effect of falling demand is likely to continue to constrain production. The prospects in the Tourism Industry for stayover visitor arrivals are uncertain. Agricultural output is projected to decline and they were projecting this before we knew about Tomas, but Tomas made more than certain that that took place. And Central government's fiscal operations are projected to yield a large overall deficit as a current account deficit widely. Interestingly, Mr. Speaker, the last statement is capital expenditure is expected to contract partly due to the slow pace of the inflow of funds.

Mr. Speaker, you know all of the countries in the OECS and other countries in the world, they face ... They face the same basically the same external circumstances. Everybody faces economic and financial crisis globally and all of the situations are not the same. For example, Mr. Speaker, in the case of Dominica, its economy grew in the first half of 2010 and the prospects were according to the central bank were positive for the remainder of the year. They faced the same circumstances like ours. In the case of Grenada, Mr. Speaker, the economy expanded in the first half of the year but the bank felt that they would contract in the second half. So they are then not like us either. In St. Kitts Nevis, while there was contraction in the first half of the year the bank said that they were uncertain about the prospects for the whole year and in St. Lucia Mr. Speaker, performance were stable for the first half of the year and they felt their prospects at the end of the year were uncertain.

Of the nations, in the present nations of the OECS therefore in the banks view they were positive that only St. Vincent and Antigua will contract for the entire period of 2010. What do we have in common? What do we have in common with Antigua, Mr. Speaker, mismanagement. Mr. Speaker, we need jobs in this country and I think everybody, nobody can argue with that. We need jobs. We need plenty jobs. (Interjection) more than that. The rate that they are going down, we need more than that. We need..., and I am coming to that you know. Semblance of stability. A stimulus for private sector investment. I saw some attempt been made yesterday and I am happy for the private sector that they are beginning to get a little bit of recognition. I will come to that too. Mr. Speaker, I want to bring to the attention of this Parliament, we all have these challenges in our OECS countries and those to us you know are the best countries to compare with because of the similarity in our circumstances in these islands, open island economies, small economies, vulnerable economies. But I want to make, Mr. Speaker... I want to make a comparison with some of the budget presentations that were already made this year by the OECS countries and compare that with what we heard yesterday and wonder why despite of our similarities, the budget presentations are so different. We presented a deficit but deficit in the current account, deficit on a cash basis on the same current account \$105 million. In the budget for Dominica, Mr. Speaker, coming out of Dominica, they are projecting for this fiscal year a budget with a recurrent surplus of \$31.4 million excluding amortisation of \$25.9 million.

So even if you add in the amortisation they are going to end up according to their projections with a surplus of \$5.5 million. That is their projections for their budget, 2010, 2011. In Grenada, the recent budget programmed the recurrent surplus of \$17.9 million. This is a country, Mr. Speaker, where you do not pay income tax unless you earn over \$5000. Where we have our 18 or 19 or 20,000 limit when we do not pay tax, in Grenada it is

60,000. Start paying income tax when your income exceeds 60,000. And even in that case Mr. Speaker, they are projecting for their budget a current surplus. Compare that you know. Let us say that we are 20,000.

Mr. Speaker, what I found very interesting was the Minister of Finance's statement and I want to quote him, Mr. Speaker, to the people of Grenada and I quote:

**“In the bosom of this crisis lies the opportunity to transform Grenada into a dynamic, prosperous and stable democracy, capable of sustaining a high quality of life for its entire people.”**

To do this we must answer a basic question; what have we learnt from this crisis? If we are paying attention, several lessons are evident; first, we must be truthful about our current reality. I cannot say that about St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Mr. Speaker. We must be truthful; if things are bad, we say they are bad. We must be truthful about our current reality. Secondly we must dig deep for the root cause. Third we must position Grenada for the long haul; there is no short term solution. Finally, we must not waste this crisis. Mr. Speaker, I wish the government here could learn that it does not pay to hide the truth, the livelihoods of our people and the long-term growth and development of this country. That is what is at stake. A good Doctor, it is said, you cannot treat a patient properly until the illness is diagnosed. So we cannot talk about the cusp of economic take-off when we know that they are not there. We must deal with the truth that is evident from the statistics before us and then take action accordingly.

Mr. Speaker, in the case of St. Kitts Nevis in their budget they projected a recurrent surplus excluding an amount of an addition of \$2.9 million. In the case of St. Lucia they brought a balanced, recurrent budget which from all indications included their amortisation. Mr. Speaker again, the only countries which have presented budgets with recurrent deficits are St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Antigua. Be very consistent. The global financial crisis, Mr. Speaker, affects all of us and in some ways you know, Mr. Speaker, we are less integrated into the global economies in some of these islands you know because our tourism sector is less than 2 percent of GDP when in many other countries is far greater than that. So their exposure Mr. Speaker, their exposure to the world economy is often greater than ours because of the size they are more integrated. Mr. Speaker, I know that every single one of us in this Honourable House is serious about wanting to see St. Vincent grow. There is nobody, Mr. Speaker, sitting here who would not want that. But just let us recognise our current reality and come with our proposals, Mr. Speaker, to deal with those realities. We cannot hide. You can have all sorts of concoctions but the reality is that you cannot hide because in the end it would reflect in the unemployment. It would reflect in the state of our economy and our people will say that we have failed them. [Interjection] you did not want to recognise that in 1998 you know, you want to recognise that now. Mr. Speaker ...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, please.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, you know when it comes now to Mr. Speaker, the sustainability of the budget that was presented yesterday, maybe a trap was set to the NDP and the NDP did not win. Mr. Speaker, the NCB is no longer owned by the Government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and that has an implication, Mr. Speaker, for the sustainability of the budget. You no longer have an NCB that you go to, which you own, and try and get what you want, you no longer have that and any Minister of Finance in the future from now on is going to have more difficulty raising funds domestically. And

Mr. Speaker, I want to say something about the other banks operating in this country. There are some other ones here, FCIB, you have Scotia, and you have RBTT. Last year, the Government was trying to borrow \$30 million from those banks and they turned it down. The Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines was trying to borrow \$30 million and the banks turned it down. Mr. Speaker, I will repeat it again.

Mr. Speaker, I know that will cause a little cross talking, \$30 million; not a large sum for those three banks but they turned it down. Mr. Speaker, I wonder what ... [interjection] that is all right, your life goes on, some people own going down. Mr. Speaker, you know we talk about credit rating. Some years ago in this Honourable House you know, the Prime Minister was happy with a B2 credit rating, not recognising that it was fourteen tiers down from the top and I am saying if international banks cannot lend you \$30 million, it says something about your lack of creditworthiness as a government. That is a small sum of money rightfully speaking. When it comes, Mr. Speaker, what are we going to see? NCB now owns majority shareholding by a different institution, what is going to be their attitude. You think that they are going to operate any different from the other banks that are here. I do not think so. In that context, Mr. Speaker, I raise the point; we have got to watch it with this Government and the NIS when they look for alternative sources of finance to carry out the business of this Government.

All of us will come to the NIS later. We had the luxury, Mr. Speaker, over many years of being able to approach the NCB as owners, as owners with the Board of Directors appointed by Governments and to get almost everything we want. That is not so anymore, Mr. Speaker, and therefore the Government will have to seek some alternative sources of domestic financing and the NIS being sound actuarially be one of those sources but I want to say to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in that regard, watch your NIS. The money is not Government's money, it is the people's money and it should be used for purposes as set out in the agreement.

Mr. Speaker, I want to relate to another matter at this time. I have already spoken and I have already said what I have to say about the deficit, but you know we have been having a number of instances, Mr. Speaker, in this country and we are beginning to have audit reports pointing to waste and fraud in Government departments. I listened to the Prime Minister yesterday and I expect that we will see action, Mr. Speaker, during this year on some of that. We cannot afford any waste; we cannot afford any fraud either. Anytime those things happen it is a crime against the taxpayers in this country. People are robbed of needed supplies and services, farmers for instance, school children, who need furniture and teaching aids, the sick who cannot get basic medicines at the hospital. And I heard some glowing reports of the hospital yesterday, made my head raise, it is a lucky think I do not have any hair. [Laughter] the public has had to endure huge potholes in the road and overgrown bushes which hit them in their faces as they commute. They call them Ralph curtains.

Mr. Speaker, you know, the lack of sustainability in this budget is very clear. Mr. Speaker, for every dollar of revenue collected, in previous years I used to handle this matter just by dealing with the debt, the public debt and emoluments and show you what percentage of Government revenue had to be used just to pay those two. I am going to go a little further down the road this time, Mr. Speaker. For every dollar of revenue collected, Mr. Speaker, the Government spends about 89 percent in inescapable expenditure commitment. Eighty-nine cents out of every dollar has to be spent on wages and salaries which you must pay, debt service which you must pay,

transfers and subsidy which you must pay except you want the institutions to collapse, because a lot of it goes to state enterprises and regional institutions.

So when you take all of that into account you have but 11 cents, Mr. Speaker, to do everything else. And when your revenue and expenditure do not balance, you do not have 11 cents and in our case, the revenue is falling. So you have to use..., you need money to fix roads so you have the other capital project. I heard the Minister talking about retention money. I want to know where it is. Buying medicine at the hospital, provide chalk for the schools, buy brooms for the sanitation department, uniforms for the police, the nurses and so on; all of those coming out of the 11 cents. You think you can pay for all of those out of the 11 cents in the dollar. You cannot and that is why the budget is not sustainable, Mr. Speaker. That is why it is not sustainability because we do not have the recurrent revenue to cover the recurrent expenditure. And when you speak about that people want to deride you. People want to treat you with derision in this Parliament. And it is a plain fundamental reality that we have to face and if we do not face it in 2010 or 2011 we will face it in 2012 or 2013. All right man. You know, there is no back door to deal with this you know.

Mr. Speaker, in those circumstances and I heard a lot of private sectors talk yesterday you know and I had a laugh when I was hearing it. I do not think Chavez would like it but I laughed when I heard it. I said... you are the Prime Minister of this country. Mr. Speaker, I had a lot of talk with the private sector yesterday, a lot of talk. Mr. Speaker, yes the figure shows that the Government owes some money to the private sector, a good set of millions to the private sector, some say 30 million. Mr. Speaker, [interjection] everything affects you. The last time I asked you here, you said 29.4 million; that is not far from thirty. [Interjection] you still have a lot of payables there in the estimates. [Interjection] you still have a lot of payers; you have thirty million dollars in payables in the estimates for 2011. Look at the debt schedule, their own debt schedule tells you that.

Mr. Speaker, we have had a lot of expenditure in this year in 2010 in relation to elections and so forth. This was not budgeted for, so I do not know what the true figure is yet in terms of expenditure that we will see later. Mr. Speaker, what happens when you do not pay the private sector what is owing to them? What you are doing is using the private sector debt that you owe to the private sector to finance part of the deficit. That is what you are doing because if you had paid it to the private sector, if you had paid it what would happen. The surplus you say you have at the end would not exist. And when the private sector, Mr. Speaker, is not paid then you have certain problems for them; their cost will increase, overdraft levels will likely to increase. Overdraft is at high interest rates, eleven, twelve, thirteen, fourteen percent.

The economy is not doing well so their sales are down. You want them to lay off people, the same poor people you say you are trying to help. What if they cannot get the debts owing to them paid in millions of dollars it is going to affect their ability to employ. So while on the one hand you are going to say, well I have increased payments here, I put more people on public assistance you are also putting people out of jobs when you are not paying the private sector.

So which one are we going for? It is a very serious issue. [Interjection] that is your job to do, the point I am trying to make, Mr. Speaker, is the longer we continue on that basis we are going to face a situation where the deficit that we say we need causes a different set of problems, not for the Government but for the private sector. So the private sector becomes a lender and it's financing Governments operations. Mr. Speaker, I want to find

out. I have a basic question to ask and I ask it of the Honourable Prime Minister and I expect during his round up it is a matter he would give consideration. I would like the Prime Minister to explain, how is it possible to have a recurrent deficit and programme capital expenditure to be financed in revenue? If you have a recurrent deficit by definition you have no money to put to capital, so you cannot even pay your recurrent expenditure. So how is it possible to project the current deficit but still project local revenue for your capital; that makes sense?

Mr. Speaker, I want to talk a little bit more now about the ECCB. Mr. Speaker, much has happened in this country over the years and sometimes, Mr. Speaker, while I respect the operations of the ECCB I find now, Mr. Speaker, there is some slippage. That institution has served us well and I expect it, Mr. Speaker, to continue to serve us well. But I believe that there is some laxity creeping in and this has to be addressed and I speak here, Mr. Speaker, particularly in relation to the supervision of our banking institutions. Mr. Speaker, much has been said in this country about the NCB and its sale. We have heard, numerous, statements in this regard from all parts of our society. The fact remains is that it has been..., the majority shareholding has been sold. Mr. Speaker, why was it sold? We have been told that it was doing well. We have always been told that it was doing well. So why did we sell it? If it is doing well, Mr. Speaker, why did we sell it? Why did the Government sell it?

Mr. Speaker, the fact remains is that the NCB was in decline. Its profits were going down and gone down drastically in 2009 and Mr. Speaker, ten Governments Statutory Corporations and as well as the Central Government had loans there and they were not being properly serviced. So the bank was not getting its interest from which its income and its profits are made. So Mr. Speaker, the liquidity of the bank came under pressure. I cannot find it now you know, but Mr. Speaker, I had a quotation from my budget reply last year in which I was pointing out that under the present arrangements, arrangements then that the liquidity in the NCB was becoming an increasing problem and that trend cannot continue.

Mr. Speaker, the situation was indeed bad, it was worst than I thought at the time. And then we find that the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines had to take a loan from the Caribbean Development Bank of \$100 million to try and clear up some of the loans and overdraft at the NCB; \$100 million.

Apart from the airport, Mr. Speaker, I do not know of many more projects in St. Vincent and the Grenadines that need \$100 million in loan financing. That is a significant amount of money for this country of ours. And Mr. Speaker, we had to borrow that money. I should not say we because I did not help to borrow that. [Interjection] well I tend to talk like a Vincentian. Mr. Speaker, what I want to say about that is that you had to borrow that. It remains a payment to be made by the Government but it was used to clear the loans on the NCB which we now do not own. So the people of this country will continue to pay that loan and the bank will have no obligation thereof in terms of that loan. And it was a condition precedent to disbursement that you have to get that loan. Let us agree to sell. The CDB was not allowing, under the terms and conditions of the loan, they are not allowing disbursement of those monies until the majority shareholding of the bank was sold. So they made it a condition precedent and therefore that is what was done. We borrow the \$100 million, we dealt with the loans and then we sold the bank for \$42 million. That is what happened.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, my concern is, where was the supervisory function of the ECCB during all this time before the bank reached to that stage. Then the ECCB, I think is quarterly supervision visits then they see that situation developing and talk to the bank about it or to the Government about it. Did that happen, I do not know. Well I see that as a failure of supervision unless the Prime Minister can say that they told them that and they did not bother about it. That is the function of the ECCB, a major function of the ECCB. And I believe that if they are looking at the banks on a regular basis and they see those things, they will have to comment about it. But this is where we are man, Mr. Speaker. The bank has gone, but I am talking here now, I want to know what the supervisors of the bank did in the last couple of years before the bank reached to that state. What sort of advice did they proffer to the Government or to the bank itself? And if they did nothing, what happened.

Mr. Speaker, I want to raise another matter now. I have kept quiet about it for some time; although I raised it several times in the past. I am going to raise it again here today and I am going to say a little more about it than I said in the past. And Mr. Speaker, I refer here to the US\$1 million which was deposited in the National Commercial Bank sometime ago. I have asked in this Parliament and outside of this Parliament and many people in this country have asked the question, what happened, what is the source of funding of the US\$1 million that was deposited in the National Commercial Bank. The person rejected, then we deposited.

I was told you know, in no uncertain terms in the most contemptuous manner by the Prime Minister that he *ain't* obliged to answer no question about that. He, the Minister of Finance is not obliged to answer. Mr. Speaker, whether the Prime Minister likes it or not I was elected to this Parliament by the people of East Kingstown. My colleagues supported me as Opposition Leader [laughter] and in that capacity I come to this Parliament and I ask the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of this country that US\$1 million in cash was deposited in the NCB; where it came from, what is the source? I expect to hear the chorus now nah, sing. I expect to hear the chorus. Mr. Speaker, I ask the question again today of the Honourable Prime Minister. [Interjection] I know that was coming to. Mr. Speaker, I ask the question again, what is the source of funding of the US\$1 million in cash that was deposited at the National Commercial Bank? I do not expect an answer today. I am going to ask some more questions of the Prime Minister in relation to that very same matter.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of people who had to pay the price for violating our laws in terms of money, money launderers among other things you call them. Small people and big people and I am asking a question here of the government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the first question I want to ask, Mr. Speaker, when the funds came to St. Vincent and the Grenadines where were they? Were they at the Prime Minister's residence that is question number 1? If and when they left the residence where did they go? Did they go to the Ministry of Finance? Who in the Ministry of Finance took the cash to the NCB? When the NCB recognised that something was wrong they asked for someone to come and take back the cash. Who came to take it back? When the cash..., was the cash returned to the Ministry of Finance? Was there a meeting at that time to make a determination of how this matter should be dealt with and I wish to know whether anybody from the Central Bank attended that meeting. What happened then to the cash? Was it escorted or taken out of this country? If so, where did it go? Did it go to the Central Bank? If so who took it out? How did it get back to the Accountant General's account? Again, what is the source of that US\$1 million? Was there a suspicious activity report filed by the NCB or the FIU? Did the ECCB know the source of the funds? All these are questions I will like to get the answer to and I am sure that many people ... [Interjection] I do not know about

the imagination. Time and time will tell. Mr. Speaker, it does not have to be me you know. Time will tell. These questions are not asked idly. I ask them seriously because there is another episode to come, so I ask. Mr. Speaker, I want now Mr. Speaker and this is in detail, those who do not like it well I have to do it, it is part of my job.

Mr. Speaker, I want now, Mr. Speaker, and this is in detail, those who do not like it, well, I have to do it, it is part of my job. Mr. Speaker, I want to now begin to look in detail, Mr. Speaker, at 2009. I want to look at output, prices, wages and employment, the government fiscal operations. I also want to look a little bit on bananas, on the agriculture sector as a whole because representative Patel will deal with that. I want to look at Tourism a little and I want to look, Mr. Speaker, in particular at what is likely and what is needed in relation to Tourism. I heard the Prime Minister giving some statements on that yesterday. Yes, Mr. Speaker, 2009.

Mr. Speaker, I have already said in this presentation that we had three years including 2010 of negative growth in our economy. I have already said that when you listen to this Government, you believe that all is well. I have already said that the ECCB has said that we have in three years consecutive of negative growth. I want to look at 2009 because I am not seeing the ECCB report, Economic and Financial Evaluation for 2010. We are only seeing up to the period June 2010. And I want to deal with each specific sector, Mr. Speaker, in terms of output, what they produce for St. Vincent and the Grenadines. How they contributed to the Gross Domestic Product of this country, sector by sector.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to start first the construction. For several years now, Mr. Speaker, value added, that is the contribution to GDP. Value added in construction was the lead sector, doing well, the lead sector in terms of our economy. In 2009 the construction sector decreased by 8.5 percent; quite a substantial drop in the construction sector. It had grown the year before, that is 2009, by 1.4 percent and there have been years on record prior to that, Mr. Speaker, when the construction sector grew very, very well. But in 2009 it fell by 8.5 percent and that has been our lead sector for quite sometime. And its share of the Gross Domestic Product has now fallen. It is not as big in our GDP as it used to be. It used to be at 11 percent of GDP which is big, came from construction, now we are down close to ten. But construction as you know, Mr. Speaker, has a lot of other spinoffs. A lot of areas are impacted by our construction sector, but the fall off we are told by the Central Bank Mr. Speaker, occurred because investment by both the Government and the private sector in construction declined because of tight liquidity conditions in the economy. And one of the impacts, Mr. Speaker, of the decline in construction is that there was a decline in the imports of building materials. The link is obvious. If you are doing less construction, less building materials are being imported. And when less building materials are being imported the Government gets less revenue. So it has its impacts. And when one looks at the banks the portfolio of bank loans, loans for construction also fell. So the bank's business is also affected. The reason why I am deciding to go through this detail, Mr. Speaker, is because it is important that we understand that when something happens it has other effects and those other effects can do harm to our economy, can do harm to Government revenue and therefore to Government's financing. But that is not all, Mr. Speaker, the same construction sector depends on stone locally, so the quarrying sub-sector declined. And mining, they say we have mining here. Yeah we mine Rabacca sand. So that would also decline. The trucks that deliver those materials to the various construction sites will have less work, so transport decline. And mining and quarrying I am told by the central bank declined by the same 8.5 percent as construction. So when you look at just that one

activity it shows a chain reaction. A chain reaction is there which tells you that when one of these things happens it has several negative effects on the economy.

Now you have to expect that whenever you have a decline in economic activity that the businesses, wholesale and retail will also suffer and they are a major ... Mr. Speaker, this is important, the wholesale and retail trade is a major contributor to the GDP in this country you know. It is one of the largest contributor to GDP in this country 17.5 percent of our GDP comes from wholesale and retail trade in St. Vincent and the Grenadines in 2009; 17.5 percent. And I told you already Tourism was less than 2 percent. I gave that information to indicate clearly how important the wholesale and retail sector is to the economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. But I hear the Prime Minister cursing people in the private sector... [Interjection] you stop? You bring Food City to close them down. Is you who say so. Who say so, me? Mr. Speaker ...

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, if my Honourable friend would give way may I ...

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** I always give way man, in the interest of parliamentary democracy. [Laughter]

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I know he may say that on the political platform but my friend knows that what I said was simply this, and I want to build up Food City in 2001 because I did not want to see us eating and drinking only what two families import for us to eat and drink and at the price they want us to pay to eat and drink. I never talked about closing down any private sector and never ever and nobody can find any statement where I have said that. You know, I mean ... In fact Mr. Speaker those families will tell you that they have made more money under this Government than under the NDP. [Applause]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Before... Let us ... Let me get this one straight because as I cautioned at the beginning, let us speak things that we can verify because you can very well be asked to verify it and there can be a consequence if I am not satisfied with your verification. Thank you. .... It is all right.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I could be like that picong, Mr. Speaker ... but ... that; an untrue picong.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** .... being realistic. It is not .... All right Sir, you have not lost any time.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, [Interjection] you not beating me over my head. You cannot beat me over my head in the first case. Not over my head [Laughter].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, let us continue the debate.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, well I was not asked to withdraw, I was told it was picong. Mine was not ... Mr. Speaker ...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I do not think you want me to ask you to withdraw. It was not requested that you withdraw a statement and apologise.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** I am saying that you did not, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** No. That is what I am saying. I normally follow the quest of the member. If the member thinks that it is offensive and he wants it withdrawn, but if he decides to pass it off as a picong, I have no problem with that, no difficulty. Honourable Member for Central Kingstown, you understand.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** There is no other way to pass it off, Sir. [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, I want to go on a little bit about value-added in the commercial, wholesale and retail sector, also a decline by 6.5 percent and remember, Mr. Speaker, we are saying that that sector takes 17.5 percent of our GDP. So when that declines by 6.5 percent you are talking about something substantial. The manufacturing sector, Mr. Speaker, value added also decreased again by 5.6 percent, Mr. Speaker. There were some difficulties in relation to bear rice and feed with significant percentage reductions 34, 23 and 14 percent but flour went up by 1 percent. The price index, the retail price index, Mr. Speaker, fell and that is good, from 8.7 percent to 1.6 percent and this was attributed to fallen oil prices especially in the first half of the year.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I want the public to note this. I want the Parliament to note this; the contraction in economic activity particularly in construction and tourism led to a reduction of employment in these sectors. Mr. Speaker, I am quoting here again, the Central Bank Report 2009. I want to repeat it.

“The contraction in the economic activity particularly in construction and tourism led to a reduction of employment in these sectors of 7.9 percent in construction and 11.5 percent in tourism. Unemployment rose. This was reflected in shortened work weeks and also in layoffs, some of them would have been temporary. Mr. Speaker, based on the NIS information, the total number of employees, and this again is from the Central Bank you know. We always talk about how we growing so much and employment going up based on .... This is in the Central Bank report, based on NIS information and the Prime Minister always used this as a proxy for employment in all of his speeches. The number of active employees declined by 8.9 percent in 2009.

Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat that because we are told all the time about how the employment is going up. The Central Bank is saying in 2009 the number of active employees, which is the proxy the Prime Minister uses it all the time, declined by 8.9 percent and of that 8.9 percent; 34 percent of them, 35 percent of them were workers in the public sector who were no longer actively employed. So the others would have been from the private and cooperative sectors. And that is why I make the point, Mr. Speaker, about the private sector debt because if they have a financial squeeze, they too will layoff and from what we see here, Mr. Speaker, that 65 percent of the layoffs came from the private and cooperative sector compared to 35 percent from the public sector. I want to go further on this matter, Mr. Speaker, because we hear it all the time how employment has been going up and up and up. Mr. Speaker, between 2009 and 2010 that is up to the end of last year the number of active employees in the NIS fell from 37,599 to 32,218, a decline of 5,321 persons.

Mr. Speaker, this is a country where we say that employment is doing well, that poverty has declined but at the same time we are saying that the number of people who would have to go on public assistance is increasing. If employment is increasing we would have the opposite effect and I am saying, Mr. Speaker, these figures were large, even you discount them by 50 percent, Mr. Speaker, you are still talking about over 2000 peoples less working. So what are we talking about when we talk about employment in St. Vincent and the Grenadines? What are we talking about? We are talking about? We are talking about significant numbers of people who are no longer active under the NIS. There are no contributions coming from them, so they are not working or they

are working less time, and you talk about the one year period, 2009 to 2010. And you know in a way Mr. Speaker, when you consider as many as 37,599 people being NIS contributors and then you lose 5,000, I do not know for how long. The NIS income, the contribution income falls and when we come to the NIS we will deal with that, Mr. Speaker, but we are talking about 5,321 less people who were actively involved in NIS over a one year period yet we have all this talk about how we are doing so well; well where? That is what we have ... that is the reality of the St. Vincent condition today and that is why I say this budget does not address that reality; it does not. Who would imagine that?

The Prime Minister spoke about the NIS yesterday. In previous years he would tell you how much active employees were there and how jobs gone up by this and gone up by that but he spoke about the NIS yesterday, he did not mention anything about that. Well the people know now.

Mr. Speaker, I turn now to the Government fiscal operations and give you the figures as quoted by the Central Bank of this country. And you notice the Central bank never, Mr. Speaker, never published an economic and financial evaluation of any economy in this region without giving you the statistical backup and they never present a report without telling you about the fiscal operations of the Government. For obvious reasons because those operations impact greatly on what happens on the economy. And here is what they have to say:

The Finances of the Government in 2009 resulted in an overall deficit of \$49 million. Overall deficit; even that I am not too worried about as an overall deficit, what about that of the \$11 million of the previous year? This is a big increase in the deficit. These results largely from the current account; that is the recurrent budget which we speak about all the time, Mr. Speaker. The primary deficit of \$50.8 million compared with a surplus of \$34 million before. So you gone from a surplus of \$34 million to a deficit. Grants receives went up. You got \$58 million in grants. Capital expenditure, when this goes back to the employment figures, capital expenditure fell by 19 percent in 2009 and it says that the reason for that is foreign funds were limited. This year a current account deficit of \$2.8 million of GDP was realised in 2009 in contrast to a surplus of \$58.2 million the year before. What a transformation and you do not want me to talk about the deficit in this Parliament here. What about ..... in the estimates just rehashing the same thing over and over again. I am rehashing it because it is important to the economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines that is why I am rehashing it. You cannot jump or fall in that kind of level. You had a surplus of \$58.2 million in a single year it gone to a deficit of \$2.8 million. That is \$55 million change in a single year on the negative side but we must not speak about it. I am tired hearing you talk about deficit.

Mr. Speaker, the deficit was attributed to an increase in expenditure in addition to a decline in revenue. I plead the point before revenue is going down, expenditure is going up and something has to give. Current expenditure increase by 7.95 percent to \$465 million. Growth in recurrent expenditure result of increase in all of the different areas of expenditure. The outlays and transfers and subsidies; let me explain again, transfers and subsidies. We have an item of recurrent expenditure where money is used to help the finance of the Tourism Authority, BRAGSA, and University of the West Indies and so on and you transfer monies to them via recurrent expenditure line. Those expanded by 38.2 percent; \$33.1 million and I believe that a great part of that was used to meet some of the social services ... , social safety net programmes for the poor of the country which are necessary.

Expenditure and personal emoluments and I want to make a point on this you know. The international community regards wages and salaries should not, they feel they should not go much past 50 percent of your total expenditure. What you do here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines I have a disagreement with that standard set by the ... I think it could be a little higher in the case of St. Vincent and the Grenadines because we are a multi-island state and therefore there is a certain amount of duplication of infrastructure. We have several ports for instance; we have port in Canouan, Mayreau and so on where in other countries will only have one port. So I agree that in our case there is probably need to look at that figure and make it a little higher; I do not have a problem with that. But what we are also doing, Mr. Speaker, is in our transfers. So like the Tourism Authority and BRAGSA we put in the wages and salaries there too; so you do not see them reflected in wages and salaries in the current expenditure. So when you look at it, we could end up with anything like 60 percent going for wages and salaries and this is something we have to examine and keep control of.

Mr. Speaker, goods and services; well we had an argument over that, Mr. Speaker. Well I better say debate to use the parliamentary language. We had a debate about this, Mr. Speaker, in the estimates and I am told that the reason why goods and services are going down is that certain things were transferred to other institutions but some of these transfers seem to have taken place before the institutions started to operate because when you look at the dates, the dates do not coincide and therefore I do not believe the figure that is there. BRAGSA was not operating..., Tourism Authority was not operating in 2009; it was not a full-fledged institution and if you look at the specific accountabilities under tourism for 2009 it begins to talk then about operationalising the Tourism Authority and as in fact I understand, a lot of the staff is gone. So Mr. Speaker, we have to look at every one of those items.

I turn now, Mr. Speaker, we will see that recurrent revenue also declined by 5.5 percent that is a decline by \$25.4 million and all categories of revenue were down.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** If my friend would give way. I was just hearing something while I was inside...

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** You are taking this give way thing too much man.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** No. I want to make a correction, Mr. Speaker, as to what he said. Mr. Speaker, my Honourable friend he began by quoting and I knew he was wrong and ... but he went on as I went inside, as though to emphasise it, about the NIS data. He quotes the Central Bank. Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that I know that between '08 and '09 the number of active employees went up. The figure he is quoting in respect of 2010, he ought to know it is a reportage issue depending on when you get the report in 2010. The employers would submit, Mr. Speaker, the monetary sums but would not necessarily submit the names. So when the NIS are doing the reconciliations they would say, the sums of monies which we receive have gone up but we do not see the data reflected in terms of the persons. Could you please reconcile this for me and it would take some time. It is not the first time; I myself have had that difficulty.

So if you see a figure of a difference of \$5,000 it would be such an appalling number and that is why the Honourable Leader of the Opposition can suspect that something is wrong and from his knowledge being in charge of the NIS and the Chairman, he say let us even discount it by 50 percent. All I want to say is that the

data which he presented is not correct and that there is a reporting issue and he knows it in terms of what is presented. And the reason why he quoted; I am submitting the ECCB, he could have easily found this out by going to the NIS to see whether there is a reported problem because he acknowledged that he needs to discount it perhaps by even 50 percent. I just want to make that. I could actually get the NIS people to provide all the data for this Honourable House by the time I come to wind up but I just want to say so it would not stand. If he wishes to stand on what he says as accurate in the light of what I have said, well it is up to him. All I can do is to say in my position as Minister of Finance what I know to be the facts.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, I would have liked the Prime Minister to have put that qualification when the data was going up and he was reporting it. Mr. Speaker, I did not by accident discount it and that is why I use such a high discount figure and the Prime Minister knows that. And I am saying that if you discount it by 50 percent, you are still talking about over 2,000 people, did not I say that. [Interjection] that is precisely the reason. I could have left it at that. [Interjection] yeah, you reply. Make me lose me page now.

Mr. Speaker, we were dealing with the recurrent revenue 2009. It says here, Mr. Speaker, that it was \$462 million a decline by 5.5 Percent compared to the year before, as percent of GDP a declined by 26 percent compared to the previous year. So generally speaking, throughout the revenue areas, Mr. Speaker, we see taxes and domestic goods and services fell by 6.8 percent which is a fall of \$16.8 million and that came about because it was 7.3 percent or 11.0 million decreased in collections from the VAT. So some collections from the VAT have been going down also, Mr. Speaker and a 35 percent decline in the yield from stamp duties. So Stamp duties were .... All these are indications of a failing economy, Mr. Speaker.

Taxes of international trade fell by 4.4 percent reflecting a further reduction in receipts, a decline from import duties consistent with the fall of imports but the receipts; they say people ain't paying their taxes but the only thing that gone up is the receipt from income taxes; went up by .2 percent reflecting the collections from corporation tax. So the same people that you owe, you are making sure you collect all your tax you know. The company tax rate was reduced by the Government from 32.5 percent to 30 percent in 2009 and that is a good decision and even non-tax revenue, Mr. Speaker fell by 16.6 percent, non-tax revenue fell by 16.6 percent.

On the capital account, Mr. Speaker, revenue fell; well this is not surprising, revenue fell by 90 percent largely to the decline in land sales. Capital expenses decreased by 19 percent as some projects were completed and capital grants increased by 29 percent. These are some of the figures relating, Mr. Speaker, for revenue and expenditure for the year 2009.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say a little bit about bananas, not much because Agriculture will be dealt with by Honourable Representative for North Leeward. Mr. Speaker, the Banana Industry continues its downward slide during 2010 plagued by poor quality, low production levels, disease and drought conditions during the earlier months of the year; I cannot blame the Government for that. The performance of the Ministry of Agriculture was a mixed one, it responded pretty quickly to the Tomas storm and provided \$400 per acre plus urea plus some fertiliser to farmers and I think that was done pretty promptly and I congratulate the Ministry on that [applause]. I am glad you can clap for that. [Laughter] The programme for aerial spraying of bananas however has been below the minimum standards in terms of the frequency of the cycles of black Sigatoka and the

Ministry's failure to reorder the necessary chemicals on a timely basis because they did not have the money to pay.

The control and the aerial spraying for Black Sigatoka is crucial and I know, Mr. Speaker, that the Ministry knows that but there has been a financial problem. Lack of funding, Mr. Speaker and all of this has to do with deficit you know. Lack of funding, Mr. Speaker, affected the Ministry in some of its performances under the banana Act. Even the new number of banana cultivars which were to be imported from Israel had to be reduced since the Ministry failed to pay its portion and only national Fairtrade organisation paid its share. Consequently a number of farmers have not received their suckles to date although funds were spent in preparing their fields, but there was a severe drought during 2010 and exports obviously would have fallen. As a matter of fact, it went so bad at one week, Mr. Speaker, that it went down to 62 tons of bananas being shifted from St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, the travel allowances for the extension staff for banana were not paid by the Government and the crucial ailments; they provide vital services to the farmers and need to be in the fields assisting the farmers in the identification, eradication of diseases particularly in relation to the same Sigatoka and WIN farmers were there to force to pay their travel allowances to these officers. When it comes to the income support, Mr. Speaker, income support was paid in November and that was along with, as you know, they had the \$400 per acre and the urea and the fertiliser. The income support as I understand it was offered and calculated in the average of about 147 weeks that is from January 2008 to week 43 of 2010 and it was paid in time for elections, no income support has been paid since, but the Prime Minister indicated yesterday when he made his presentation that \$3 million will be allocated for further payments on income support. Most of the difficulty with the industry, Mr. Speaker, has to do with factors, many factors outside the control of the Government and I just want to point out that in 2010 up to October exports were only 5,400 tons up to October at a value of \$6 million plus. Of course we had the drought in the early part of the year and then the latter part of the year we had Tomas. This compared with 11,490 tons the year before at about \$16 million. [Interjection] yeah, internationally. So Mr. Speaker, that is an area which will be further developed when the representative for North Leeward speaks.

Mr. Speaker ... Mr. Speaker, I want to spend a little time on Tourism. The mission statement, Mr. Speaker, of the Ministry of Tourism states: "to advance the positioning of St. Vincent and the Grenadines as a diverse globally competitive tourism destination through effective planning, development, management marketing and sustainable use of natural resources and heritage sites and attractions of the country." I think this is a very good mission statement, Mr. Speaker. Tourism despite, you know hotels and restaurants in our figures are used as the proxy for tourism and tourism is our biggest foreign exchange earner but it only accounts for about 2 percent of Gross Domestic Product in this country but it has its impact on other areas of the economy. Agriculture for instance about 8.9 percent of Gross Domestic Product and as we heard a little while ago, retail and wholesale trade is 17.5 percent, so when you look at tourism it appears to be very small in relation to its GDP contribution, but it is our biggest foreign exchange honour. It is our biggest foreign exchange earner and therefore a crucially important sector of the economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The result indicators for tourism in 2009 were as follows: we projected stayover visitors at 8 percent ... increase that is what we expected to get instead we got a decline of 9.9 percent. Same day visitors we projected that we

will get a 6 percent increase, what we got was a 14.3 percent decline. We projected the odd visitors will increase by 15 percent; they increased by 3 percent. We projected cruise ship visitors would go up by 30 percent; they went up by 35 percent. I do not know, Mr. Speaker, what is the status of the Tourism Authority today in terms of its status where they have all their staff and so forth. I know there were some resignations, I do not know whether there were replacements.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at this, because of its contributions to foreign exchange earnings, Mr. Speaker, we really have to pay a lot of attention to this sector. Total visitor arrivals and this is a very important factor which I think needs consideration. Total visitor arrivals in 2008 were 249,000 a few hundreds in addition and in 2009 it went up to 283,000. So there is an increase of 11.8 percent in the number of visitors that came to St. Vincent and the Grenadines in the year 2009. But the tourists who came here in 2009 spent, and this is what we have to look at, Mr. Speaker, they spent \$243 million in our economy. It also came in 2009 when you had an 11 percent increase as compared with 2008 when you had a smaller figure and you earn \$259 million. This is a point we have raised over and over again, Mr. Speaker, in these debates in Parliaments. So you have a big increase in arrivals, \$33,000 I think it is but you earn \$16 million less. You earn \$16 million less and the figure earned, Mr. Speaker, in 2009 is even lower than it was four, five years ago but we went past \$300 million.

It went to \$385 million I think about two, three years ago, Mr. Speaker, in earnings from tourism. So here you have an increase in numbers, but a decline in the amount of money that we earned. It was in 2006, Mr. Speaker, that we had \$305.8 million in earnings and that is \$62 million more than we earned in 2009, because, the cause, Mr. Speaker, has to do with the decrease in the stayover visitors. Stayover visitors declined overall by 9.9 percent, but stayover visitors is where we make some money as compared to say cruise ship visitors. They come to our country, they part take in all facilities, they pay hotel bills and so on and in fact, what you earn from the stayover visitors it far exceeds what you get from the cruise ships. Well when you look at the arrivals from the major markets from whom we get our tourists, for stayover visitors arrivals from the USA that is a big market for us, it declined by 15.1 percent, arrivals from Canada declined by 11.7 percent, arrivals from the Caribbean declined by 3.5 percent and arrivals from other countries declined by 10 percent.

So here are the people who provide us with the most money and they are all in decline. But the cruise ship which has done very well during the same year and allowed us to have 33,000 more passengers although that grew, our income still declined. So obviously stayover visitors are critical to our earnings and therefore I will except that the policy position of the Government and the strategies they adopted would be aimed specifically as seemed what you can do particularly about stayover visitors. I do not know, is it our promotion, has our promotion advertising did what they are supposed to do? Do we need to reorganize that, do we need to change those persons who are involved in promotion particularly those from overseas? What do we need to do? And that is the question I am sure that would be of concern to the Minister of Tourism. It is all good and so on to have increase in visitors but you do not want any decreases in visitor expenditure in the country. We have spent money, and I support that project, in fixing the tourism sites. I expect those kinds of things to have some impact on our stay over visitors and visitors generally, but I feel somehow that part of it has to do with our marketing approach or marketing strategy or promotion strategy, I do not know all the details about what it is, but I am not familiar with all the details of how the marketing is done, I see references to it in the result indicators, but I

believe that matter has to be taken in hand very, very seriously to increase in any significant way our stayover visitors arrivals.

Mr. Speaker, also in 2009 we had a decline when it came to excursionist that also declined by 14.3 percent and that is an area that needs looking into. Cruise ships did very well but the contribution of revenue was not hot and when it comes to yachts, Mr. Speaker, there was a 3 percent increase in yachts, yachts arrivals. Mr. Speaker, St. Vincent has the best yachting waters in this part of the world. I do not think anybody denies that and we are dominant in the yachting sector in the OECS, but recently we have lost ground in St. Lucia and I do not understand why and Grenada, I really do not understand why. Well I could probably understand Grenada even more than St. Lucia because Grenada has other areas like Carriacou and Petit Martinique and so on, but I really do not have a fix, Mr. Speaker, as to why we are losing business. I have heard all sorts of arguments, I have heard crime is a problem, molestation of yachtsmen, theft from yachts, I have heard all of those various complaints Mr. Speaker on the question of yachts, but yachting is something you can make a lot of money per head of. And there is need Mr. Speaker for review of the strategy in relation to bringing yachts, more and more yachtsmen to St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

If my memory serves me correctly I think at one stage we got sixty something percent of the yacht business from the OECS and we have declined and we need, Mr. Speaker, we need to spend some more energy addressing this issue, because when it comes to yachts and stayover visitors there is where the money is. There is no question about that; there is no gainsaying about it, Mr. Speaker and we have to look seriously at our marketing. I do not know what is the exact promotion budget now because the tourism authority is under BRAGSA, I do not know...., I know \$14 million went to the tourism authority. I do not know how much of that is for promotion, I do not know the figures. But I am saying something has to be done and I look at the website you have there for tourism and I see at about \$250,000 hits and it did not generate one visitor for the country. It did not generate a single visitor for this country.

So I believe somehow our promotion in advertising is a area that needs much further attention right now and I recognise that the Prime Minister highlighted that area in his presentation yesterday, the Foreign Exchange Earnings are so critical to our economy that we have to do everything possible, everything possible, Mr. Speaker, to deal with that issue.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at the first half of 2010 in relation to tourism, we see that the decline in the stayover visitors continues, up to June 2010. It is down by another 2.3 percent as compared with the first half of the year before and in this time in 2010 as at that time of the year, he also had the decline in cruise ships also. I understand the St. Vincent has been removed from the itinerary for some of the cruise ship companies, I do not know why they would not come here anymore and that contributed to the decline in cruise ships when you had an increase of 35 percent just the year before and this needs examination, Mr. Speaker. You grew by 35 percent one year and the next year during half year you are down by minus 9 percent. Something is wrong and I mean we need to hone in on the factors, Mr. Speaker, that are affecting this important sector of our economy. And then even some visitors from the Caribbean, Mr. Speaker, again in 2010 the first half we have another decline 9.6 percent and that is after carnival and so on has passed. I understand that LIAT fares and so on might have a hand in that, but I hope that LIAT is going to get some competition just now.

Mr. Speaker, Canada, US show some increase; 8 percent, but the United Kingdom which tends to have longer staying visitors still have the decline of 5.6 percent for the first half of 2010. A lot of the UK people tend to stay four weeks, six weeks and so on and that is very important and here we have the decline may be due to economic conditions in the UK. There are a lot of factors which have to be taken into account, with this in the air, Mr. Speaker, where I think we should not spare any effort whatsoever, they should not spare any effort whatsoever to try and boost our tourism around those particularly in relation to cruise ship visitors, not cruise ship, to stayover visitors and yacht visitors, there is no question about it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to look at the capital. Mr. Speaker, I want to spend a little time looking at the capital and as I look at the Estimates before the year 2011. Excuse me, Mr. Speaker, I have a little mix up here with my papers. Okay, the Estimates for the year 2011, Mr. Speaker, the financial summary for the budget 2011 indicates that the total budget is \$786.4 million comprised of recurrent expenditure of \$609 million and capital about \$176 million. The budget is 14 percent lower than the budget of the year before 2010 which was \$913.4 million a decline of about \$126 million. I said it in the Estimates debate, Mr. Speaker and I repeat it today, it is really not much point talking about record budgets unless we have records pending backed by record revenue, because you have gone from \$913 million last year to \$786 million budget this year. So that has to do with the outturn and there is no point boasting it was the largest budget ever if there is no associated outturn which shows it is the largest.

Mr. Speaker, the recurrent budget of 2011, \$609 million is almost the same as the previous year \$610 million. There is no change; \$300,000 is the only change in terms of the totals on the recurrent budget that is just about .05 percent of the decrease. Mr. Speaker, the capital budget has declined from \$303 million to \$176 million and that was a significant decline. The Prime Minister has advanced some reasons for the decline. You know the capital budget is very important, Mr. Speaker, in one; one assesses the possibility of returning to positive growth. This one does not show any great potential in that regard.

On the revenue side, Mr. Speaker, we have tax revenue of \$464 million that is 3.1 percent above the approved Estimates of \$450 million in 2010. So while non-tax revenue \$40.6 million has declined and is 22 percent lower, non-tax revenue and that is significantly less than what we have the year before, but Mr. Speaker, the revenue is not sufficient, the recurrent revenue is not sufficient to meet the recurrent expenditure. We find ourselves coming back to that all the time, Mr. Speaker, [interjection] yes that is a good way to put it. I learn that phase in Walveroo the dance cannot pay for the light and that is what it is right [interjection] you ain't run in that constituency, Charmers is not in Walveroo [interjection] no, no, no, no, you are trying to make a fraudulent link [laughter] well I will give it for your information who run there is close to the plan, Charmers is in Roseau. I am surprised you have made such an elementary mistake [laughter] [interjection] your head still hurting you.

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

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** No, they are not interrupting me [laughter] [interjection] this is not a laughing matter you know [interjection] [laughter] while they are having some jokes inside here, people are outside, more of them getting unemployed.

Mr. Speaker, what we have here I said it before, let me say it again. The recurrent revenue Senator Francis, Minister of Transport and Works...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, Honourable, the \$27.4 million deficit you have to hear it again, because it is there, because that is the difference between recurrent revenue and expenditure without dealing with amortisation and the sinking fund. Let me repeat it again, Mr. Speaker, because in your presentation [interjection] yes that is not important. So Mr. Speaker, we have that deficit and then we have a cash deficit of \$105 million on the recurrent budget, this compares with the \$108 million last year deficit, about the same thing.

Mr. Speaker, last year as it is again this year, the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines came to this Parliament with a recurrent deficit and when one looks at the expenditures, the major categories of expenditure where it is in 2010 was 237.6 million where it is in 2011 \$243.6 million and increase of \$6 million or 2.5 percent. Mr. Speaker, pension and I think NIS has gone up from \$39 million in 2010 to \$46 million in 2011 an increase of 6.8 percent, \$6.8 million or 17.3 percent that is in fact the biggest increase percentage terms in the recurrent expenditure budget for 2011. Other transfers, Mr. Speaker, have gone under \$6.3 million in 2010 to \$113.9 million in 2011 a difference or an increase of some \$7.6 million or 7.1 percent. Interest payments, Mr. Speaker, have declined by 13.6 percent from \$61.8 million to \$53.5 million a decrease of \$8.3 million or 13.6 percent and goods and services have decreased also from \$77.9 million to \$75.3 million. So that makes a total of \$532 million for recurrent expenditure without counting amortization and sinking fund. When you add the amortization of \$71.7 million for 2011 which is down from \$75.2 million and the sinking fund, you have a total of \$607 million for under recurrent expenditure.

Let us look at some of these, Mr. Speaker, some of these categories of expenditure. This increase of 2.5 percent for wages and salaries will just probably carry increments. It does not have sufficient funds to carry the deferred as I understand the Prime Minister to be saying in his budget presentation last night there is an agreement to defer the 3 percent salary increase for later on in the year and that two of the Public Sector Unions have agreed, the police are yet to state their position. It will appear to me therefore that if that is met one will have increase, maybe by a special warrant the amount of money that has been allocated to wages and salaries for 2011.

Pension and NIS Mr. Speaker, from \$39 million to \$46 million, a 17 percent increase, this is a quite a large increase and I had a question here, is this an indication that the NIS Pension Contributions are going to go up as you have been predicting for some time? It is that a person will have to increase their monthly payments both to employers and employees by a significant sum. And Mr. Speaker, below that we have the other brackets and I am coming back to NIS later, includes BRAGSA and Tourism Authority, those are covered under other transfers. We do not know the details of that breakdown, but there is also as I have indicated an increase of \$6 million there.

Mr. Speaker, it is still not clear for me looking at the debt schedule. I saw all the reasons for the reduction in interest payments since the debt schedule covers the period to the 30<sup>th</sup> September and not for the whole year and

the CDB \$100 million loan would have been disbursed after September 30<sup>th</sup> but I believe, however, that can be explained. Then we have discussed the reduction in goods and services, which I will get to see for a third time and when you look at the overall situation, one has to look and see clearly that the revenue is not there to meet the expenditure.

So I turn my attention, Mr. Speaker, to the capital. Mr. Speaker, there is a decline of the capital budget from \$303.3 million to \$176.6 million a drop of about \$126 million or 42 percent and the Prime Minister has given an indication of the projects that were dropped that caused this decline. And then you have environmental protection, you have general public services which will get \$10.2 million down from the \$16.1 million in 2010, so it is down by \$5.9 million; you have public order and safety, Mr. Speaker, which is down from \$34 million to \$11 million a drop of about \$22.9 million; then you have the economic affairs, Mr. Speaker, that has fallen from \$172 million to \$87 million a drop of about \$85 million; then you have environmental protection which has fallen from \$2.9 million to \$2.5 million; then you have housing and community activities which has fallen from \$22.2 million to \$10.9 million; and then you have health which was fallen from \$19 million to \$13.5 million a drop of \$5.5 million; and they have recreation and culture, a fall from \$373.7 million to \$3 million, a fall of just about \$.7 million; education, the only item increase from \$26 million to \$33 million an increase of \$7.1 million; and social protection which has fallen from \$5.7 million to \$4.6 million.

Mr. Speaker, there is something I have to do every year and I have to do it again this year and I make no apology for doing so, none whatsoever, because when I look at the financial summary in the Estimates, Mr. Speaker, I see the following. I have already pointed out, Mr. Speaker, that we have cash expenditure of \$609 million and we have revenue of \$504 million, so we have a gap in the recurrent of \$105 million. When I look at the capital receipts, Mr. Speaker, that is the amount of money to fund the capital programme and probably some of the activities in the recurrent expenditure where we have a deficit, I see that we have \$281 million in capital receipts made up as follows: grants, \$54.6 million; external loans, \$52.9 million; local loans, \$33.4 million; capital revenue, \$25 million; and other receipts \$115.7 million. All of those categories, Mr. Speaker are lower than the previous year except for a small increase under other receipts.

Mr. Speaker, this is an area you know, this is an area in our budget, our Estimates in this country which is of great concern. I have spoken about it on several occasions in this House. It is designed to fool the public that we have a balanced budget and the Government knows full well, Mr. Speaker, that this is so. It is time to tell the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines the truth in this matter. We had it last year and we come back to it again this year. Mr. Speaker, (let me see if I find it here) all of us know in this Parliament, (well I do not know for the new Members of Parliament) but those of us who were here before, all of us know full well, Mr. Speaker, that we cannot achieve the level of capital receipts that is put in here as \$115 million in order the balance the budget. All of us know that, Mr. Speaker, who has been here year after year, it is not possible given the history of capital receipts in this country; it is not possible, Mr. Speaker, to collect \$115 million. That is the largest item, other receipts is the largest item, Mr. Speaker, under our capital receipts and if were collecting it we would have been able to balance the budget, but we know, Mr. Speaker, that we cannot collect it. We have gone through this in the House all the time, so why are we putting it there? You are putting it there to get an arithmetic balance, but it is not real, it has no basis in reality [interjection] man stick to your medicine.

Mr. Speaker, it has no basis in reality. We have put down here the grand figure of \$115 million that we expect to collect under other receipts and we know, all of us know, Mr. Speaker, I have been a Minister of Finance too, all of us know it is not collectable. So why are we putting it here to fool the public of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, I am going to show you some data, present some data, Mr. Speaker, based on the history of other receipts, that same item from 2001 and even prior to 2001, Mr. Speaker, we were not collecting nearly as much as one was collecting although these figures were smaller in those days.

Mr. Speaker, \$115.7 million is needed if you want to wipe off the \$105 million for the deficit and we are not going to get it. In 2001, Mr. Speaker, the Government put in the Estimates that he will collect or is expected to collect \$16.9 million from other receipts, the actual amount collected was zero. I repeat, Mr. Speaker, and I am going to spend a little time on this because it is a fiction, I would not call it a figment of the imagination, this one is a fiction, in 2002 they put in \$9.3 million in the Estimates for 2002 and what they collected \$398,000 out of \$9.3 million. In 2003 he increased the figure in the Estimates to \$14.062 million and he collected \$640,000 not even \$1 million. In 2004 they put in \$9.886 million, how much you collected \$1,340,000 million; remember this year you know, we are looking for \$115 million in that area. In 2005, Mr. Speaker, he raised it from \$9 million to \$48 million, \$48 million are expected, how you collected \$3 million, you are short by \$45 million. In 2006 you put in \$55 million, collected \$2.4 million and so the story goes on year after year. There is nowhere in this world, Mr. Speaker, nowhere in this world you will be able to collect \$115.7 million from other receipts. Our history has shown it. All of that includes sale of Government property and things of that sort. There is no where we are going to collect it, but he is using it to balance a real deficit of \$105 million. That deficit is real, because you are expected to pay salaries and wages and so forth. So why is this, why is this, just to balance? The reality of it, is that there is a false impression to the Parliament, to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and therefore, when it comes to deal with the issues of employment and income and paying the debt of the private sector and so forth you cannot do it, Mr. Speaker, because you are not going to collect that revenue. So why are we repeating it year after year? At least if you put in \$4 million or \$5 million I will understand that and you get a \$2 million or so I would not have no problem, but when you put \$115 million, the highest you reached since 2001 is \$3 million, what suddenly going to jump from \$3 million to \$115 million? The average collections over the period under this item, Mr. Speaker, is \$2.8 million, the average collection per year. That is what it is, that is what the average is and now you are telling me you are going to collect, all of a sudden in 2011, you are going to collect \$115 million? That is what I mean by humpty dumpty you know.

Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the Minister of Finance, I know he knows it. What are we trying to do? You are creating a fictional balancing item which has no chance of being realised except you want to sell the financial complex. It really is ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. What is it we are trying to do to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines? What are we trying to do them? They have put us here to look after their business. They do not expect us to be miracle makers. They do not expect the world to change in the morning, but they expect the truth. They expect that what we say to them they can take it as the truth. And it is dangerous, Mr. Speaker, this year they are presenting a balanced budget based on fiction is dangerous for the economy. It makes people think that everything is okay, finances are all right and we can move on. Is not that so? And we have to stop it, we have to stop that, Mr. Speaker, in this Honourable House. We should not

present Estimates; we are already in a situation Mr. Speaker, where after 30 years of independence it is only two years that we have a recurrent deficit and are we complicating it further.

History will not judge us well. It is wrong to do, it is fooling the public, it should not happen. I speak on this with passion, Mr. Speaker, because I know it is a problem and I know what problems it causes [applause]. I know what problems it causes, Mr. Speaker and we got to stop it. If we want to produce a balanced budget, then we must do it truthfully. I did not mind if it is a small sum. But when we talk about \$115 million and only once we have reached to \$3 million in the last 10 years, how you suddenly going to tell the public that you are raising another \$112 million [interjection] that is true, the bank sell for \$42 million and it could not even cover that. It is a deadly serious matter. There are people there outside, Mr. Speaker, who put us there. What we are trying to fool them for? You know there is a feeling that the public does not understand this, so it does not matter. You can put down whatever figure there is, but we by virtue have been elected by the people of this country, have an obligation to explain. I do not expect everybody in St. Vincent and the Grenadines to understand that but I know the Parliaments understand it and I therefore expect that we will come clean, if it means having a smaller budget, then so be it.

And Mr. Speaker, the other thing, when you put capital figures and show you could finance them, you are sending a false message to the whole community including business people, Mr. Speaker, because they based on your projections arrange their businesses accordingly. If a businessman sees several capital projects and so on to be financed and so on, he figure, well they going to bring in more cement, I going to order that. But when you do not have the money to do it and leave the impression that you can carry out the capital budget, you are fooling not only the public, but business people.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, I know you are speaking on this matter with passion and I do not want to steal your thunder but you know there is a thing about tedious repetition and you keep repeating this thing for the whole while.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Okay Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I find it necessary in repeating it because it is made of as a joke during this Estimates debate.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** But I need to draw your attention to the rules of the House.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** I agree with you, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Sir.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Well I am repeating it for emphasis.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Okay.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Because people are playing the fool with this matter, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker that is why I say this budget is not sustainable. It is unsustainable, Mr. Speaker, when you have those kinds of statistical tricks.

Mr. Speaker, I want to look a little further at the capital in the Estimates under the following, Tourism, Transport and Works, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Agriculture, I want to look at a few items there, Mr. Speaker. First of all, Mr. Speaker, Tourism, pages 539 and 540 in the Estimates, earlier when dealing with the Tourism Sector, Mr. Speaker, I made reference to the stayover arrivals and 539 of the result indicators covering the period 2009 and 2010, we made a forecast for stayover arrivals in 2010 and there is also a forecast for arrivals in 2011. Last year, Mr. Speaker, when I looked at the forecast for arrivals in 2010 I did not find them ambitious and I said so, Mr. Speaker. The forecast was that stay over arrivals will increase by 1 percent that is what we set out to achieve a 1 percent increase in stayover arrivals when they had already declined. It did not seem that we had much confidence that we could resolve the issues surrounding the stayover business and therefore regret put a very low projection of 1 percent, but maybe they knew what they were doing, because in reality stayover arrivals declined by 5 percent.

They put a forecast, Mr. Speaker, for same day arrivals again 1 percent, we still on 539, page 539, there was in an increase to 3.2 percent that is good. They put a forecast for the auto arrivals of 5 percent and then it went to 8.2 percent, they put a cruise arrival at 5 percent and we had a minus 30.5 percent for 2010. These are the actual based on the result indicators and forecast done by the Ministry of Tourism. But still you see again, Mr. Speaker and we discussed this earlier, we still have a problem with stayover arrivals and there are some improvements as far as yachts are concerned overall for the 2010. So again, Mr. Speaker, the need for examination, a closer examination of what are the factors impacting on our stayover arrival business which is the most lucrative part of the industry. It is also instructive, Mr. Speaker, to look at the table below to see that we projected for the USA .5 percent but achieved 15.5 percent, this is a breakdown by area of destination where the stayover arrivals come from. We projected an increase of only half of a percent but the other 15.5 percent increased in the USA. Canada we project 3 percent and got 22.7 percent increase in arrivals. UK, Europe we project 1 percent and we got a minus 4.5 percent increase and for the Caribbean we projected 2.5 percent and got a decrease of 15.7 percent.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Just to remind you or to inform you that you have 1 hour remaining.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Okay, Mr. Speaker, I been here longer than I expected already. Mr. Speaker, again I raise the issue and the Prime Minister in his presentation did raise that issue on the question of the arrivals. Now we have some extremes in relation to the targets we forecast and what we achieved. It leaves me with the feeling, Mr. Speaker, that we need to spend more time on the mechanism, methodology whatever it is to it in terms of the forecasting, because they are too varied. I do not expect them to be absolutely consistent, but they are far too varied in terms of the outcomes that you have. You project .5 you get 15, you project 3, you get 27 they are too extreme and I believe that the Ministry can look at these matters.

Mr. Speaker, on page 540, I referred to this earlier, we have a website there where people can check on our country, they get the information on hotels and so forth with a view to them coming and visit us and you will see that the forecast for 2010 that you will expect to get 2,050 hits on the website and in fact you got 2,061 hits on the website, you are expected to get 1,250 hits or information request, you got 1,021. You projected 1,000 you know, you got 1,021 that is what I am talking about, the methodology in terms of our forecast. Something is wrong and then, Mr. Speaker, the reservations, those who made a booking because of the information they

received, we said we wanted a 120 people to book a room and none booked a room in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. So Mr. Speaker, I am concerned about this area of forecasting.

If we may turn now, Mr. Speaker, to page 553 I look again there at the bottom of that page, Mr. Speaker, on 553 from what we have there, Mr. Speaker, with the Tourism Authority doing its forecast for 2011 and they projecting a stay over increase of a 3 percent, same day 1 percent, yacht 5 percent and cruise 5 percent. They will know on what this is based and I am looking to see, Mr. Speaker, what the outcome of that is going to be, because with the respect of stayover which has been in the declined and they are now projecting a 3 percent increase and saying there 1 percent.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say a word on page 555 and I go back to the website; they just simply put back the figures for the year before. You know, I wonder how seriously, Mr. Speaker, is there no change in the circumstances, you have already predicting that in the forecast for stayover arrivals and the others, you are going to have some increases, but they put back the same forecast for the website, identical. I do not get the impression, Mr. Speaker, that the exercise is serious in that regard. I may be wrong, but I do not get that impression. I think a lot more time has to be spent on matters of this sort.

Mr. Speaker, I turn to the Ministry of Transport and Works, page 403 in the Estimates. Mr. Speaker, design and rehabilitate nine miles of the Leeward Highway from the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital to Layou and achieve a 60 percent completion date completion by December 2010 by last December and what I see there is that they are still evaluating the consultants for the project. On what basis was the forecast made in the first place? We are expecting 60 percent of completion of construction by December and in 2011 as you evaluate, you just reach the stage where you are evaluating consultants. So what was the basis of that indicator? We should have had 60 percent of the nine miles completed, but we have not even started. What is the reason? It is funds, what is the reason, is it funds?

I look at the next one, well you know the history of this that is the 1,800 feet at Vigie, they said it will be completed this year, but what you have, Mr. Speaker, in these two major result indicators, you just have a reputation in 2011. Then they talk, Mr. Speaker, that finalised designs for the third phase of the cross-country road, the same page 403, on all the preparatory work for commencement of construction, the result indicator at the end of the year is that they are still reviewing the consultants assessment and then you say works on the preparation of the environmental impact assessment is delayed due to lack of funding. So what it is you are evaluating?

Mr. Speaker, this is not taken with any seriousness. You are talking about the capital works of this country. You say the designs are on the review by the impact assessment and then works are delayed due to lack of funding that is because from the \$115 million. You look at page 404, Mr. Speaker, on the top, upgrade 15,000 feet of farm feeder roads and access roads to tourism sites, both of this... I look at this as a productive project in terms of its intention to improve the tourism projects and to include feeder roads to farmers, both of which will have beneficial effects. You were supposed to upgrade them, at the end of the year what you have seen? Design 60 percent complete for the feeder roads, contract awarded for the construction of the tourism sites and no works due to lack of funding. You know, Mr. Speaker, that is where the deficit comes into play. There is

where the \$115 million comes into play when you are seeing the results indicators. No works due to lack of funding.

Then you complete the electrical inspection of all Government buildings, no work undertaken. I do not know. There are so many areas of no work undertaken. Why did we put them down in the result indicators? Did you provide financing for them? But it is part of the deficit financing, so you cannot do them. Mr. Speaker, I looked at 406 and 407, well we saw the results of the property tax in the budget yesterday.

Mr. Speaker, continue to regularize vending operations in Kingstown. Why was this not done? I do not know. I see some statements here which I do not understand. Then they come to the main bus works of the terminal by June 1<sup>st</sup> commence work, do renovation at the terminal last year June, what they are saying, no work was done on the main bus terminal as no funds were released for this project. No funds again. That is the \$115 million again. So Mr. Speaker, we see the impacts of these things.

Mr. Speaker, I go to the Ministry of Finance on page 128. Mr. Speaker, yesterday we looked at what we have now on the top of page 128 when the Prime Minister made the presentation on the situation in relation to BAICO and I agree with Romans 1 – 4 and last night we had a report on plan B which I will come to later, but I agree with what is down there. On pages..., the Ministry of Agriculture..., well I must say in this year the result indicators for the Ministry of Agriculture on pages 321 to 371; fifty pages of result indicators for the Ministry of Agriculture. That compares very productive, it compares with 14 last year, so I am expecting a lot, Mr. Speaker, from the Ministry of Agriculture this year. A lot, a lot, you see a lot here in relation to non-banana agriculture and so forth and they are so voluminous, Mr. Speaker, it will be easy to measure performance when it comes to the end of the year.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Maybe I could edit them this year.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Oh, you edited them previously [laughter]. I see. Well Mr. Speaker, it is a very impressive list here and based on what I know of performance so far, I wish them well. I wish them well, Mr. Speaker.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I thought you are going to be a gentleman..., you going to give up this job.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Give up what?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** What you doing there?

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** I am only speaking on the budget.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** No I am talking about being in here nah..., with the agriculture over there.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** I will deal with that when I am ready to deal with it.

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

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** The people of East Kingstown have not given any indication that they want to get rid of me. They give me a triple increase [applause].

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I notice some of you and your side may have been clapping enthusiastically..., in front your face.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** That is all right.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Let us continue the debate, Honourable Member.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** You have so many enthusiastic claps you getting too [laughter].

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

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Yes. Everything comes back to papa like them two Bills you are trying to bring in this House here.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Let us continue the debate Honourable Member.

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

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You are 45 minutes away.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, I turn my attention now to the public debt.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** To the?

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Public debt.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Oh, oh, sorry.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** And Mr. Speaker, what I need here is some clarifications from the Minister of Finance when he gives his reply. Mr. Speaker, we have a situation here, I want some clarifications, Mr. Speaker. When one looks at the public debt schedule which is on pages...,

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** 629 is that it?

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** 6 what? 629, yes, one sees, Mr. Speaker, that the public debt of St. Vincent and the Grenadines as at September, (I notice they have 31<sup>st</sup> here I do not know if September has 31 days now, I thought it always had 30 days) as at September 30<sup>th</sup> 2010 that the internal debt was \$577.6 million, the external debt is \$653.1 million, the total debt Mr. Speaker is therefore about \$1,230.7 billion that is at September 30<sup>th</sup> 2009. The total debt was \$1,186.3 million or 3.7 percent lower. But I need clarification Mr. Speaker, on some of the issues related to this thing. A number of the loans and overdrafts listed in the 2010 debt schedule are missing from the 2011 debt schedule or have significantly reduce amount.

I was trying to find the source under which those payments were reduced. For example the Accountant General's Overdraft loan of \$24.8 million in 2010 is down to \$10.00 a token provision; I would like to know how that was financed. As far as I recall it is one of those that was supposed to finance from the \$100 million loan from the CDB. The GESCO loan of \$6.5 million I am not sure how that was financed either, why it has been removed and the National Properties Loan of \$17.1 million is not there in 2011 and there is a loan there for the Banana Growers Association of \$14.3 million. I am seeking some clarification as to how these have been removed, whether they were paid for and the source of funding of the payment and whether we should find that source of funding in the schedule for the external debt itself.

I also note, Mr. Speaker, that there are a number of suspended loans. If you look in the schedule of the internal debt you would see a loan for the Arrowroot Industry \$555,000; Carnival Development Committee \$470,000; Housing and Land Development Corporation \$11,600; Kingstown Town Board \$4,000,025 million; Fisheries Market \$580,000; National Properties \$2.5 million; National Properties Food City \$9.4 million and the Postal Corporation \$1.1 million. Some of those have been scheduled to have been replaced by the CDB debt and the policy based loan of \$100 million and when one looks at the reduction in interest payments and principal and the financial summary for 2011 it is beginning to beg the question, because some of these debts here was supposed to be removed by the CDB loan.

I do not quite follow what has happened because the CDB loan we do not have any disbursements prior to September 30<sup>th</sup> to which this schedule refers. The CDB loan disbursements would have taken place after September 30<sup>th</sup> and therefore would not be reflected in this schedule. Although I will expect that in the financial summary they would be there because by then we would have had close to about what the actual is for the end of the year. So I have a little difficulty, Mr. Speaker, in terms of the debt figure itself. It is not clear to me where some of these have been financed and if they are financed with another external loan they are not reflected. I did not see them reflected in the external loan schedule. So I will like when the Prime Minister responds, Mr. Speaker, if he could give that clarification.

I also wish to point out Mr. Speaker, that the National Properties loan owed to the NIS which was \$47 million in 2009 is now shown as \$51 million in 2010 which suggests to me, Mr. Speaker, that loan is not being paid. I am assuming that the interest has been capitalised and added on. That is a significant amount of money, Mr. Speaker, significant amount of money. And am I to assume that they are going to sell some land over to NIS or am I to assume that the Government is going to take over this debt at some time \$51 million at the current time. I will really like these matters clarified so that we can in fact really have a picture of the debt because I cannot understand given..., I understand it for the financial summary, but given the date, the terminal date you have on debt here being September 30<sup>th</sup> I cannot understand any CDB loan being reflected here and in fact some of those loans were suspended and some of these loans do not appear now, which if they are financed by CDB have been cleared. So I think there is need for some clarification on this matter, Mr. Speaker, and I look forward to the reply of the Honourable Prime Minister on the question of the public debt.

I will also like to say in this regard, Mr. Speaker, that the rebasing exercise which the Prime Minister mentioned yesterday would have had as I expected a significant impact on the international, local and regional perception of the state of our debt, because to the extent that they increased our GDP considerably, our debt to GDP ratio would fall correspondingly and I think that is something that I am happy that has happened. It makes it easier to

deal with questions of debt to GDP ratios in the future, but I will like the clarification in relation to the other matters. Yes Mr. Speaker, I am nearly finished now.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You got time.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** National Insurance Services - Mr. Speaker, yesterday in his presentation, (let me see if I can find the page in the Prime Minister's Budget Address) [interjection] 59, you sure it is 59? Mr. Speaker, yes I find it here on page 40 in the copy that I have.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Sorry, my copy missing 2 pages 41 and 42.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Oh, 40. The Prime Minister referred to the significant reserves of the National Insurance Scheme, but its calculation represents about 23 percent of Gross Domestic Product and the ratio of pensioners to contributors was only 13 percent, but he predicted that the financial position of the NIS would deteriorate over time [interjection] well I ain't reach to unless yet. Mr. Speaker, in this presentation the Prime Minister alluded to the increase in cost of retirement benefits in the Civil Service and the fact that it is increasing at a very rapid rate and as I pointed out earlier when we looked at the financial summary of these Estimates there was a 17.3 percent increase for 2011, so that is in line with what is being said.

Mr. Speaker, but there are certain threats to the NIS you know. We have \$62 million of NIS funds which have been tied up in the British American Insurance matter. We have the enticement on the sale of the NCB, the enticement for the Government, if you want to borrow more from the NIS and we have, Mr. Speaker, an economy that has been declining and you have less active contributors. So all three, Mr. Speaker, are threats to the financial viability of the NIS. In addition to that even before this happened and I think the Prime Minister explained that so much when he spoke yesterday, one had an eye on the increasing cost of pensions.

There was a time you know, in the early stages of the NIS and I have spoken about it in this Parliament, there was a time when persons who reached age 60 by the time they had retired for 18 months, they had got back in pension all their contributions and the NIS had to look after them for the rest of their lives. So just imagine somebody being at age 60 and before they reach 62 they have gotten back all of the contributions that they made to the NIS and it is only as the scheme choose looking down the road that you will find it will take longer and longer before you can get back all your contributions. These are very important factors in Social Security and it is something that we do not pay any attention to, Mr. Speaker. It is a very serious matter. All we are concerned as individuals is that we get our money. So just imagine, you work for how many years since 1987 when NIS was started until a couple years ago and in 18 months you get back all that you contributed and the NIS has to carry you for the balance of your life [interjection] exactly.

So what is happening now, Mr. Speaker, is that these costs have been going up and when projections were done on the scheme going forward 30, 40, 50 years which we have to do because you are not having NIS for now, it is there for good and you have to be able to meet the obligations to those persons who have made to their contributions. So we have a situation, Mr. Speaker, where the NIS has to be looked at very closely. I have been saying publicly for some time now that our NIS contributions are going to go up and in addition the retirement age in this country will have to change [interjection] you do not ask me what I am going to support [laughter] I

will make the determination with my colleagues at the appropriate time [laughter]. But Mr. Speaker, [interjection] [laughter] Mr. Speaker, I do not want to laugh.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** You done laugh already.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, it is a serious matter you know. The gravity of this situation has not hit home yet. Listening to the Prime Minister yesterday in his presentation, he indicated that he probably looking somewhere at the retirement age reaching somewhere to 65 years. So all of you out there....,

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** But you still fit at that age.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Eh?

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** You are still fit at that age

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** If I fit?

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** You still fit at that age so I will pay you a compliment.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** You do not even know the difference between Roseau and Walveroo, way yo calling me for?

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** [Inaudible]

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** [Laughter] no, but seriously, Mr. Speaker, I have been on this matter for a long time now and I knew (the Prime Minister was keeping it quiet) but I knew he know that it had to happen. I just said it earlier. Now, but it has a lot of implications you know. We have countries in this region where the employer/employee contributions combined, reach 17 and 18 percent you know.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** In Barbados.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Yes, and we are still down at 8 percent here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and while we are talking about 3 percent for the public service, NIS increases will eat that up [interjection] what I am telling you? It will eat it up as we go forward. We are the second lowest in terms of rates in this region. I cannot remember..., I think is Jamaica was the lowest. So here we have a situation, the Prime Minister did not mention it, and he just mentioned that it will go up, but by how much is the question.

The IMF in a presentation two years ago on the economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines said it should go to 11 percent for 8 percent and that it will have to go further later on and that is before you know, that is before the \$62 million was tied up and that is before you lost any active contributors. So what I see down the road Mr. Speaker is a very difficult time for the National Insurance Scheme and by extension, the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

You know it is the life of the Scheme that becomes very important. In addition to that Mr. Speaker, you have the situation in relation to pensions in the Civil Service and the Prime Minister was indicating that those would

growing even more rapidly and therefore Civil Servants who are getting two pensions, they are eligible for their NIS pension and they are eligible for the Civil Service pension and what he is indicating is that they would not be able to afford that any much longer and that one has to go. And what is now likely to happen which we have said it before, I have said it before here, I have said it outside here, what is likely to happen now is that we will have to look as to whether you are going to continue to have two pensions and what the implications of that are for future recruitment in the public service as against the private sector. There are a lot a lot of issues, Mr. Speaker, rising out of this matter, a lot of issues and I agree with the Prime Minister, they are not going to be easy financially and they are not going to be easy politically either

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** But I always read...

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Not always [laughter] you said in this Parliament you lie sometimes [laughter].

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, may I correct it once and for all, I made it clear in this Honourable House that on public policy matters I do not lie. I make that quite clear, on public policy matters I will never lie, so do not twist it any other way, please.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Just a minute Honourable Member, do not stand yet. I remember that statement you made and I remember your clarification on it, but that is not the part I want to deal with, we can always deal with that part, but I am warning members of the gallery you are not part of the debate and therefore you are to listen in silence. If you cannot obey that I will that the gallery be cleared and I am serious about that.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** You say it so often on your platform you forget.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** You do not give me full support on this?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** But I will not...

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

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Let us continue the debate.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, I cannot stress you know, I cannot stress how important this issue is to the future of this country and particularly the finances in this country and particularly the impact it is going to have on the ordinary people outside there. It *ain't* going to be easy you know, it is not going to be easy. It is going to be a very bitter pill to swallow and I was expecting it that is why I was speaking about it. It is a very difficult matter to deal with.

Mr. Speaker, you see that \$62 million there, you are now hearing about plan B I ain't get to plan B yet. Mr. Speaker, the return that the NIS would have gotten on that \$62 million per year is just under \$5 million. They are now, not now, they have already lost it for a year or so and had to adjust the accounts by providing for that in the accounts as if you have lost it, you made provision for losses and that is likely to continue, Mr. Speaker, for some time, because we are talking now about a new arrangement having agreed that the existing arrangement via NEWCO for BAICO may no longer apply. We have all heard in this Parliament successive

reports from the Prime Minister on this matter and the idea was that we will have a new company BAICO and that BAICO..., a new company NEWCO that is a short for new company NEWCO, and that with that in mind you would have this new company and over a five year period you expect it to make enough profit to be able to begin to pay back persons who have lost monies some of the money that they have lost.

The Trinidad and Tobago Government, the new Government of Trinidad and Tobago as it was explained yesterday was to play a major role in NEWCO, they were to be a major, for want of a better word, call it equity contributor, maybe something \$100 million. That is not going to happen anymore and the situation now is that alternatives are being proposed. But those alternatives have to be worked on. They are going to take considerable time and all those persons, those 11,000 people or companies who are exposed in the OECS to the travails of British American Company Ltd going to have to wait a long time to get their money if, they will never get, I will venture to say that, they will never get all their money. But whatever they get and that cannot be determine now, will be only a portion. I do not expect it to be a large portion either, I am giving my opinion. The proposals let me get them on page I think is page 39 of the Prime Minister's budget address. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has however and I am quoting, has always indicated that they appreciate the systemic impact of any BAICO collapse on the Caribbean Region and proposed to work with the ECCA Government (East Caribbean Currency Authority) our people, and the Caribbean Development Bank to establish a regional fund through CARICOM to respond to major financial threats to the region's economy including that of British American. Considering that this part despite the best intentions of the participants, and I am watching the language, it is not optimistic, will take time to implement, time here means years. The East Caribbean Currency Union Ministerial Subcommittee has agreed to revise plan for resolving the BICO issue whilst also permitting a potential CARICOM solution, this is referred to as plan B.

The plan would involve recapitalising the [inaudible] life, life insurance here portfolio with funds currently on deposit with the Central Bank from the petroleum fund and selling it to a third party. So you take over the [inaudible] life insurance policies in your organisation, they take over all the policies and they continue to run the business. The total liabilities are US\$38 million for approximately 22,000 policy holders that is one. So that is one aspect of a three pronged plan. Even while settling the life portfolio challenge and even then you notice the language, even while settling, it ain't settle, we shall continue discussions with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and the CDB regarding the establishment of a CARICOM support fund to deal with the annuity investment policy holders of which there are approximately 11,000. These are mainly the people who deposited money at specific rate of interest with British American Insurance and now cannot get none. That is how that 11,000 is.

In the case of St. Vincent and the Grenadines I do not have the figure of how many people or companies and so on involved, but I know in the case of St. Vincent is a \$190 million that is exposed in that arrangement. The intention, I want you to listen careful, the intention of this support fund is that policy holders may be paid compensation up to a fixed amount. Not all, up to a fixed amount which will depend on the funding available. You see all the caveats? Up to a fix amount depending on the funding available and the Prime Minister says he will continue [inaudible] and it goes on additionally Governments intend to walk with the reports CARICOM fund to create a pool of funds to settle liabilities due to systemic important institutions and that includes the NIS. So they have to deal with institution like NIS and pension fund and credit union under different

arrangements again. So what we have is a three pronged approach for dealing with this particular issue [interjection] well I do not even want to go to CLICO, because you have CLICO to follow. The point I am trying to make, Mr. Speaker, with this regard is that plan A is out of the window, plan B at this stage has no substance, they are proposals to be developed and those will take a long time. There are many people out there in all of our country including St. Vincent and the Grenadines former teachers and civil servants and other people who have spent their whole life working here and who put their gratuity in these annuities who are under the present time really have no hope, no real hope of getting back any of their money. It depends on whether that three pronged arrangement which is cast in language, it is not optimistic whether it will come to fruition and whether it performs and if it does not do so, Mr. Speaker, then they will lose all their money. Whether it be NIS or individuals or the life holders.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Ten minutes.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Or policy holders, they will lose all their money. This is a serious matter, Mr. Speaker and sometimes you know I think of whether there are any other avenues that can be explored to deal with this situation. I know it is very difficult, but one time I show off, Mr. Speaker, because in our country here ordinary people have no culture of investing, they are not normally..., they do not normally have the resources, additional resources available to them and you know you could go in the stock market, you could go in the United States and so on and ordinary people get involved, we do not have that culture here of investing and people hear okay, British American paying 9 percent, boy I putting my money there. That is it on the regional stock exchange St. Vincent and the Grenadines has no companies trading. Our companies here are largely family owned companies. That in itself tells you something about the culture that we have here in terms of investment and one thing I thought of and know, Mr. Speaker, that we have a rebasing of the GDP. I do not know whether if some arrangements could be examined in relation to some sort of bond issue or some issue to allow some payment to those Vincentians who are involved. It may not be large, but I make that proposal as something worth considering. I do not see plan B becoming effective during the next few years. In the meantime there are pensioners and others in this country who cannot make ends meet, having given their lives to the public service and to the private sector.

I turn now for a brief moment, Mr. Speaker, and really it should not be brief, I really did not intend to speak so long to the constituency of East Kingstown. We did not have a chance to say Merry Christmas or anything of that sort, but Christmas gone. What we are dealing with now is the year 2011 a year that is going to be difficult. You just heard about the NIS, you have heard of a lot of different issues, but I do wish the people of East Kingstown and indeed of the whole country well for 2011.

I want to thank the people of East Kingstown for the confidence they have once again bestowed on me by electing me for the fourth consecutive time to be the representative of that constituency [applause] and by substantially increasing the lead that I had before [interjection] you finish? Mr. Speaker, I wish the people well of East Kingstown. I have raised some areas in my meetings there about specific activities, of course we suffer the same fate or almost the whole country when it comes to roads and I hear about road repairs being done with retention monies, I want to know where all those retention monies are, because they cannot be there in the last budget, because that done.

There are lots of other areas, Mr. Speaker, that need attention apart from roads and of course the whole questions of employment, unemployment in the constituency and there is a range of incomes in that constituency from the very rich to the very poor and it is sometimes I consider it as difficult to address, but Mr. Speaker, I will do what I can. I will do what I have always done to try and provide for the best interests of the people of Kingstown, East Kingstown in particular and the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines as a whole.

I want to close by saying to the Members on this side of the House; I now look forward to their contributions to this debate. It has been a lot of talk, a lot of things said about them and a lot of other comments that come in between, I ignore a lot of them, but when it comes to this team that is assembled here I expect and I know that I will get the best from them. I am much obliged, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much [applause].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, Honourable Prime Minister.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I thought you would ask, any further debate and then you will call on me to mind up, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Well I had an indication for you that you probably want to say something, so I ask.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Oh, I see, I see.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Is there anything that you want to say, of course the debate continues.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, it is now almost 1:30 we have two hours lunches because we have..., not because it takes two hours but there are a number of things to be done in the period so we return at 3:30 p.m.

I beg to move that this Honourable do stand suspended for the luncheon period until 3:30 p.m.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**House suspended at**

**Until 3:30 p.m.**

**Houses Resumed at**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Pray be seated. Even before I sit I thought I heard the sound of a cell phone, could you kindly [interjection] Minister's Burgin phone [laughter] Minister Burgin, thou art guilty [laughter]. Honourable Members, we resume from our lunch break and we shall continue debate on the 2011 budget. Debate Honourable Member for East St. George Minister for Housing etc. You know that you have 1¼ hours to make your presentation as a Minister, [interjection] 1¼, 75 minutes [interjection] you are still 45 [laughter]. Honourable Minister.

**HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to the 2011 budget debate in this House. May I first, Mr. Speaker, extend the highest commendation to the staff of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning under the astute guidance and

leadership of the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for the tremendous job that has been done to craft these budgetary estimates [applause].

And Mr. Speaker, this was done as a backlog of its stringent international economic crisis or climate. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday when we did the Estimate my good friend the Honourable Senator Anesia Baptiste in this Honourable House lamented on the cut in the budget for training towards the vote for the home help for the elderly and she also dealt with it in correspondingly with the number of trained persons or persons to be trained where that was decrease or increase. So there was a reduction in the training vote but an increase in the number of persons. I just want to let her know that training is also provided for at the Service Commissions Department, so other Ministries can also go to that department and present a case and get some training for personnel as well. So I just thought I would just mention that so that you know she will be aware of that as well.

Mr. Speaker, even though there is a cut in spending for the training of home help first for the elderly we got to learn in this time to do more with less because we see what is happening not only in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, but the world over. So many of us have to ensure that we play our part in ensuring that more of what is to be done get done with less resources, because we do not have an over abundance of resources.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Housing Informal Human Settlement, Physical Planning, Lands and Survey has a mission and the mission is to facilitate national sustainable development for both the private and public sectors through the implementation of an integrated approach. This Ministry, Mr. Speaker, for the first half of the fiscal year 2010 was indeed a challenging time for the Ministry as a result of the global economic crisis which impacted on public sector investment and as a result some of our planned development projects were not implemented. However, in spite of all this staff at the Ministry was able to concentrate more on the programmes for which funding were available. And also, Mr. Speaker, the staff members were able to adopt or put strategies in place designed to ensure optimum use of the resources that were provided and they use these resources to provide quality services to our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, the acquisition of land for public purposes will continue in 2011 as was done in 2010. This is an important programme within the Ministry of Housing. Mr. Speaker, it is well known that state owned land is not readily available especially where some of us might need them to be in order to have projects, programmes and facilities within these communities. However, we in the Ministry of Housing will pursue getting lands elsewhere or from private individuals since the state owned lands in some communities are not available. So we will embark on a programme to purchase lands from private holdings to support the development that we are talking about in the various sectors.

Mr. Speaker, the budgetary allocation for 2011 stands at \$4 million for land purchasing and this amount, Mr. Speaker, is expected to finance not only new purchasing of lands, but also to look at commitments that were made on prior transactions. Mr. Speaker, improvement to the land management and administration system will remain the focus of the Ministry of Housing for the current financial year. In 2009 and 2010 the Government provided almost \$3 million in consultancy fees, equipment, procurement and this was done towards improving the land administration and management system in the land registry department. Lands and Surveys

Department, Land Valuation Department and the Physical Planning Unit were also beneficiaries of that consultancy on the equipment that was procured.

Mr. Speaker, we therefore will continue to facilitate the land registry, Lands and Survey and other relevant land management agencies in implementing the national land titling project. Mr. Speaker, monies have been provided for the acquisition and also for the requisite training for related staff to deal with these lands when we purchase them. Also monies have been earmarked for purchasing of equipment for public education as well as additional research and development when we are dealing with the land titling issue. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Housing with the support of the sustainable land management project in the Ministry of Health, Wellness and the Environment intends to implement the project titled “The National Physical Development Plan in the Current Fiscal Year.” The Physical Planning Unit which is one part of the Ministry that I am in charge of, commenced the preparation of this National Physical Development Plan with the policy of participation and prescription to guide land development and land use in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

A number of studies were done Mr. Speaker, on this National Physical Development Plan and a number of drafts were made over the years and these happened, way back in 2002 by the Physical Planning Unit. But what has happened over the years, Mr. Speaker, we find that some of the information gathered would have been outdated and new information would have been gathered. So the Physical Planning Unit, they are now in the process of ensuring that we have new information provided to the general public so that this essential plan could be more accurate and reflect the current development situation in St. Vincent and the Grenadines in accordance with the policies that are existing at the moment and also to provide projections and proposals for future development. So that is what the Physical Planning Unit is doing. Mr. Speaker, to ensure that this draft has in all the component and something..., a good project for the country and for the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, I think that the unit has already identified a qualified consultant to assist with this whole exercise bringing all what they have gathered, all the data together so that we can have one product, a policy so that all of St. Vincent and the Grenadines can be a part of that.

Mr. Speaker, the 2007, 2008 poverty assessment report revealed that more than 60 percent of household owners own homes without mortgage. Approximately 19 percent having mortgage arrangements and 10 percent living in rented accommodation. Property ownership Mr. Speaker, is seen as a source of wealth and a symbol of social and economic status and the demand for housing continues to increase and Mr. Speaker, this is so even though we may have a decline in the population, because the last census we did states that it is about 106,000; 107,000 persons. So even though we have a decline in the population, we find that there is a need for housing by the population. Persons want to own their own homes and that is something commendable and credible by the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. And as I stated before, this can be attributed to the social and economic values attached to property ownership.

Mr. Speaker, it is because of the growing demand for housing and the relatively high cost of construction that the HLDC, (the Housing and Land Development Corporation) was established some time ago and this corporation, Mr. Speaker, is mandated to assist the Government to provide affordable housing for citizens. Mr. Speaker, when we came into office in 2001 we stated that we are going to build a number of low income houses for persons within a certain bracket in terms of their monthly salaries and the then Minister of Housing, Honourable Senator Julian Francis and later on the Honourable Senator Saboto Caesar then embarked with

gusto to provide housing units for the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. And Mr. Speaker, in 2003 we started improving the living conditions of persons in St. Vincent and the Grenadines where hundreds of families within St. Vincent and the Grenadines received low income houses from the low income housing programme sponsored under the Unity Labour Party administration.

You may notice, Mr. Speaker, in the Prime Minister's 2011 budget address on page 33 where over 521 houses were built, low income houses; 130 new houses also were built by the then Ministers that I mentioned and these houses, Mr. Speaker, were constructed on 10 sites throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, I could remember when we started building these houses; they were called by all sorts of name. They were called matchbox, telephone booth, you know, but these houses, Mr. Speaker, were going like hot bread. You could not supply the demand for these houses. Persons bombarded you every which way, up and down the country, at home calling on the telephone asking, "how can they be a part of this housing programme, how can they get a house." And as I stated, out of the thousand hundreds have received over 521 low income houses.

Mr. Speaker, we will continue to place emphasis on housing development throughout the 2011 fiscal year, because the demand is growing all over the country and we know that houses are relatively costly to build and when we build these houses, Mr. Speaker, we put in the various infrastructures [applause] and we only charged the people for the cost of the houses at a reduced rate. So persons received these houses did not pay the full cost of what the land, the road, the water, electricity and even the cost for building these houses, because that was part of what the taxpayers of this country were contributing towards the housing stock in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. So the Housing and Land Development Corporation, Mr. Speaker, also assists in this programme and Mr. Speaker, we are talking about poverty alleviation and poverty reduction. This is all part of that programme. The reduction of poverty and the alleviation of poverty, because when we provide these persons with house, they are sure of a shelter and they do not have to go to look for houses elsewhere and land that is very scarce. So Mr. Speaker, the low income housing programme is a very successful programme indeed. So we have addressed the shelter needs of persons whose monthly income was in a certain bracket and I think when we started, Mr. Speaker, it was from zero to \$700, but as the material prices for building construction increased, we carry up the threshold a little higher so that other persons can be a part of the programme.

Mr. Speaker, one of the difficulties these persons faced when they are getting \$700 a month, you cannot go to a financial institution to tell them that you want money to borrow to build a house, because the money that you will have to pay monthly would be almost what you are working for and we know people have to eat and everything, Mr. Speaker. So Mr. Speaker, with the low income housing programme we want to also thank the Government of Venezuela who assisted us in this regard by providing a grant to make this possible [applause]. So Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that the housing programme and project remains an important mechanism for poverty reduction and wealth creation in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, the HLDC has already constructed 130 new low income houses as well as provides material assistance to undertake repairs for some 95 houses throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines and this again, Mr. Speaker, was with the injection of EC\$4.5 million by the Government of Venezuela. A Government that is assisting this country in various ways in its developmental path and a Government that has been chastised by a number of persons who cannot see the importance of our foreign policy in having friends all over the world and also we directing our own path without answering to some other massah somewhere.

Mr. Speaker, since I mentioned the Government of Venezuela and the assistance that they are giving to us, I want to express my profound gratitude and appreciation to the Government and people of Venezuela on behalf of the Government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines [applause] for the enormous support [applause] that they have given to us and will continue to give to us. Mr. Speaker, more no income houses will be built. We have to provide shelter to the economically disadvantaged sector of our society. The demand for no and low income housing as I stated earlier on, Mr. Speaker is like hot bread. Everyday someone asking you, “We have the housing programme going on still Minister?” I want to apply for a low income house and some persons are now asking for the middle income house, but I touch on that in a while, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the HLDC was very crucial in the Hurricane Tomas recovery and reconstruction and I want here Mr. Speaker, to commend the Honourable Minister then of Housing, the Honourable Saboto Caesar for the tremendous work that he did in ensuring that the reconstruction and the recovery started with real haste taste. They say give unto Caesar what is Caesar nothing more nothing less [laughter] so...

**HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR:** Nothing more.

**HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN:** Yes [laughter]. Mr. Speaker, the response by the Government through the Ministry of Housing was swift, positively aggressive. The Cabinet of this country during the time of Hurricane Tomas request for credit facilities from business places and initially we got \$250,000 each from Coreas Hazell’s Inc, Browne’s Hardware and Manufacturing and also East Caribbean Metals Ltd. with a payment over a 90-day period. And Mr. Speaker, given the prompt response by the named local companies, we were able to procure the necessary building materials for the speedy repairs to rooftops and other aspects of the houses that were destroyed throughout the country.

Mr. Speaker, approval was also given to procure building materials from Tank-Weld Metals from Jamaica and we receive 17 containers (was it 40 foot) 17 40 foot containers, Mr. Speaker, with building materials and they arrived in port, Kingstown on November 18<sup>th</sup> at a cost of EC\$5.8 million. Mr. Speaker, when these materials arrived here at such a short space of time after Hurricane Tomas came here, they said that the Honourable Prime Minister knew that the storm was coming so he procure these things way in advance. Well I am saying that if the Prime Minister is so good at predicting that a storm would come in advance you see he is the right persons to lead this country St. Vincent and the Grenadines [laughter].

Mr. Speaker, the Cabinet also give approval for a credit line with the roads, building and bridges authority BRAGSA for an amount of \$150,000 to provide the HLDC with Rabacca stuff and sand so that the programme of reconstruction and recovery could have gone on smoothly. Speaker this is the same BRAGSA that is being maligned all about the place *ah nah*, organisation that is just over a year old that is doing wonderful work and the Minister of Transport and Works, he will talk more about that organisation.

In 2011, Mr. Speaker, the HLDC will focus on these programmes, and permit me to list them Mr. Speaker:

- Hurricane Recovery and Reconstruction
- Clare Valley Low Income Housing

- Queensbury Infrastructure Development
- Lowmans Bay Infrastructural Development or Programme
- Fitz Hughes Infrastructural Programme

### Phase 3

- Green Hill Bridge and Infrastructure Development Project
- Richland Park Housing Programmes

The Minister of Education and Parliamentary Representative of Marriaqua the HLDC would be coming your way in 2011. The Colonarie Housing Programme and Middle Income Housing on privately owned lands, these are some of the programmes that the HLDC, Mr. Speaker, would be embarking on in 2011.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, by the end of December a mechanism to encourage greater participation by the Private Sector in providing affordable houses would be developed. As a result, Mr. Speaker, a policy document detailing all the necessary guidelines for the proposal for the Private Public Sector partnership is to be crafted and will be available for discussion by the end of the year so are not only trying to do things on our own we are trying to partner with the private sector so that they can also provide affordable houses for the citizens of this country.

So Mr. Speaker the HLDC is critical in the Government Development Programme and the HLDC will be held responsible for housing development in this country and Mr. Speaker at this juncture I must say that the wheels of the HLDC is turning quite smoothly despite some hitches here and there.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the Physical Planning Unit, the Physical Planning Unit in that Ministry is responsible for the implementation of the Town and Country Planning Act and all the various regulations therewith, and we know, Mr. Speaker, or for persons who do not know who are listening to us on air that this Act is designed to ensure orderly physical development throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker the unit was able to complete the first draft of a National Physical Development Plan in 2010 and the Unit is now engaged in the crafting of three local area plans and Mr. Speaker, members from the unit and other sectors of the Ministry of Housing, Physical Planning is there in the strangers' gallery so I want to applaud them and thank them for the tremendous hard work that they have been doing over the years [Applause].

Mr. Speaker, these instruments have been designed to establish the framework for efficient land use as well as to promote sustainable development. These initiatives, Mr. Speaker, are expected to ensure that optimum use is made of this limited resource that we call land. Mr. Speaker, 2010 saw enactment of the building code and guidelines and these will be implemented by staff in the Physical Planning Unit during this year 2011.

The Building Regulations, Mr. Speaker, have introduced to ensure that our buildings are safe, strong and durable as well as to ensure that they have the ability to withstand natural and manmade disasters. Mr. Speaker,

in addition to the regulatory role of the Physical Planning Unit, the unit also holds responsibility for facilitating national and development. The unit recently assumed responsibility for the development of a National Geographic Information System, Mr. Speaker, permit me to say what this includes. This includes the mapping all spatial data, buildings roads as well as other related data, in an attempt Mr. Speaker, to comprehend their relationship.

Mr. Speaker the information is expected to provide integrated spatial data which will inform the policy and decision making process and this is in regard and respect to land use and the developmental activities on these lands. Because, Mr. Speaker, there are too many times when persons want to do things, build something, put up something without having the proper design and the requisite information from the Planning Unit as to how they should go about doing certain things and when a problem occur, the first set of persons that these people are coming to is to the Government to say, I build this and when the rain came this is what happened, so the Physical Planning Unit is very important ensuring the sturdiness of our structures and also to ensure the safety of all citizens in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, the Physical Planning Unit also crafted and implemented a programme designed to improve the quality of service provided to the public with emphasis placed on improving access to services and the turn around time. You know, Mr. Speaker, there are many times in a number of the ministries, a lot of times people who go for service in these places usually have to go one, two, three, four, five times to get certain things done and we in the Physical Planning Unit put certain measures in place to ensure speedy delivery of services to the general public. And this is what the unit did, Mr. Speaker, they have decentralised by establishing planning desk in rural communities namely Georgetown, Barrouallie, Bequia and Union Island so residents of these countries, Mr. Speaker, can have access to the Planning Unit via these desks in those districts that I mention and for the members who are here from these communities and also persons who are listening I would give you the days when persons can go to the desk in various communities so that they can get their planning or whatever they are doing addressed.

The first Wednesday of each month Union Island, so the Honourable representative for the Southern Grenadines you can tell the Planning people that Union Island will be the first Wednesday of each month, Georgetown on the second Wednesday, Barrouallie on the third Wednesday and Bequia on the fourth Wednesday.

Mr. Speaker, these Planning desks are already having a positive impact in the areas mentioned and they are located in the revenue or administrative offices in the four mentioned areas. So persons who are listening and they want to know, in the Revenue and Administrative Offices in Bequia, Union Island, Georgetown and Barrouallie. And Mr. Speaker, these desks are staffed by a Planning Technician, a Building Inspector and a Clerical Officer, and these staff members, Mr. Speaker, process applications, inspect sites, scout and provide information and advice. So one of the things that we are doing is to decentralise instead of having everything coming to Kingstown and we will appreciate the cost especially from Union Island, the Representative for the Southern Grenadines always talking about the cost of travel and we all know that, so to avoid them having to come up to Kingstown and then you are to hear that it ain't ready yet, you have to go back down and come another day. We have the service right in your backyard so you no longer have to travel up to Kingstown for that.

Mr. Speaker, 778 applications for building works were received by the Physical Planning Unit in 2010 and Mr. Speaker permit me to indicate some of the specific in this area. In the Kingstown area, 127; 86 in the suburbs of Kingstown; 54 in the Grenadines; 240 in the Calliaqua area; 47 in Marriaqua; 41 Bridgetown; 50 in Colonarie; 34 in Georgetown; 6 in Sandy Bay; 55 in Layou; 17 in Barrouallie; and 21 in Chateaubelair. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, last year the Physical Planning Unit conducted two workshops for artisans and building tradesmen and this was in preparation for the implementation of the building regulation in 2011 because as I stated before we want to ensure that persons are au fait with these building regulations and what is required so training was done for artisan in this respect. So I must daresay, Mr. Speaker, that the Physical Planning Unit can be proud to say that they have had rather relatively successful 2010 and Mr. Speaker, some information that most of us never knew before but in 2010 the Physical Planning Unit received accolades in the World Bank publication title doing business. And in that Publication, Mr. Speaker, our Physical Planning Unit has been ranked as number one in the world for its efficiency [Applause] in processing applications for physical development. So the Unit has been doing tremendous work and they must be commended and they were.

We look at land use Mr. Speaker, earlier on I spoke about this as the finite or resource of this country, beautiful land we have but persons will say limited so we have to make do with what we have.

Mr. Speaker, this ministry continue to spearhead and coordinate the development of an efficient land administration system and Mr. Speaker, given the importance of land resource as a wealth of promoting the social and economic development of each individual and in particular each household and the nation as a whole it is important that we pay real attention to the land use in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, all of us know that our country, we can boast of the richness of the land, the diverse habitat, we are blessed with a beautiful and rich environment and we are fortunate also, Mr. Speaker, that our land St. Vincent and the Grenadines remain largely unspoiled unlike many others within the Caribbean so it is therefore our responsibility to make optimum use and good sustainable use of this great resource that we call land. But Mr. Speaker, this finite resource is very limited as I stated because of a number of factors, our smallness, the topography of the land and other physical constraints.

Mr. Speaker, I remember once some persons from other countries were talking about, some bigger countries than St. Vincent, about the land space and the land area that they have and bragging about it and this Vincentian say, what you talking about land, we have so much land that we have to heap them up, meaning we have to put them up....we have so much mountains, and then we talking about the topography [Laughter] of the land, you know. So, you know a Vincentian do not let you get away with certain things, when you say certain things we have to come back with something. [Interjection] yes you know.

Mr. Speaker, a good land administration system is fundamentally important for the development of an active land market and the productive use of lands, the Minister of Housing in collaboration with other ministries and department and agencies embarked on a programme to address the issue of improving land administration and this was done, Mr. Speaker, through two projects and these projects were financed by the European Union and one is namely the National Land Information Management Project, we call it NALIMP, National Land Information Management Project, and this was concluded in 2008 and also the Land Titling And Land Registration Project, NLTLRP. Those were the two projects that the ministry collaborated with a number of ministry's agencies through funding from the European Union.

And Mr. Speaker, the National Land Information Management Project provides the information platform for significant improvement in land administration through the development of a National Geographic Information System and I mentioned about that already.

Mr. Speaker, the National Land Titling Project and Land Registration Project is transforming the current Land Titling And Land Registration System from a Manual Deed Based System to a more reliable electronic system for securing titles to land, and in general for the administration of lands. Mr. Speaker, land information is therefore critical for enhancing administration and for the development of an effective land market. The information is scattered along the following four major institutions, Mr. Speaker, when it comes to land matter and so on, so that is why it is important that we have a coordinated effort and it is scattered in the Evaluation Department and if I may, Mr. Speaker, let the House and the public know what the Evaluation Department is doing. They have a computerized database on transaction records for estate and stamp duty purposes as well as reevaluation record, so that is what the Evaluation Department is there, what they have. To the Registry which have a manual system of registered dates, the Land and Surveys Department which has records and registered survey plans and a computerized database on the allocation of crown and state lands and then we have the Physical Planning Unit within the Ministry of Housing which have developed the nucleus of a National Geographic Information System in addition to other spatial information and information on property development.

So you see, Mr. Speaker, four institutions have information concerning lands and you have to always go to the other to get some information to put certain things together. So we collaborate and if we have one system where everybody can go into and retrieve the information that will augur well for speed and as I stated earlier on the turnaround time when people have to be dealt with at these departments. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Housing is currently also collaborating with other departments and this is so in a bit to integrate informal system or information system to facilitate the sharing of data and when we share these data we know we will improve in the decision making process and also we will enhance the quality of service we will provide for the general public, so this is very important that we continue to collaborate.

Mr. Speaker, the policy and institutional framework to enhance land administration is very evident. In 2004 a New Possessory Title Act was implemented to permit persons who are occupying lands undisturbed for about 12 years to given the opportunity to obtain legal title to these lands. And this was followed, Mr. Speaker, by the policy of turning dead capital into live capital and this was done in 2006. As a consequence, Mr. Speaker, several hundreds of persons have been offered the opportunity to purchase lands from the State at subsidised prices or subsidised rates and Mr. Speaker, it is expected that through clear ownership the increase in number of persons who are in a position to utilise their title to property to secure loans for further investments and wealth creation would be enhanced as a result of this policy of turning dead capital into live capital. Because what we have, Mr. Speaker, a number of persons are living on State lands, they have some big houses but they still cannot go to the bank to get some money because they have no collateral, they just have the house there, it is not in their name, the property belongs to the Government, so we have presented them with an opportunity to own these lands [Interjection] umm, [Interjection], if it just have to...? [interjection] yes when they have the... you go to the, I think the AG so those who are on Government, I am not talking on the privately owned lands because some people on privately owned lands for over 12 years, but if you are on ownership of the

Government you go to the Survey and then the Legal Department. So those are the avenues where they go and the matter is dealt with there.

Mr. Speaker, the Lands and Survey Department within the Ministry is committed to providing the foundation for sustainable growth and economic development to the nation of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and this is done by ensuring that effective management and proper utilisation and timely delivery of land-related information and services are presented and given so that persons can get the required information that they so need in order to purchase lands and to develop their lands and their property.

Mr. Speaker, the demand for surveying activities on crown land has therefore increased and this has increased significantly during the last year. The Land and Survey Department, Mr. Speaker, from time to time have to settle boundary disputes, a task which is normally performed by the land surveyors and Mr. Speaker, sometimes it is not only dispute between ownership and Government owned lands but you may find that the Government land may be boundary with some private person and you have these disputes, so the land and survey department, they have to come in here to ensure that the boundaries are properly placed and that the disputing parties are being addressed and all persons receive their justice. But sometimes, Mr. Speaker, we know that...sometimes it is a very... the survey department... I have been to places where even when the land has been surveyed and we think that they thing, some persons say, 'you come over one foot pan me land, you take too much of my land and give to the person', even though the surveyors would have gone there, persons who are technically competent to do the thing, but those are some of the things we have to live with. So, Mr. Speaker, the land being one of the most important resources in our blessed land and is needed for all human activity we have to ensure that access to land and security of tenure are being given their due significance in this process.

Mr. Speaker, it is estimated that approximately 16,000 persons occupy land in an informal capacity and this is what we refer to Mr. Speaker, as debt capital and I stated earlier on, those persons who are occupying these lands were not able to procure loans from the bank so we have to do certain things to ensure that they get title and this is consistent with what the Unity Labour Party said it would do. And Mr. Speaker, also when we ensure that persons receive title to their lands, this is also another way of eradicating or reducing poverty because what will happen here now is that, you have a deed, you have something you can show to the bank to say yes I have ownership, so I want to procure a loan and after they look at all the intricacies they would decide what and how the process can be fast track. Mr. Speaker, more than 600 free hold titles have been issued to persons who have purchased Government owned lands since 2005. Mr. Speaker, crown lands were issued to persons throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines and I would not go in to naming all the communities where persons received these crown lands. Just to say, Mr. Speaker, that the land information system is proceeding on target, YES Programme workers have successfully scanned and digitized more than 5,000 parcels of land [thumping on desk] the process was indeed time consuming, Mr. Speaker, because the youngsters had to be trained to get them to operate at an appropriate level. And Mr. Speaker, in this area of land management, it is expected that the following would be achieved in 2011:

- Regulation of land ownership and titles at Trigger Ridge, Diamonds, Fair Hall, Keartons, Chateaubelair, Queens Drive, Lowmans Bay and Lauders.

- Entering, well that is in the Lowmans Bay area, entering of 50% of records into new crown land database.
- Upgrading of the land information database by scanning and digitizing an additional 5,000 parcel of land.
- Increasing the collection of crown lands, seals and rent.

So Mr. Speaker, these important activities will be done during this year.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member I have to tell you, you have 15 minutes remaining for your contribution.

**HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN:** Alright, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, one of the things that the Ministry is planning to do is to deliver quality service [to the] public and too often we hear complaints about customer relationship not of the best of times in a number of Ministries. So we in the Ministry ensuring that in the year 2010 we improve upon the good service that we are delivering to make it even more better.

Mr. Speaker, the Lands and Survey Departments over the years in their revenue drive collected just under \$1 million in the work that they have done in surveying and all other activities for lands throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the Land and Survey Department work assiduously in assisting not only the Ministry of Housing but also the IADC, International Airport Development Company and National Properties in their programme and in their project.

Mr. Speaker, at this point in time for the next thirteen minutes or so I will like to say a bit about the constituency of East St. George. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the constituents of East St. George tremendously for their support to me in the recently held General Elections on the 13<sup>th</sup> of December [Applause]. Mr. Speaker, I also want to thank the Constituency Council, the Youth Arm, the working committees, the special committees, the various volunteers and all persons who are involved in the election campaign with me in East St. George, the Campaign Manager, the Chairman of the council and all other managers for their tremendous effort and hard work during the election campaign.

Mr. Speaker, there are some persons who come up against me, people reject them 2005, 2010 and even before that, I hear some people say they cannot even win they seat but that is besides the point, [Interjection] yeah that is not my business, that is beside the point. But Mr. Speaker, I... one of the things I must say, Mr. Speaker, that there are some Honourable gentlemen on the Opposition side, the Honourable Member for West Kingstown met me, we congratulated each other, the Honourable Member for Central Kingstown also give me his congratulation, the Honourable Member for North Leeward did the same thing, Southern Grenadines, but my opponent for 2005 he refused to congratulate me and he did not do it again this time. So those gentlemen over there who did not come up against me have a little bit more credibility in respecting when somebody achieve something, so I must commend them, they are my friends and they have been my friends even before politics so its not anything new.

So Mr. Speaker, I have won the seat according to the information from the Electoral Division and office and all the other persons who were there, but a certain gentleman he is not here so I won't bother with him, he said that I did not win this seat by fair means, I do not know what I did. All I did on the day, Mr. Speaker, is to ensure that the people come out and vote, I did not spend more than five minutes in any of the polling stations because when you go there and you peep and you see things in order, you just go and get the people to come and vote. And low and behold, a gentleman was rejected by the people to come in the House, his Party ignore him as well but it seems like he want to come in by some other means, so he say that me call he all *kinda* names and so on. Mr. Speaker, they went up and down this country calling me all *kinda* names and Mr. Speaker you would have been in Calliaqua at time hanging out when you hear they calling me all sorts ah names and Clayton Burgin did not bother with them, me *aint* even say *nuttin*, but me just go on a platform and I just say that, the candidate for West St. George, East St. George and Marriaqua, you are safe with us, your 13 year old is safe with us, they say that me say certain things about them which is not so.

But Mr. Speaker, the thing about it is that the people of East St. George, they know what they have and they know what they want and they will continue to know what they want and the Unity Labour Party will continue to be a strong force in East St. George come the next General Elections.

Mr. Speaker, we have done a lot of projects in the constituency, at present work is ongoing on the Calliaqua Town Hall. And now I mentioned the Calliaqua Town Hall Mr. Speaker, we have already spent nearly \$3 million on the Town Hall and the gentleman said, "when I win I am going to break it down redesign it". Well the people in the area, they decide, boy you cannot make \$2 million go sown the drain like that so we cannot allow you to win at all. And I know Mr. Speaker, that certain elements within, and I have been saying this on the platform, so it was not nothing new on radio and so on, certain elements, or I should not say elements, certain Members in the hierarchy, may not be the Members who are here but other persons glad when I defeated the gentleman because they say that he was selfish, he campaign on he own, he did not campaign as a team but that is besides the point Mr. Speaker.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you very much.

**HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN:** Yes, Mr. Speaker...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Just a minute, Honourable...

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker, I mean the Honourable Member is becoming gratuitous now, we know who he is referring to...

**HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN:** Mr. Speaker...

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** ...and the Honourable gentleman is not in this House.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Just a minute, just a minute, both of you are standing, you are moving what, you are on a motion...

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** I am finished, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You are finished?

**HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN:** Glad that you finish. Mr. Speaker, it seems...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** No, just a minute, I'm not...just sit for me please, I am not going to make.... Just sit for me please. The Member was standing, I do not know whether you standing on a point of order, you asking for the Member to give way, by the time I see a clarification he say he was finished but we do not operate that way in this Honourable House, we have to be more professional in the way we do things. I think I understand the point he was trying to raise or the information he was trying to share or whatever and you might have even heard me saying thank you, which is enough to say to the Minister, okay let's move on with the greetings or whatever he was doing and move away from the line which he was going and to just sit down and say "I'm finished" is just not good enough. I do not expect this of Honourable Members in this Honourable House. Thank you very much, you may continue.

**HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN:** So, Mr. Speaker, 2011 will continue to see the development in East St. George and I want at this point in time, Mr. Speaker, to thank you and the Clerk and the Members of this House for the tremendous support I have received over the years and I want to wish the best for all of us here in Parliament and hope that we continue to do the work that we are doing and to say that, Mr. Speaker, we must not be too thin skinned in the House. Thank you very much.

[Applause]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Further debate? Any further debate? Honourable Senator and Parliamentary Secretary in the Ministry of the Prime Minister.

**HONOURABLE ELVIS CHARLES:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to the budgetary estimates of 2011.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Just hold for me please, you have 45 minutes to do your presentation.

**HONOURABLE ELVIS CHARLES:** Thank you.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Right, okay go ahead.

**HONOURABLE ELVIS CHARLES:** I would personally like to compliment the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Honourable Dr. Ralph Gonsalves for crafting a budget that is realistic and certainly not exaggerated, one that points to development and one that engenders confidence in the hearts of the Vincentian people. [Loud applause]

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I am humbled to be a part of this Honourable House and sometimes it seems like a dream because as a youngster I always dreamt about being a politician and today it is a reality. [Applause] Mr. Speaker, I am honored to be a part of this great Party and I always compare this Party to the West Indies Cricket team of the late 70's and 80's where you had members who are outstanding in their pursuits, we have a Leader who is bold, decisive and assertive and who is not afraid to take on the many

challenges around him, and helps to bring out the best in the other team members and I am happy that I am a part of this team [Applause]. Mr. Speaker, it may seem like a joke, but I said to one of my brothers that one of these days when I am old and rocking my grandchildren in rocking chair, I will say to them I was a part of this great team [Cheers and Applause].

Mr. Speaker, I too would like to welcome the new Members of Parliament regardless to which political persuasion they share. I would like to return the compliment to my good friend the Honourable Nigel Stephenson, Parliamentary Representative for South Leeward, I would really like to return a compliment and I say to you brothers that the nation is looking at all of us and let us try at all times to be examples, let us try to do our best to further develop our country.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of National Security continues to be placed in high esteem in this country, Mr. Speaker, we see here that it would be given high priority again in 2011. This Ministry is responsible for determining climate, the atmosphere, the attitude and the general behaviour of everyone in this country and it is the bedrock of our nation, it determines our behaviour, how we behave, it determines if tourist come to our shores, it determines those who invest in our country because no investor wants to know that he is operating in volatile situations where there is no stability and he does not want to even harbor the thought that he would be able to get the gains from his investments and that is the reason why this Ministry is given such high priority in our country and I thank the Prime Minister, under whose guard this Ministry falls. He is the captain of the team, he is a man with vision, he knows what he is about [Applause] and I know that this Ministry will strive.

Mr. Speaker, this Ministry has several components and these work hand in hand in order to create this whole, if we look at Page 9. Item 40 of our estimates we would see that this Ministry has been a source of revenue for our country. The projections are that in 2011 it would realise nearly \$5½ million. Local shipping, it is projected that this would bring nearly \$4 million to our Treasury and the projections for 2012, 2013 are quite favourable because we see here that by 2013 it is hoped that we are going to make over \$600,000 more in this Ministry. And this is because of the structure, the infrastructure that was put in place by this Government why we are able to make such favourable projections.

I remember during my campaign, Mr. Speaker, I said, I love the Unity Labour Party because it does not do things in an ad hoc manner, things are systematic, there is always continuity.

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

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

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Point of order, could you just point again to the appropriate section of the estimates that he is referring, I had some difficulty finding it. [Interjection] Why you so rude?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, please just a minute [knocking on desk] the Honourable Member is rising on what sir?

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Simply, Mr. Speaker, he refers to a Page and a number and I have been trying to follow him, I simply ask him if he could assist me, that is all I have asked for...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Alright, thank you very much

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** ...before the rude intervention.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I myself was trying to find the Page in which he was speaking myself, I did not stop him but...

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** I couldn't find it, yeah, you have the same problem isn't it?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, I caution at the beginning of this session that if a Member rises let us deal with it, let me deal with it as Speaker of this House. Okay maybe you can assist us in letting us know where you are quoting from.

**HONOURABLE ELVIS CHARLES:** Mr. Speaker, if you would permit me, I made reference to Page 9

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Page 9, in the estimates you said? Page 9, yes. Okay go ahead.

**HONOURABLE ELVIS CHARLES:** Mr. Speaker, if I may continue, when we look at the constabulary we see here that this institution too is a source of revenue for our country. Mr. Speaker, we normally look at the constabulary as that institution that fosters law and order, fosters peace and Mr. Speaker, the services offered by the constabulary is of immeasurable value. Mr. Speaker, if you would permit me to say that there has been a radical shift in the way things are done in this institution in 2001 and that is because of the care, that is because of the passion that this Party has for law and order in this country. Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to Policemen who have said to me that they never had it so good before 2001, we joke about the salary they made and I remember one said to me that they can now drive a car and still save something. Things were not like that before. So the constabulary, members of the Police Force, is placed in high order by this administration. [Applause] And one thing of note, Mr. Speaker, is that even though we are operating in harsh economic times, we know for sure about the financial meltdown, we know that we are one of the small players in the game and what affects the develop countries affect us but I would like to point out that our salaries has not been altered in any way, the salaries of those policemen have not been altered in any way and they continue to enjoy the same higher standard of living that this administration has helped them to experience.

Mr. Speaker the police have been trying to shape the behaviour of our youths who have been influenced, many of them have been influenced in negative ways by looking at what goes on in the developed countries like America and England. Mr. Speaker, we know that our youths, they look up to these countries as their benchmarks as to how they should behave and we recognise that we cannot do it alone in this country, everyone has to be on board and that is the reason why the police have organised activities to help to shape our youths, point them forward so that they can make meaningful contribution in this country. When we look against Pan Against Crime, Mr. Speaker, many people feel that it is artificial but Mr. Speaker, I have seen guys who we looked at as castaways in our society, guys who have made an about turn and are now playing pan, now playing music and they behave much better than they did before, so I say that this is really a wonderful idea and I compliment this Party [Applause] for initiating the Pan Against Crime. To date, there are many steel bands, there are about eight steel bands scattered throughout communities in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and even the Grenadine Islands, even people in the Grenadine Islands have come on board, we have Bequia and Canouan,

they have come on board and they now have youngsters who are happy to play the pan, happy to find something meaningful to do and to keep away from trouble.

Mr. Speaker, whenever we heard about the Forensic Lab where testing of substances are done, we pointed to countries in the region, the more developed countries like Trinidad and Barbados, but Mr. Speaker, our country have been making great strides in establishing its own Forensic Lab right here so we can have results on substances done speedily. Mr. Speaker, a code of ethics for the staff is being worked upon at this time and discussions are held with the consultants as to how it should be done. So pretty soon, Mr. Speaker, we can boast about a Forensic Lab that is of substance.

Mr. Speaker, the ULP administration must be complemented for these initiatives. in fact things have happened so fast since 2001 that every day we wake up we expect something new from this administration, we expect some innovation, some bright idea and this is really based on our performance, how we behave. We certainly done good since 2001 and done better since 2001.

Mr. Speaker, in order to make the lives of our police more comfortable some many old police stations have been refurbished, new ones have been built, they look like hotels. Mr. Speaker, I am originally from Biabou and when I look at the Biabou Police Station I say to those guys, you live in luxury. The buildings are beautifully constructed; much thought went into the construction, now everyone is glad to be a police. One police officer said to me that he doesn't have to pick bugs from his clothes anymore, he sleeps in comfort, he doesn't want to rush home, he can stay at the station and feel comfortable and that is because the ULP administration thinks about every worker. And I would applaud the Prime Minister for that, he comes up with some very good ideas and I say he is a visionary, some times I wonder if he sleeps.

Mr. Speaker, pretty soon there will be institutions built on places like Mayreau; Union Island will soon have its own new Police Station and that is supposed to begin in 2011 and we are already in 2011.

Mr. Speaker I want to talk here about the Prisons, a fundamental component of our security system. I made mention before that the prisons were looked at as the place for the castaways of society. When you went to prison you were dumped behind those walls, you waited on your turn to get out but this Government thinks about the rehabilitation of prisoners, they are treated better than before. We look at the person, we do not condemn but hope that by helping to shape, hope to remodel the lives of those prisoners that they would come out into the society again and live more meaningful lives. This is clearly exemplified by the new building at Belle Isles, we often joke that people will want to go to prison to live in such lovely conditions but it is just a joke, Mr. Speaker, because those buildings, certainly they are attractive, the environment is healthy and we try to treat our prisoners in the best way so that they can feel as though they are human beings. Even the prisons are contributing to the revenue of this country, Mr. Speaker. I remember much noise were made about taking some of the most fertile lands in the Leeward side of the country and building a prison but today we can say the prisoners are showing off their farming skills, they are rearing pigs, chicken and now they are selling produce that are making money to help to feed them.

Mr. Speaker this was not so but again without exaggeration I will like to talk about the vision of the ULP administration where we teach those men to be industrious, where they can hone their farming skills so that

when they come out of prisons, when they are released they can live meaningful lives. And in 2011 work would continue on the completion of the facility and this was clearly stated in our estimates, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker our ports of entry are given much attention because when people travel we have to be careful when they come to our shores that they adhere to rules that they come here going through the right channels to get to our country. It is part of our security system and the airports also bring much revenue to our country. Revenue collection measures include taxes on internal trade and transactions, direct entry tax and we have several airports in this country that contribute to the revenue of this country. Airports in Canouan, Union Island, Bequia and most of all we are awaiting the completion of the Argyle International Airport where I am sure, Mr. Speaker, the revenue will be doubled, tripled and all of us will look at the airport as something that is meaningful and not a waste as some people postulated before.

Mr. Speaker, workers at the airports are exposed to proper training that is to help them to do their jobs in the best way possible. This government has never refused training for its human resource, it does not look at it as a waste of money because the human resource of a country is the most important resource. Mr. Speaker, it hurts me when I hear others talk about monies spent on training and education of our human resource as a waste of money, it clearly tells me that those people have no vision.

Mr. Speaker, those at the Immigration Department who deal with passport, they form part of all that system that have to do with traveling, they too must be complimented, they too are given much attention to do their work in the best way possible, they have been exposed to much training and education. We are collaborating with other countries and other institutions like the OECS in order to help to train our Immigration Officers because pretty soon with the opening of the Argyle International Airport we need people who are well trained and who know what they are about to ensure the smooth flowing of activities at the airport. We have to comply with international standards, Mr. Speaker and this is no time to look back, we as a small country must deliver the best product we can. I remember Dr. Jerrol Thompson saying he has gone to countries where people do not even know about St. Vincent and the Grenadines, where they look at his passport and doubt the authenticity of it, but I am happy and I am confident, Mr. Speaker, that pretty soon many people would be hearing about St. Vincent and the Grenadines and they will be coming to our shores. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker, we cannot underestimate the work of those in the Coast Guard, they brave the rough seas to protect our fisher folks, they brave the rough seas to prevent pirates who come here to do all kinds of strange activities, they prevent them from coming to our shores, and that is the reason why the ULP administration continues to invest in the Coast Guard. In fact we have held talks with the President of America, Mr. Barrack Obama who will be delivering two new 33 foot vessels to us at the cost of just of \$3 million to help us to intercept those on the high seas who are taking part in all kinds of illegal activities where we can cut down on this kind of behaviour making our waters more friendly and safe for us to operate. Mr. Speaker, monies were invested in a radar system that will help us to keep those who deal with illegal drugs, who deal with the trafficking of illegal drugs under cruise scrutiny. Mr. Speaker, we know about those, they develop hearts that are so wicked. Mr. Speaker, we know about the drugs situation in our country, we have seen many of our friends falling prey, some have died, some their behaviour will never be the same again, they have been lured into the drug trade by the quick money. But Mr. Speaker, money is not all to live in and I have known about families who have mourned their losses and who will continue to mourn at the passing of their loved ones and

that is the reason why, Mr. Speaker, the ULP administration continues to invest in the Coast Guard, it is not joy ride in any way. These men have work to do.

Mr. Speaker, old vessels will be retrofitted and even to expand the action, the activities of the Coast Guard. Lands have been sited in Canouan where a new Coast Guard base will be established with the help of the Americans. Mr. Speaker, we are very close to the USA and activities that go on there normally affect us and that is the reason why our government would collaborate with the Americans in preventing the use or the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in our region. There are programmes, the Secure Seas programme where we all trying to make our waters safe. Mr. Speaker, we know about the illegal firearms in this country, sometimes we wonder how they get here because everybody seems to have a firearm. When you listen to the boys on the block, you listen to the talk, everybody seems to have something. They will go home for their thing. Mr. Speaker, we do not want a country like the Wild Wild West. I long for the day when we can walk our streets and feel absolutely secure again, I may sound old fashioned, but Mr. Speaker, I yearn for the day when our country will be a model country, when tourist can walk our streets with their head held high where they can feel secure, where they can be in the company of friends and Mr. Speaker that is the reason why the ULP administration continues to invest in the security of our country. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker, we talk about the firemen, the fire service, I have heard many crude jokes about the firemen, they only reach when the house is already burnt, but Mr. Speaker, we have unfavourable terrain, sometimes...the saying will always be true that when the firemen reach these places the house is already down, we do not have friendly terrain like Barbados where it is flat. But Mr. Speaker we have to compliment who are always there, always ready for action. We have to compliment them. [Applause] Many of us feel like there job is not something of value but I now what it means to lose a house through fire, I have seen families mourn. There is a friend of mine right now who, Mr. Speaker, she has lost everything because of fire and she comes to me she calls me almost everyday about helping her to get back her home. Mr. Speaker, the ULP administration is a friend of the people and I believe we are continuing in that vein.

NEMO is also a component of our security system. When at the passage of hurricane Tomas, when people became anxious and angry that they were not receiving treatment immediately, many of them had many bad things to say about this institution but it is made up of real flesh and blood people who have there limitations and their shortcomings too and they operate using the limited resources that they have but I will continue to shower praise on NEMO. They were ready, the members where ready [Applause] at the passage of Tomas, clearing trees making roads passable again. When breadfruit trees where lying on the houses of people on the roofs, NEMO was ready to help. And Mr. Speaker, they continue to collaborate with CDEMA and other organisations in the Caribbean that deal with natural disasters. The members continue to be trained, they continue to be educated, they continue to be placed in a state of readiness should a natural disaster strikes.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak briefly about the energy situation in our country. The energy supplies are of fundamental importance if a country is to develop and more so develop economically and that is the reason why Governments always talk about the efficient use of energy. Even now we talk about preventing wastage. Mr. Speaker, we are not an oil rich country and most of the electricity in St. Vincent is generated by the use of diesel. And Mr. Speaker we continually lament the fact that the importation Bill for diesel is very high and this is the time when we have to be more efficient when we have to prevent wastage in our Ministries and even in

our homes. Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, when I hear people talk about their light bills it sound as though they have business places but if we become more sensible, if we become more scrupulous as to how we use electricity; I am certain that the importation bill for the diesel and other forms can be significantly reduced. Mr. Speaker we will continue to cement our gains from the PetroCaribe and ALBA agreements, we will not unsign ALBA.  
[Applause]

Mr. Speaker, on the capital side two engines have purchased and installed at the Lowmans Bay Power Plant while the existing ones have been modernised. Mr. Speaker, at the end of 2010 one of the two engines have been commissioned and by April 2011 the other would be up and running. Mr. Speaker, when those engines at the Lowmans Bay Power Plant are up and running we will have about 17.2 megawatts of installed generating capacity. Mr. Speaker, this Power Plant was not placed at Lowmans by any stroke of luck it is because of the vision of the ULP administration, with development at Buccama....

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, Mr. Speaker..

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Point of order, will you please state your point of order.

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** The Honourable Member is misleading this House and is not being factual with respect to the development at Lowmans Bay Power Plant.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** When I asked, as I indicated earlier, you have to quote me the point of order the section.

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Its 35 (2) I think it might be Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** 35 (2) you think it might be.

**HONOURABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** [Laughing] [Inaudible]

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** *Yo love dat eh?*

**HONOURABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** [Laughing]

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** I can take my seat you know, because you seem not to want to accommodate me.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** It seem what?

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Mr. Speaker, I withdraw the point of order.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** There is no 35 (2) anyway.

[Laughter]

**HONOURABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** 35 aint got no 2. [Laughter]

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

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

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

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yes Sir.

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** You have made the point of the respect for this House means serious business, Mr. Speaker. Members have been standing on points of order, you have subjected me to a exercise which has not been done for others.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** That is not true.

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** The point of order, Mr. Speaker, is that the Honourable Member is misleading the House in that the Lowmans Bay Power Plant was started long before the ULP, they designed the work and the project...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Okay.

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** ...before the ULP came into office and they wisely continued on that project. Today they are going to another step to introduce bunker C fuel to give them more energy efficiency at the Plant, but it is not fair to speak about the vision of the ULP with respect to this project which was previously conceived. That is the point I am making.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Oh, alright thank you. But arm, thank you very much, thank you for sitting as well. Before you continue let me just make one correction, I said at the beginning of my...when I was expressing my thanks on my re-election here to parliament that I will be insisting that members, when they stand on a point of order quote the point of order on which he is standing and it is not true to say that I am insisting that you state the point of order, that is not correct to say so. I indicated that long time ago that I will be dealing with that and I did that for good reason because many of us stand up here on a point of order and we are not sure about the point of order, and it has just been demonstrated here, and that is the point I am making. Thank you very much.

Honourable Member.

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Mr. Speaker, I...may I Mr. Speaker?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yes you may.

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** I stood and I explained the objection to the comment of the Honourable Member, I would assume that you are going to rule on the matter and ask him to retract his statement because it would be on record that what he said is true and it is not factual, Mr. Speaker, and that is the point I am raising, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, but your correction which he has not denied also stands on record, isn't that true? He has not denied it, it also stands on record. Continue with the debate.

**HONOURABLE ELVIS CHARLES:** Mr. Speaker, in addition to the expansion of the Lowmans Bay Power Plant.....

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** [Inaudible]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** But you are going to argue with me Honourable Member, I just told you...

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** [Inaudible]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I just said that I accepted the fact that he did not deny what you said, and has accepted what you said.

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** [Inaudible]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, could you continue with the debate please.

**HONOURABLE ELVIS CHARLES:** Mr. Speaker, I'll continue. Mr. Speaker, work has been done at substations at Cane Hall and South Rivers and work would continue to be done in order to improve the quality of electricity in this country [Applause]. Mr. Speaker, the quality and reliability of electricity in north eastern side of our country would be greatly enhanced. This will improve the Government's rural electrification programme in keeping with its policy to electrify every household in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, you have eight minutes to conclude your debate.

**HONOURABLE SENATOR ELVIS CHARLES:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to use the eight minutes to talk about Central Kingstown. I will always hold the people of Central Kingstown in high esteem, those who have supported me and those who I know and I believe in my heart that in 2015, if I live to see 2015 I'll be the representative of Central Kingstown. [Applause] I believe that. Mr. Speaker, I will continue to socialise with my constituents, I will not use any other means than being friendly, I will not use any other means than educating the people so that they can see who is the quality candidate. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker, I am not a person with money, I have always been among the people, in fact I have been there since 1995, I did not go to them through politics, I thought at the Lodge Village Government School for six years, I always recognise my past students, I sit on the block with them, eat the breadfruit that they eat, play cricket in the road with them, help them in whatever way and I know, Mr. Speaker, that there are many hearts that are paining that they did not support Elvis Charles for one reason or the other. Come 2015, Mr. Speaker, that is the reason why I start going back in my constituents and start campaigning you know, [Laughter] I go there, I choose an area every week and I go to that area and I be among the people, Mr. Speaker.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker, Point of Order.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Point of order. Order.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** I cite rule number 37 and I'll read it for the benefit of Members of the House. The caption is "scope of debate".

**“a debate upon a Motion, a Bill or Amendment shall be relevant to such Motion, Bill or Amendment except in the case of a motion for an adjournment of the House.”**

The Member seems to be carrying on a political campaign, Mr. Speaker, which has no relevance whatsoever to the Bill that is being debated here or the motion that is being debated here.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you very much. I will deal with this matter. If the Member for Northern Grenadines is asking me to rule against any Member who would address matters concerning the constituency in which they have interest then I can honestly understand the point of order. But the Honourable Member like every other Member here and particularly even at Christmas time and this one is coming even more significant that it is after a general election and is expressing some thanks you to the people who supported him, and I see that has no relevance really to the point that you are making, Honourable Member, because I think that you yourself will have the opportunity to divert from the matters that we are discussing before this Honourable House to deal with matters relative to your constituency and if you are saying to me that when you start in that direction I should stop you, I'll be quite willing to do so is that is your desire.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the clarification and I can assure you, I will make full use of your ruling.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you very much. Honourable Member, you are congratulating the people of or saying thank you as a matter of fact to the people, could you kindly continue with your thank you.

**HONOURABLE SENATOR ELVIS CHARLES:** Mr. Speaker, I will change note a bit by saying to the constituency that the one laptop per student would also affect Central Kingstown and pretty soon every child in Central Kingstown of school age would be getting his laptop that would assist them in their homework and their general resource. Mr. Speaker, let us say in five years time so much would have happened I can picture in my mind eyes, students who are sharper who are brighter. Constituents is able to make decisions, worthwhile decisions and who would not be easily fooled.

Mr. Speaker, crime prevention would again receive assistance and if we are honest there are pockets in Central Kingstown that people normally refer to as hotbeds. Mr. Speaker, Central Kingstown has talented people who mean well, people who are talented in various forms of sports who academically sound and sometimes it is really...it hurts when people refer to Central Kingstown as a place that they will not want to live, they wouldn't want to come to watch a football match and I realise when I walk the streets of my constituency the people are friendly, the people treat me with respect, I treat them with respect and I feel at home among them.

Mr. Speaker, I am happy that the police will continue to work with the constituents and that they would seek ways in helping the youths to chart there way forward to make meaningful contributions to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, I am really heartened, I thank you, may God bless everyone.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Further debate. Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines, I recognise you just give me a minute to reset my time. When you are ready, Honourable Member.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to the debate the 2011 Budget as was presented in this Honourable House by the Prime Minister

and Minister of Finance. Mr. Speaker one of the first things that I noticed with the Budget Address is that it was quite a bit shorter than usual and we got home a little bit earlier last night than usual and sort of in passing I reflected on it and I thought well, the election had an unintended consequence that it resulted in the shrinking of the Government side of the House and then we had a shrinking in the Budget and the Estimates from \$913 million down to \$786 I think and in the Prime Minister's own address he was a little bit more concise than usual, to put it my way.

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** No, I know you are a loquacious person so telling you that you were brief I did not consider that a compliment. Mr. Speaker, it is a lean Budget in the colloquial language we say it is '*marga*' in more than simply just the number of pages, it also [interruption] [Laughter] whatever it means. Mr. Speaker, the Budget as presented by the Prime Minister it offers very little to the people and on the one hand there are provisions which gives something, give a little and on the other hand there are provisions which take away a lot and I will go into some of those measures as we go along. But you know, I suppose its fitting because during the election campaign, ULP, they talked about owning the campaign and owning the Government, well suppose in owning the Government they mean you have to pay for it, so the people in this country are going to pay a very high price as we can see in some of the measures that are included here in this Budget.

Mr. Speaker, one of the most obvious things in this Budget is there is no relief from that, which is something that we have campaign on and people have asked for generally. You know during...after the election and leading up to the preparation of the Budget there was talk about there in not being an increase an increase in VAT. I suppose in an effort to try to change the subject or the focus of the debate on VAT from one which we say should be a position of reducing or removing VAT on basic food items to give some relief to people in hard economic times especially to poor people because VAT is a flat tax. But nothing is presented in this Budget in that regard, in fact there are many measures that seek to take more money out of people's pocket and Mr. Speaker, the people of this country and particularly the poor people they are going to feel it as time goes on and there is no relief in sight, I mean it is not a matter of temporary measures because there is no real prospect based on the measures that I hear of any economic renewal or growth in the short term. In fact the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank in its own report for the first half of 2010 says pretty much the same thing. In the meantime the national debt continues to rise and investment in the productive sectors are few and far between, the projects that I intended to generate income, jobs, revenue for Government, Mr. Speaker, especially those that are mentioned in the section of the Budget Speech or the Budget Address may seem some distance away or even speculative to the point that I wonder why they will include it here.

Mr. Speaker, during my address in the debate in the Estimates last week I spent quite a bit of time on the provisions for tourism because as I indicated then that is one of the areas of responsibility that is been given to me by the Leader of Opposition as a critic on this side of the House. I want to return to that area but in a more general way because it is not just a question in dealing with what's though the facts and figures are in the Estimates, or the proposals are in the Budget Address but it is also reflecting on the quality of the leadership that we have in the particular ministry and to let the Minister know that a lot of people are counting on him, relying on him and will hold him accountable for the performance of the Ministry. I have no apology to make,

Mr. Speaker, to say that during the last four or five years the Ministry of Tourism has suffered greatly from a lack of Leadership. There seem to be no real vision, no direction and just a lot of wild promises and statements that were made by the former Minister. For example, suggesting that, I think either the last year or the year before, that within seven or eight years we are going to surpass Barbados in terms of visitor arrival. Or to say that in 2007 that the Mt. Wynne Peter's Hope project which has been a perennial favourite of this Administration, that for sure it was going to be started in 2008. I recall that, Mr. Speaker and I said that it will be good but 2008 came nothing happened. In the present Budget Address of the Honourable Prime Minister that particular project seems to have moved down the list from one that is being whether discussion with investors or potential investors to one where there is just some basic references to it and I will find the particular page. At Page 14 Mr. Speaker, of the Budget Address it says, 'these ongoing imminent cases of foreign direct investment', referring to certain projects there was mentioned about, 'amounting in the aggregate hundreds of millions of dollars and on the mainland', this is the relevant part, St. Vincent 'serious enquiry continues for the tourism development at Mt. Wynne Peter's Hope'. That is quite a come down from 2007 when it says it was definitely going to start in 2008 and there was some expectations. But after so much effort I know the previous Minister Baptiste had as well expressed a lot of interest in it and to her credit she seems to have been working very hard to make it come to fruition, but as it is now, Mr. Speaker, it seems no more than a pipe dream.

Mr. Speaker, the point I am trying to make is that in the Ministry of Tourism the Minister has to be confident enough to make proposals to lead but also to seek advice in the industry who know better, they know what is required. You cannot simply because of the mantle of Minister which you are responsible that is where the bucks stops but it doesn't make you omniscient, you do not all of a sudden know everything in the Ministry. There are people who have been doing this, running hotels, guest houses, taxi services, whatever who know very keenly and I am in touch with a lot of them, what is required. And a lot of the things that need to be done to make a big difference and big things, you just need to be aware and to do them.

What's more, Mr. Speaker, we cannot promote tourism in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and have an ambivalent attitude towards the Grenadines. You cannot have on the one hand you want to develop tourism, because the majority of it is in the Grenadines and doing it grudgingly, it has to be embraced, Mr. Speaker. As a national enterprise in which Grenadines having been endowed with those attributes which tourist tend to be attracted to initially will be the easiest part of our tourism product to sell. But then from there we go on and develop other things, Mr. Speaker. But I have sensed an ambivalence over the years in its approach to the Grenadines. Sometimes I wonder if there is an attitude of killing the goose that lays the golden egg because when we ask for assistance with obvious problems like the problem with the yachts, we get silence, nothing. Yet the fees on the yachts that are charged keep going up over and over again as more funds are being taken out of the industry and brought here into the consolidated fund and nothing put in areas that produce them. [Applause] And it hurts, Mr. Speaker, because and I will tell you something, St. Vincent is a unitary state, one that I champion and cherish [Interjection] I did not say that.

Mr. Speaker, lately you know, we had two demonstrations outside in this....and I have mentioned this because in the instance when it occurred, I did not give the satisfaction to those persons who said the words, but as I departed this Honourable House last week Friday going to catch the ferry to go to Bequia there were thorns that were being thrown at me to tell me to catch the boat to go back to Bequia, the same thing happen, Mr. Speaker,

as I departed this House on Monday and Mr. Speaker, the person to here credit who said it to me I challenged her on it and she immediately recognised that what she did was wrong and she became a lot more conciliatory, I think some what even apologetic. There is no place in our country for that sort of approach [Thumping on desk] and I say it because I have seen the same ambivalence with regard to serious problems that I raised here in this Honourable House. Last week I talked about the deteriorating conditions of the roads that are so dangerous now... [Background talking]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Members please let the Member...

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:**...and I asked about it and the Honourable Senator Francis, his remark would be to ask Sir James or something to that effect, about it. Mr. Speaker, the point of the matter is tourism is the most important foreign exchange earn in this country, it is the short term, medium term, the hope for future of this economy and the livelihood of people in this country it is a fact the Grenadines contributes most of it, most of the earnings to the treasury of this country. In absolute terms and if you measure it in terms of proportionally the contribution of the Grenadines is even greater. And it is not too much to ask as the representative that some of those funds stay there to take care of the urgent and serious needs of the communities and I do not have to feel that when I come to this House that I am coming from a dependency begging for a handout, those days are long gone. We expect to be treated fairly, that is all people asked. This is why you couldn't understand the outrage that people felt when you impose the dollar tax on the wharf because you only could see a dollar, you couldn't see the insult. And Mr. Speaker it is the same thing, my constituents tell me this all the time, they look at the deterioration that is taking place, business cannot stay open because of the rise in crime. People cannot leave their yachts because they cannot come ashore because it is unsafe and you ask for a little patrol or something, there was a Customs boat there in the harbour, when I asked why it was removed, the Prime Minister said it came here for maintenance, routine maintenance I think was the answer to the question, it hasn't returned. It would be more useful Port Elizabeth Bay, Admiralty Bay, it would be more useful patrolling in Union Island, in Cumberland, Wallilabou.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke last week about some specific areas that more funds need to be put into. I spoke about the Easter Regatta, this is world famous, well known it is bigger every year, every year the same \$15,000 or thereabout is allocated to them and people work voluntarily, heroically to do it every year, tremendous benefit to the economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. But I wish also to indicate to the Minister and to the Government as whole that we have to be more proactive it is not just a matter of putting a brochure and going overseas and trying to sell what we have, everybody is actively developing more and more activities. In Grenada, St. Lucia there are mariners being opened all the time. Twenty-five years ago, you to Chaguaramas in Trinidad and it was an abandoned military base, now you there it is one of the largest yachting centres in the Caribbean. Grenada is also taking a lot of our yachting business, and it frustrates me when we seem to think that if we simply continue to do what we are doing that some how magically we will get a result. You have to do something different. Take for example, Mr. Speaker, we have to develop more events, tourism in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, in the Northern Grenadines and in the Southern Grenadines after Easter falls off very dramatically, so we have to do something more to bring people in from the Caribbean Islands.

The fares for LIAT are ridiculously expensive. We put a lot of money into it but we seem to get very little back in return. This weekend coming up we have an event they call the Bequia Music Fest which started small and

grew and I hope everybody comes because it is a lot of fun but more important than that, as I tell the people who are behind a lot of these things, people start these things you know because they are fun, there are cultural activities and so on but I look for the economical angle on it. If we can do it for two days instead of one, we do two days, if we can do three days we do three days, four days we do four days, if we can do four sites instead of one, do four sites. So we always have to be looking for ways to maximize it. You see they do not wait on the Government, that is the point I am making. But the Government has a role to play, you cannot stand off and say that you were elected essentially to watch everybody else perform. What do you think it is, a beauty contest? Government has a role to play and if you do not believe that then you shouldn't be in Government. The point is this, Mr. Speaker, the music fest have grown over the years because people have put effort into it and they have gradually increased it, now people actually book vacation to come to Bequia Music Fest. Rather than being there and enjoying the event, they actually book to come, I know this for a fact because a friend of mine she was here over Christmas with her family, they went away to work, they are coming back this week for Music Fest. And this is an example of how, with good planning the support of dedicated people you can achieve a lot but with a bit more support as and planning on the part of Government and the Tourism Authority instead of taking the eight or nine years that it has taken we can perhaps go even farther and we should always be exploring ways in which to maximize the benefit from it.

In particular, Mr. Speaker, the period between Easter and October, I know few years ago I used to see a lot of people, school trips and various other things of that nature coming in to St. Vincent and the Grenadines from Barbados, St. Lucia, Trinidad, I do not see as many any more. I suspect it has something to with the cost for travel and it is affecting us very badly and we have to find some ways, Mr. Speaker, to get around it. And do not tell me International Airport because that is not the solution, these are regional tourists, you do not get many people coming out of North America in August and September. I think the Honourable Senator Slater, he appears to be in the House for comic relieve, Mr. Speaker, [Interjection] well it is because everything he takes as a joke, every comment I make he takes as a joke.

Mr. Speaker, I also wish to continue to advocate, there are two areas in our tourism product that I think we have a lot more potential to develop but which we are not, we do not seem to be that interested in. Every year you have people return here to St. Vincent and the Grenadines, they come to Bequia, Union Island, mainland, whatever to spend the winter months here and they come they come in, these are people you look at their passports and for the last ten years, you could have seen for the last ten years that they have come here every year. Now every five years you get a passport, so you can see that they come back here every year, year after year and yet when they return we make them feel as though they are strangers. They are permitted one month initially to stay in the county and then in order to get an extension, they must get someone to vouch for them to say that they will leave the country when required if they get an extension for another three months. They do it, but I know a lot of these people in Bequia, they feel as though we do not appreciate them. What is more is that we can actively enlist these same people to market our destination as the perfect place for retirees to come in winter. A lot of them go down to Florida, many do it because of the medical reasons, they can have good health care but we also have to develop that to give them a certain sense of security that if they come here that it is a safe, idyllic environment in which to spend their retirement money. So it is an area, Mr. Speaker, a niche market, but one that I think has tremendous potential.

It is a similar thing with the people who are on the yachts, I said this last week because I have known of incidents, you have people on cruising yachts, they going up and down the islands and they decide which island to stay in, why are we going to harass such a person to tell them that they cannot stay in our harbours for three weeks, three months or whatever, when all they do is spend money in the bars, in the groceries, in the laundry services, buying services from the people who provision yachts, who fix sails and so on. These are small individual items when they add up they put monies in people's pockets, they can pay their mortgage, they can send their children to school. It is going to be solved with one big silver bullet, you know, everybody looking for one big project that is going to transform tourism but that is not how it works. I mean when you see how the large destinations struggle and grab to try and get every single person, when you think that they have such a large market and yet we seem to be saying, well we do not really matter whether you come or not. That attitude has to change, Mr. Speaker, and I agree with the Honourable Senator Elvis Charles when he said that the Immigration Officers, they have a role to play in it because they have been guilty of not really appreciating that their job is not necessarily to keep people out, but to admit those persons who are genuine visitors and friends. The enforcement attitude, Mr. Speaker, is too predominant. Mr. Speaker we may wish to consider as well as an attendant part of the retirement is for health reasons, you know, people come south and it is an area we need to explore rather than just advertising for the sea, sand and sun type of tourist.

There are other persons who might find this a more attractive environment than that sort of junket tourism. There have been a lot of talks about mariners. Mariners come with good and they come with bad, they are trade-offs but that is the nature of development, Mr. Speaker. You have environmental concerns but these can be managed, I think we need to pay a lot more attention to the development of mariners in St. Vincent and the Grenadines so that we can attract more of the yachts that are, what you call, the big spenders, who will be here to receive service and also to enjoy our hospitality. Not much... [Interjection] no you charge, the whole point of it is to make money. I am a very friendly and inviting person but when it comes to tourism it is not just about hospitality it also about making money so we have to do what is necessary to maximize and you have to do it on a daily basis one tourist at a time. We do not have that sense of urgency of mission, Mr. Speaker. I have seen some of the sites, I have been to Montreal Gardens, a fabulous facility, Mr. Speaker, one that really we should try to replicate in other parts of the mainland because I am not easily impressed with these things, but I was blown away by the scale of it, the beauty of it and the attractiveness of the site, and still we do not hear very much about it but it is something I think that we can develop more. There are to be a much more active role on the part of the state to promote that sort of development on the mainland to make more sites available, more opportunities for people to spend every dollar in their wallet and maybe even to use even their credit cards.

Mr. Speaker, there are certain obvious things, I mean you look around Port Elizabeth Harbor, this is where I come from so I know it keenly and this is the tourist season, at least if we do not care to clean it up for the people who live there all year round then make an effort during the tourist season so that it looks a little more presentable for visitors. You know when somebody is coming to your home, even if sometimes you might leave your slippers by the door and so on when you there, when they come you may put them aside or tidy up a little. Is it too much to ask to have the people who are working there to do something to make the harbor look a little bit better, it looks abandoned. And I am sure that it is not the only example.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to say a few words about the airport because I know this is the Government's flagship project as the Prime Minister said, but I asked a question in the House last week as to when the Argyle International Airport will be completed and the Prime Minister said at the end of 2012, because there had been speculations in the public that maybe the date had been pushed back or something to that effect but I am glad to see that he has been firm on the date and he has repeated here in the Budget Address, but I hate to be the bearer of bad tidings, but I pass by there that site and had a visit and I do not see, Prime Minister, how that is a realistic objective. Not even close. I have been asking some of my own fellow citizens about it because it is not just an election promise it is a major infrastructural project which has serious implications for resource allocation in this country for dept servicing well into the future after we have passed from this stage. It has the potential to bankrupt this country, that is not an exaggeration and we have always been concerned about the financing. If Mr. Speaker, we do not get that right, we are in for very very serious problems. And I do not see it... I ask as I said my fellow citizens, people who I pass on the streets, friends I talk to and I ask them about it, some are ULP supporters some our NDP supporters, and just yesterday I asked the question, I say will how long did the Reigate Building take to complete? I said maybe four years, somebody said no, it is probable more like five years. The Argyle International Airport work started in August 2008, so if it were to finish in 2012, it would be completed in less time than the Reigate Building. I hope you can do it but I remain skeptical, Mr. Speaker.

The financing concerns me because our major contributor is Venezuela, I thought we were getting a grant, we got a loan, low interest loan so that is better than borrowing at commercial rate which is what we were doing before from the National Insurance Service and First Caribbean International Bank. But we still have to pay back US\$50 million at interest rates I think of 2% or 2 ½% and we haven't reached half way in the project yet and you know what the Prime Minister said in his Budget Address, that I think he said three quarters of the earth works have been completed.

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker.

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

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** If my Honourable friend would give way, I said two thirds, actually I said 65% but I said more or less two thirds. Just want you to get your facts straight.

**DR THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** No, no, I saw that in your Budget Address, but I was pretty sure that I heard you said three quarters, but if you did not I take the correction. [Interjection] Well facts, I am dealing here with facts too. The point is this Mr. Speaker, if our major contributor has already made his commitment that is \$50 million for Venezuela and we are not half way there yet, the question is where is the remainder of the funding going to come from.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member you, have 10 minutes to...

**DR THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** ...conclude.

**DR THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** And Mr. Speaker, the question is this as well, if we do not get that additional funding from that source where are we going to get the funds to complete this major

infrastructural project. We cannot build the Argyle International Airport simply by borrowing, we cannot afford to service that sort of debt. We see that the amount to complete it has gone up from the original estimate, I think by thirty something million dollars. There has to be a major grant component or other investment that we do not have to pay back or some partnership with some investor who are willing to put up the matter. Mr. Speaker, these are serious concerns for us. And there is the matter of the wind study which causes me a lot of concern as well, I raise this before, I find it somewhat disconcerting to say the least that we are building the airport while we are conducting the wind study. I mean if somebody told me that the land upon which I was going to put my house, they may have some concerns about it because it might be unstable, do you think I would say to the builder go ahead and start the foundation and pour the concrete while the engineer test the soil to see if it can sustain it? That is not bold or visionary, that is blind and reckless.

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I'm wondering if my Honourable friend would give way. Mr. Speaker, we really shouldn't in 2011 be repeating these inaccuracies, the matter has been canvassed over and over again. From the studies it pointed out that if there is a wind factor in excess in a particular level and IKO has the guidelines, what you would need would be a crosswind runway for the small planes which fly to the Grenadines, and the cost of that is less than half of 1% of the overall cost and therefore manageable. But the wind rose at the ET Joshua which had indicated tentatively the kind of data that the wind did not reach any way near that prohibited measurement and that the four years thus far of wind studies have in fact confirmed what was that general view but even if the wind consistently was over the limit, it is not for the planes, whether its the dash 8s or the jets but the smaller which fly to the Grenadines. These are matters which the MM and M Consultants have long established. So that, for my friend to repeat this and then to go on to say it is reckless, I mean it is just not becoming, really.

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

**DR THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, time will tell. I wish now to say something about one of the revenue measures and that has to do with the abolition of the stamp duty for the exempted person and that is at Page 50 of the Prime Minister's the Minister of...the Finance Minister's address. What it says, Mr. Speaker, as it is now persons within a certain category parents, grandparents and child, brother and sister, spouses can make a voluntary or at least a deed of gift which is what everybody knows to one another and pass on property in that way without paying any stamp duty. The measure as I understand it now will remove that exemption which has been in place, I think since the 1990's and require for those transactions that a 10% stamp duty be paid. Mr. Speaker this is going to create a lot of hardship for people. I'll give you a common example, you have a situation where a young man buys a piece of land, he goes out he works, he starts his house which is part of our tradition, part of our culture, that is why we have such a good housing stock, particularly in the Grenadines, he then gets married, the deed is in his name, builds his house, he has a mortgage in the bank, 10 years, 15 years down the road he pays of the mortgage and suddenly decides now they have to decide who to get the wife's name or the husband's name on the title deed. The piece of land that he paid \$15,000 for now developed in Bequia is \$500,000, so in order for his spouse now to own a part of that property, they have to pay the government stamp duty of \$50,000, that is impossible. That is going to be a serious, serious problem, it is a common occurrence, that people they do not deal with these matters until

sometimes the children are grown and gone and they are now thinking about how they are going to pass the property on to their families.

In 1993 under the NDP administration the so-called debt dues were removed so that if you passed properties through a Will or the administration of estates you basically only had the legal fees to pay and the legal fees are nothing substantial. So now you have a situation, grandfather wants to leave a little piece of land, in Bequia it is very real because you cannot afford public lands anymore, it is just not available, people use to refuse, four and five thousand square feet of land, they just begging for a piece of land to put a house on, it comes from a member of the family who subdivide a little piece and give it to him, but the land values are high and so this person now have to pay the government 10% of the value of the property, and who sets the value, normally is the government because even sometimes you get a valuator certified to do a valuation and then present it to the Valuation Office and it's basically ignored.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Three minutes to conclude, sir.

**DR THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker, I ask your indulgence for about five.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Three minutes to conclude.

**DR THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** And the rationale to say that Lawyers abuse the process, Mr. Speaker, it just doesn't wash, this is simply a money grab. Listen, there is a declaration that lawyers must sign to do a transaction of this nature and it basically asks them to verify and to state that the transaction falls within the exempted category. If there is an abuse, deal with the abuse, but this provision basically throws out the baby with the bathwater. You are taking a sledge hammer to kill a fly [interjection] well alright to kill a rat. [Laughter] [Interjection] If you say so.

But Mr. Speaker, this is an iniquitous measure which will cause a lot of problems; it will cause a lot of problems for people especially in areas where you have high land prices. You know what will happen, I heard the Honourable, Minister Burgin, I cannot remember the portfolio, Mr. Speaker, Housing, I apologise, he spoke about transforming dead property into live property but what will happen, if a family member has to give you a little piece of land and they say well the land is valued at a \$100,000, in order for you to get the deed for that land you have to pay the government \$10,000, they will want to use that \$10,000 to buy cement and steel because that is how they build on those small parcels of land. And so they will move on to the property and build without a deed and therefore creating a shelter but no real equity that they can use as collateral. Mr. Speaker, so we will be going back to where we supposedly have come from with the introduction with the Possessory Titles Act. And I asked the Honourable Prime Minister, Minister of Finance because he understands these matters to think about the implications of it, if there is abuse deal with the abuse, I mean this happens in all tax regimes, you plug, you call them loop holes and lawyers make a lot of money trying to find. But often they are not illegal; they just tax avoidance, rather than tax evasion. So what you do, there is a legal difference, the lawyers will understand that, the lawyers will understand that but, Mr. Speaker, you plug the loophole and you move on, you do not abolish the entire programme which has such beneficial effect because now what you are saying is that in order for a family member, parents to pass on property to their children, they have to make

a will so it goes to probate or administration, lengthier process and it can be quite expensive as well because the legal fees are expensive.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Alright Honourable Member, I'm going to ask you to wind up please at this time.

**DR THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** So I am asking that this matter be reconsidered and the idea that people abuse it simply doesn't wash because how can you misrepresent that a man is married to a woman because spouses are also covered. The exemption is taken from them; you can prove easily whom a person is married to. Mr. Speaker I thank you for your indulgence, there are many, many matters that I can deal with but I will do it in different arena, the various problems that I confront in my constituency with the roads, the Clive Tannis Playing Field, the fixing of the Paget Farm Playing Field, these are all the things that improve the life of people so much and they cost so little. I am hopeful though one, maybe one, good thing that Hurricane Tomas might have done is that it took off a piece of the roof of the Clive Tannis Playing Field because it was in such dilapidated condition, I think it was the only building in Bequia that was actually damaged by Tomas. So maybe some funds can be used to develop that. So in conclusion, Mr. Speaker, the Budget as is presented, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition pointed to a lot of the weakness in it, the lack of funding, big gaps you know, like a hot air balloon I suppose it goes up but it must also come back down and we will see, Mr. Speaker, as we go through the rest of this year what the evidence are from what we have seen in the Budget is that we are in for difficult times. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Further debate.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** I crave your indulgence through you to ask the question about when are we likely to... how long are we likely to go tonight for my own personal convenience, I am not sure about that.

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** [Inaudible] to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition that normally that these debates we tend to go until about 9 O'clock sometimes we go a little earlier, sometimes we go a little later depends on other matters during the course of the day. So that is basically it there is no precise close off time, we try to get the debates concluded in this week.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** The refreshments are ready and maybe we can take that now and then we can after that continue, because by that time we will be well refreshed and we will have the strength and the energy to go on [Interjection] until midnight you said?

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I beg to move that this Honourable House do stand suspended for Members convenience until 7p.m.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Members the question is that this Honourable House do stand suspended until 7 p.m.

**House suspended at 6:30 p.m. for tea.**

**House resumed at 7:20 p.m.**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Prayer, be seated. Honourable Members after that of course sumptuous break I think we are all we sustained and ready to continue for several more hours. There is no water? Oh, I did not realise that the water had gone.

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** [Inaudible]

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** [Inaudible]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Very well, Honourable Member, very well, very well. Honourable Members we continue the debate. Debate, Honourable Member for South Leeward. [Interjection] Hello? [Interjection] Well I cannot determine who will speak but I believe in the interest of time the 45 minutes might be more [inaudible]. Honourable Member you have 45 minutes to speak.

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to make my contribution to the 2011 budgetary debate. Again I love to do what is necessary, I believe that every man has a duty above all things to give God thanks for the breath of life that he has loan and I want to take the opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the God of Heaven who has given me the privilege to stand here in this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, having listened to the presentation of the Prime Minister I really listened with great expectation because I am from a school of thought which says God is gonna do great things through anybody who will do things and do not care who is going to get the glory after and it is that same philosophy or one of the reasons why I actually entered politics because, Mr. Speaker, my purpose I believe is to ensure that there is a better way of life for every person that I come into contact with. And anybody that does anything that is beneficiary to the development of any individual and by extension the citizens of St. Vincent and the Grenadines I am very grateful to that and I would not call it bad if I am not the person who has contributed to that person having a better quality of life.

Mr. Speaker, I was hoping that from the Budget presentation I was going to see hope for the citizens of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, I was really hoping that despite we are on opposing political fences that the Budget would have offered hope to our citizens but I have to say, Mr. Speaker, that there is precious little to look forward to for the year 2011. We have had over the past five years experience, what I refer to as the paying of labour and unfortunately it will appear as though the citizens of St. Vincent and the Grenadines must once again brace themselves for another year of labour pain. [interjection], five years, I wouldn't say that if I were you, I wouldn't say that with any degree of confidence [laughter]. Mr. Speaker, let us just look for a little minute we have debated estimates and we have seen that because there is gonna be a cut in spending we know for sure that there is no great prospect in employment in St. Vincent and the Grenadines especially among the young people.

Mr. Speaker hopelessness and despair have characterised our young people, many of them wake up on a daily basis and they wonder where the next dollar is going to come from. Many of them have families, they have to provide for their families yet there is no employment opportunity and where there is no employment, Mr. Speaker, it therefore means that there is no prospect of getting money, their purchasing power is nil. So Mr. Speaker, unemployment especially among young people become not only an economic problem because that is

a factor that is seeking employment but where that factor cannot find employment it therefore means that the productive capacity of the community is slowed down.

Mr. Speaker, unemployment is also a social problem, because employment determines ones standing in his or her community. If you are not employed as I said before you do not have an economic power and for those people who have no economic power, Mr. Speaker, we find that they have the tendency to develop antisocial behaviour. So Mr. Speaker, this is [what I] want to illustrate to us this evening because there is a lack of opportunity for young people the natural thing to do as I have made the point a few days back is to join with those persons who are in the same category as you, that is to say those persons who cannot find employment those persons who think that society has rejected them, they form themselves into little unions and I notice that one of the programmes that the government is proposing is...it have something to do with youth on the block but these same youths on the block, Mr. Speaker, they gather and they have their own forms of conversation as to how they are going to make ends meet. Considering the fact that I have said before that they have their own families and they are considering how many dollars and cents that they are going to have to spend to keep their family going and considering that there is no employment opportunity. Mr. Speaker, the natural thing for people to do which is the unfortunate thing actually, because having gone there seeking employment, knocking on the door and they cannot find any employment you are going to have resort to some other activity, probably you are going to go out there and beg but you cannot go to the same set of people day after day, week after week, month after month for them to give you a bread, because the Bible tells me that we should withdraw our feet from our neighbours steps lest they get weary of us and so hate us. But this unfortunately is the philosophy, it is the mentality of our people, they do not have any hope because the Government has failed to provide jobs for our young people and because they have failed to provide these jobs, we have a dependency syndrome mentality in our country.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, our young people feel that they are socially excluded, the doors of opportunities are not opening, they have been knocking and they have been knocking and no hope has been forthcoming so some of our young people, Mr. Speaker, in the words of the big bad wolf, they will huff and they will puff until they get what they need in order for them to live a reasonable standard of life. That is not to say Mr. Speaker, that is the way that we are going to endorse, that is not the conventional way but because of the economic pressure, Mr. Speaker, there is no limitation to what the minds of our young people will contemplate.

Mr. Speaker, I want us to just imagine carefully because on a daily basis I am absolutely sure that most of us here as public officers, and I like to use public servants and not lords and kings as some people think they are, we would have seen many, many people approaching us they need jobs for their children, they need jobs for themselves but having been bombarded even you on the other side who have the resources do you see within yourselves and be honest and search yourselves, do you see any hope in the immediate future for these people who come knocking at your door on a daily basis for employment. [Interjection] Well that is why I said search your heart and in answering make sure that your heart does not condemn you. [Interjection] [Laughter] Well very well...

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:**...the Youth Empowerment Service.

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** But you talk about the Youth Empowerment Service, I will get to that not too long from now but, Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious state of affairs because we realise that 75% of the crimes which are committed in our country are committed by young people and a similar percentage make up the prison population. And if you have a conversation with young people especially those who have committed some offense some criminal offense, by and large I would think that the majority of them do not want to commit these crimes, but because of the lack of employment opportunity they do that which is unseemly and they pay the consequences. So I am saying Mr. Speaker, that it is incumbent on the government to ensure that the crime situation reduces and one sure way to ensure that there is not an escalation in crime is to create employment opportunities for young people.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of our young people and I am not be naïve here at all, because I recognise the fact that there is a get rich quick mentality in some people and it doesn't matter what opportunities are out there they are going to the hills or some of them are going to meet you and hold you up Hollywood style. But that is just a very small percentage in our society. Some of them, Mr. Speaker, and I remember on one occasion I was in a particular and I saw a group of young men coming out of the bush, I ask them, 'gentlemen, where are you all going so busy', and they said to me, some of them did not even know who I was, they said 'we have to make a life for ourselves, we cannot find jobs therefore we have to go to the hills'. And Mr. Speaker, this is a fact of life, you talk to a lot of these young men particularly, and you would recognise that these are people who would not normally resort to that form of activity where they go to the hills and certainly not grow ground provision and vegetables but grow other crops, Mr. Speaker that they think is going to make a life for them.

Mr. Speaker, I have spoken to a lot of these people and they express to me the difficulty in leaving the community that they know, the people that they are comfortable with, their own family to go into the mountains in the cold environment. And the danger that is associated with that way of life, but Mr. Speaker, they take the chance to go. Why, we must ask ourselves, have they taken the risk and the simple answer to that, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that there is no employment opportunity for these people. I do not think anyone on the other side can dispute it because jobs have evaporated and when you consider the Budget presentation it offers little or no hope with respect to that particular prospect.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard the Honourable Minister of Youth, allude to the fact that one of the ways that the government is trying to create employment is through the Youth Empowerment Service. I have no problem at all with what the government is attempting to do with respect to finding employment for young people but Mr. Speaker, that is only a temporary measure that needs to go much further. Many, many times we have been criticised for calling that particular service the Youth Exploitation Programme, and I still believe, Mr. Speaker, that it is a youth exploitation programme [Interruption]. Hold on with respect to trying to create employment, I have no problem at all with that, but I do believe that our young people are being exploited. Mr. Speaker, [Cross talking] training what, listen...

[Knocking on desk] Alright Mr. Speaker, thank you for the timely intervention. When we examine the Youth or the YES Programme very carefully we notice that there is an allocation of \$2.8 million for that programme for the year 2011 but how much of that \$2.8 million go towards wages. And when we examine it, Mr. Speaker, we notice that \$19,000 of a grand total of \$2.8 million assigned to the YES Programme is available to young people for their services.

**HONOURABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** 19,000, that wrong.

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** Well you look at it again.

**HONOURABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** 19,000?

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** You look at it again.

**HONOURABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** No, no, no, no [Inaudible]

[Cross talking]

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** I'm sorry...

**HONOURABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** It cannot be 19.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** [Knocking on desk] Honourable Members....

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** It cannot be 19? What I am saying, it is what...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, just a minute if we are making an objection to the statement that was just made I would like you to do it in a more parliamentary way instead of everybody shouting across the floor. Honourable Member, continue your debate.

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** Alright, Mr. Speaker, I'll move on but...

**HONOUABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** [Inaudible]

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** I feel you have too much mouth in this Honourable House as a Senator [Interjection] alright, Minister?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** [Knocking on desk] come let's....

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** You have been given that, a matter of fact I believe you are holding that job for somebody else but I would not say who. Mr. Speaker, I would move on...

**HONOUABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** [Inaudible] the Page for the 19,000. [Laughter]

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** I will move on, we gonna move on. I am making the point here, Mr. Speaker, that I do believe that more can be done for the young people and it is temporary measure, it is a stop gap measure because, Mr. Speaker, having worked for a period of one year, apprenticeship period, what happens to these young people? How many of you have spoken to these young people after that apprenticeship period.

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Me, me.

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** You have spoken?

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Several times.

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** Well I expect that you would [Cross talking] but the point I am making here, Mr. Speaker, is that many of these young people the vast majority of them they go back to the community from whence they came....

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** That's not true, that's not true.

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** ...and they cannot find employment again, Mr. Speaker. [Cross talking] But what kind of training [Knocking on desk] has been conducted? Mr. Speaker, I still believe, I insist that our young people are exploited. I have seen them at work and some of these young people perform the same task and even harder than other members of that said staff. You understand what I am saying here, Mr. Speaker? They are made to work very, very hard for their \$450 per month. [Interjection] Well I haven't seen that quoted there, Mr. Minister, it is not quoted there but I would be happy the day I see these young people get an increase from \$450 to \$800 but I haven't seen it documented, yea.

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** [Inaudible]

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** Well I will investigate it. Mr. Speaker, we move on and we want to examine the Education Revolution, this is termed as one of the flagships of the government but I want to go on record here, Mr. Speaker, in stating that we on this side of the House are not opposed to universal access to secondary education.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** I rise under 35(b)

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** 35 (b)

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I am familiar with that.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** To elucidate some matter raised by the Member in the course of his speech. The Honourable Member was referring to the YES Programme stating that there is \$2.8 million allocated and only \$19,000 is paid to the young people. Mr. Speaker, if we look at the Estimates on Page 209 and 208 is a total of \$2.8 million, wages is \$19,200, wages, but that is not where they get their stipend, if we look under 209 it would say, "to provide work experience to 1000 persons over a 12 month period, to provide an income in the form of a stipend to similar number of persons", and down below in the breakdown you will see allowance to Youth Volunteers \$2,711,200, so that is where the volunteers get their stipend and it is labeled under account number 320 as allowances, so just to elucidate, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER:** You do not read the Estimates when you going to debate?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, you may continue your debate.

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, [Interruptions] well the thing is you know I did not think I was infallible at all.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Continue, continue.

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** Now, Mr. Speaker, we move on, I was making the point about the Education Revolution and the fact that we are not opposed to it. But we are fundamentally opposed to Mr. Speaker, is the fact that our young children whether or not they are prepared for secondary are hoarded into the system. So Mr. Speaker, we have a mixture of those students who will do well academically and those who are placed into the system against their will. So what we are saying here, Mr. Speaker, is that the government basically has put the cart before the horse.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard the discussion going on and I have heard the Honourable Prime Minister and I agree with him that attention would be paid to Early Childhood Education but I am saying here, Mr. Speaker, that is precisely where the Education Revolution should have begun, Early Childhood Education. So why is that coming after the proposed Education Revolution? The point I am making here, Mr. Speaker, many of these people cannot read at the Grade 3 level [interruption] right teach them, but teach them before they get into the secondary system. So what system are going to get in that particular system, what we are doing here, Mr. Speaker, is an injustice to these young people [Cross talking]

Mr. Speaker, I have seen instances where students who did not pass the Common Entrance Examination, and I must add that the Education Revolution started out long time ago when you had schools, privately run schools sending letters inviting students who wrote the Common Entrance Examination, failed the examination to be students in their school, that has happen many, many years ago, so that is where the Education Revolution actually started.

Mr. Speaker, I have seen students [Interruptions] I have seen students, Mr. Speaker, who cannot [Cross talking]. You will have an opportunity to talk, [interjection] no, I am not talking about the Honourable Minister there.

Mr. Speaker, what I am saying here, you have a number of these students in the schools and because they cannot cope with the work that is going on there they become disruptive, any teacher can attest to this and when they become that disruptive they are creating a problem for the students who we say are brighter, they become a problem for the teachers who have some difficulty now in delivering and I know the Ministry of Education always talk about loss of instructional time. But that is a classic example of where instructional time Mr. Speaker, will be lost because you cannot go on with your lesson because you always have students who are disruptive because they cannot cope with the situation.

So Mr. Speaker, the government has a system and the system is what I call the up and out system, so because whether or not these people pass at their particular form they go up and out of the system and thanks to the Education Revolution, Mr. Speaker, this year I have never heard that in all my life, so many students have been signed up for one subject, after five years and that is an Education Revolution, it is really a revolution, Mr. Speaker. I cannot tell the last time I heard students being signed up after five years for one subject.

Mr. Speaker, the question is, what is going to happen to these young people after five years? I know there are some of them and the Honourable Member for the Southern Grenadines, I am not talking education here but I am talking youths, what is going to happen to these young people after five years? So, Mr. Speaker, effectively when we take these young minds that have not been prepared for the secondary system and put them into the

system what we are effectively doing, Mr. Speaker, is postponing a serious social problem for five years down the road, that is what we are doing. So what we are saying here, Mr. Speaker, I know some folks are saying okay, do not give them the opportunity to go to secondary school, let them go on the streets. If they go on the streets and we are not advocating that at all, but if they go on the streets, Mr. Speaker, they themselves may feel that they are socially excluded also, they themselves may become a part of the youth on the block which, Mr. Speaker, may engage in antisocial behavior. Very well, but the trouble is Mr. Speaker, put them into the secondary system when they are not ready for the system [interjection] help them, start from the early childhood education, but when they are not ready for that, Mr. Speaker, and you put them there and they go through the system it therefore means they have been in the school for five years therefore they have not been on the blocks so the social problem, Mr. Speaker, [interruption] the social problem, Mr. Speaker, have been more or less put on the back burner but when they leave fifth form the same situation presents itself. Because there is no opportunity for jobs, that is the point I am making, that is the injustice that we are making to our young people [Cross talking] [Laughter]. And I am saying to you, this government has failed our young people and when they go back on the blocks and when they start performing those antisocial behaviours there are some people who are quick to call them all sorts of names, and when they go into the hills and they start doing their form of agriculture, we have Vincy Pac and we have people with an agenda to pursue them until they no longer exist. That is the product of this ULP Government.

Mr. Speaker, what we are actually proposing here is that.....

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

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Will my Honourable friend give way or... Mr. Speaker, and you know it is a little late but we had been fortified with some refreshments and I saw my friend eating fairly amply as all of us did, but I really do not think that he would like to say that what you have they go in the hills and then you have Vincy Pac and what some people want is to pursue them until they no longer exist. Meaning that to kill them, now [interjection] I have never said that, this is what he is saying here, Mr. Speaker, this is not a joke, when someone says, Mr. Speaker, Vincy Pac and we can get the record, we can get what is said if you do not recall it, Mr. Speaker, he said, and what you have is that they pursue them until they, these young people, no longer exist. That is the height of irresponsibility because nobody is engaged in such an activity and my Honourable friend knows that. You may say that on the street somewhere else but you cannot come to the parliament of this country and say that, Mr. Speaker, unless you have the evidence for it. It's a dastardly incorrect statement.

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

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Withdraw it.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** ... I do agree that the statement is irresponsible and no words can...you can escape from that kind of statement and I am being serious, the Honourable Member for Central Kingstown knows that the final [interjection] well you are bawling Jesus, you are praying to Jesus. Honourable Member for Central Kingstown knows that the end result is death in relation to these persons, if they are being pursued until they no longer exist, I mean what you mean by that, maybe you have a good explanation for that. Could you

explain to me what that means? [Cross talking] If not I will ask....kindly withdraw the statement because the ultimate situation there is death it couldn't be any thing else. [Interjection] when you say no longer exist, but even though they leave the country, come out the hills they still exist, do not they. Kindly withdraw the statement and let's move on, or....

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I'm really amazed that the responsible elements on the other side including the Deputy Leader are condoning this kind of a statement...

**HONOURABLE MAJOR ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Who are you calling an element?

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** ...this is the kind of recklessness that encourages persons outside not to want to address these issues of national security and law and order seriously.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, yeah I think you should withdraw that statement and let's move on.

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** Mr. Speaker, I have no problem withdrawing that statement.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Saying that doesn't mean you withdraw it, just simple withdraw the statement.

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** I have withdrawn the statement, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you very much.

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** And I will move on. Mr. Speaker, if our government is really concerned with a better quality of life for young people I am certain that they would have a system where young people are given an opportunity to acquire a skill. I realize, Mr. Speaker, that there are some Technical Vocational Centres and those are geared to help our young people to acquire a skill but many of the people or the students, Mr. Speaker, that will have gone to secondary school and did not excel they are not given an opportunity to be students in those Technical Vocational Centres because they do not meet the criteria [interjection] no, no, no, I have seen that in one of the tech vocs, I have actually tried to assist a young man to get there and they said to the young man that he does not have the requirements to be a student in that school. You understand, but anyway, Mr. Speaker, what I am saying here is that those young people having gone through the secondary system they are still not given a fair opportunity.

Mr. Speaker I shall move on, I shall move on to sports. Mr. Speaker, I notice that the government have been in talks with National Properties and that has been happening since 2010 because the proposal here, Mr. Speaker, was to get what was called the Anglican School, the Annex transferred into an indoor sporting facility. When I heard that, Mr. Speaker, I felt rather good because I realise that this is an opportunity for sportsmen and women to excel. But having looked at the estimates we realise that nothing concrete has occurred they are still in talks, so the question I am asking here Mr. Speaker, when precisely can the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines expect that indoor sporting facility? When?

I have been in conversation with some of the sports people in this country and some of them even told me that they were making efforts at one time to get Australia Netball Team to come here, but they couldn't for the simple reason that those people do not play on asphalt or the surfaces that we have here, concrete surfaces. So the indoor facility would have been an ideal facility for international teams to come here to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. And I am certain, Mr. Speaker, that we would have benefited in more ways than one. Our netballers would have benefited because they would have been exposed to a higher level of game. It hasn't happened and the point is Mr. Speaker, St. Vincent, they used to do so well in the Caribbean and in the world, we do not even have a ranking...we do not even have a position in world ranking for netball right now. So netball effectively is gone.

And not only that, that is not the only discipline that is gone, Mr. Speaker, look at football, there was a time when St. Vincent and the Grenadines was doing very, very well and under the Leadership of the Honourable Member for Central Kingstown, we attained the highest ranking ever. [Applause] When a few short years since politics has infiltrated sports, Mr. Speaker, we have seen that football has declined almost to the point of being a life support. Mr. Speaker, there are many, many facilities and I give an example, Victoria Park, somebody just draw reference to 1979 and I have heard how well that team of 1979 was. But Mr. Speaker, those folks were good, that good because the majority of them, we remember people like Guy Lowe and Raultie Lowe, they were able to utilise the Victoria Park and there are many other people around those communities. But what has happened to Victoria Park, effectively the footballers have been shut out of Victoria Park and that is in their neighborhood, that is in their community, Mr. Speaker. We cannot be serious about sports, we cannot be serious about sports, Mr. Speaker, if we are not allowing our sportsmen to have access to the facility.

[Cross talking]

Mr. Speaker we have heard for many, many years...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Members just....

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** ...for many, many years, Mr. Speaker, we have been hearing, I think about since 2001, about a National Stadium that should come onstream, the question, Mr. Speaker, is where is the National Stadium. I notice that approximately \$47 million is allocated for the development or realization of this National Stadium [interjection] well I would say to you stop your coming and come, yo have been coming for a long time now and you ain't reach. Mr. Speaker, I notice that there is an allocation for this year of \$100,000 to go towards the National Stadium, so if we compare the \$100,000 for one year with the total cost of the National Stadium which is approximately \$47 million, how long from today or from 2011 can that stadium be delivered to the sportsmen and women of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, I really do not think that the government is serious about sports. Gone are the days when people used to play for fun, when I played, I played for fun, I am sure that most of us who participated in sports played for fun, I played several sports, but the point is Mr. Speaker, we cannot expect young people today to be playing for fun when there is a living to be earned through sports. So if we approach sports development in St. Vincent and the Grenadines with the view to ensuring that one, two, three, several people can earn a living through sports then I am absolutely certain that we will begin to put the infrastructure in place so that they will have the benefit of the

best facilities in the Caribbean [Applause]. But it is absent and because it is absent, Mr. Speaker, we wonder how serious we are with sports.

I note, Mr. Speaker, and I am going to be looking very, very closely at it, there are plans, Mr. Speaker, to develop pavilions with change room facilities and so on in Chile....

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, you have five minutes to conclude.

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** Unbelievable, Mr. Speaker, unbelievable.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Be careful Sir, be careful Honourable Member, you are treading on very thin ice.

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** Mr. Speaker, I will proceed. It therefore means it will not give me the opportunity to speak on the constituency issues that I had planned. But one of the things that I welcome, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that there is or there are plans to improve the Campden Park Playing Field. I will be watching because many, many years, Mr. Speaker, when there are sporting activities opening and so on we recognise that the former minister would not show up even when he was issued with an invitation most of the time. And I am absolutely sure that it was the embarrassment of seeing a structure that is in such dilapidated condition that he does not want to be associated with it as the representative. But Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that I am delighted also that I see that there is provision made for the Francois Vermont Bridge, that is one of the things that I have been talking about for a very long time and I remember one of the many persons that wanted to be a candidate in South Leeward said, 'we already have the money for the bridge'. Well I am watching to see if that would come to pass. That is an area, Mr. Speaker, where the government has done very, very well and I am watching to see what you would do for those people down there because precious little was done to improve their standard of living.

Mr. Speaker, there is a particular road in Campden Park that I would really love to see done. There is a road or three roads for that matter in Coconut Range in Campden Park, one in the vicinity above or very close to the Bethel High School and I am talking about the road that is between Keitha Delplesche and Vin Durham. Mr. Speaker, that road would exit just above St. Vincent Brewery. But whenever it rains as it is doing now, Mr. Speaker, the residents around there have a very, very difficult time passing the road, the road is filled with water, you can practically row a boat to get to your home, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker that is an area that I used to live and I know how many times I have had to walk with three pairs of shoes before I can get onto the concrete road..

**HONOURABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** [Inaudible]

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** Well I am depending on you.

**HONOURABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** [Inaudible] [Laughter]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** [Knocking on desk] Honourable Members...

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** I am stating in this Honourable House that I expect that you would pay attention to that particular road. Mr. Speaker, there is a road and I say in the vicinity of Elsa going up to Dodo in Coconut Range there also, I notice that they started that road you know, just before....

**HONOURABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** [Inaudible]

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** Well you notice Vermont and Francois is not South Leeward too?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member allow him, please, to finish up his debate.

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** A road has been started during or just before elections and I am watching to see the progress of that road because this government has a reputation of trying to hoodwink people. [Laughter] doing things only because they want to get their votes and once the votes are gained they abandoned the project, so I'll be watching that. Also Mr. Speaker, in the same Coconut Range area just below one of your main supporters, we call him Little Man, a lady a couple weeks ago fell because of the condition of the road. A part of the road is concrete and the other is just dirt, she fell and had to end up in the hospital and not only that go overseas to see, well to get a brain scan. Mr. Speaker, the road is in very, very bad condition. And nothing would please me more than to see some attention paid to it. [Applause] There are many, many other roads that I can talk to, I will just talk about the Pembroke road for an example very briefly. That road was started by Jeremiah Scott in the New Democratic Party, what has the ULP government done? Nothing to the roads except to take some dirt, truckloads of dirt, spread it off on the road and that is an area where you have very heavy rainfall. So what I am saying here, Mr. Speaker, you wouldn't know the road in Pembroke, attention has to be paid to that also, that is the area where we have the English community and those are people who have the mentality that because they were voting Labour in England they can come down here is the same Labour. But they will endure, they have been enduring the pain of Labour, that is Labour St. Vincent and the Grenadines style.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You can wind up now.

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** Mr. Speaker, in wrapping I just want to thank again the people of South Leeward for the faith that they have placed in me, I want to thank them for going out to the polls and ensure that despite we were running against several people in the ULP and the many, many, many piles of dollars and cents that infiltrated the constituency you showed that you cannot be bought [Applause] you cannot be bought and you would not partake of the kings meat for a season, but I am happy, Mr. Speaker, that Nature was allowed to take its course and I will, Mr. Speaker, with the help of Almighty God do all that I can to ensure that there is a better way of life for the citizens of South Leeward. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker. [Applause]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Further debate. Any further debate? Honourable Prime Minister you gonna wrap up now?

[Cross talking]

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members. [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all Honourable Members [Laughter] who have debated thus far [interjection] that is what you are worried about eh? [Laughing] No, no, no, no, no, we set aside the week. Mr. Speaker, it doesn't appear as though these young men and women, I am the oldest Member in this Honourable House save and except for present, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition I am not speaking about the Speaker, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Prime Minister before you go on, really I would like to have an indication of who would want to go... how we can go tomorrow because we will probably come back here and end up wasting the same time again, nobody....

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Well I was hoping that we would have had another one this evening, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Okay, alright I have gotten an indication.

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** ...because the...but I was going to make the comment that I thought that those of us who are, well the Leader of the Opposition has left for the day since after he spoke and I would have thought that the others would have enough energy to speak but apparently it is a different breed.

Mr. Speaker we start tomorrow at nine o'clock again. My wife would be happy to see me home earlier this evening so that is a bonus. [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House do stand suspended until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

**Question put and agreed to  
House suspended accordingly at 8:15 p.m.**