

No. 2

Wednesday

First Session

26th January, 2011

Ninth Parliament

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

ADVANCE COPY

OFFICIAL REPORT

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

**PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 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.**

FIFTH SITTING

26th JANUARY 2011

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

The Honourable House of Assembly met at 9:05 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 Fredrick

Opposition Senator

Honourable Anesia Baptiste

Opposition Senator

ST VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

BUDGET DEBATE

WEDNESDAY 26 JANUARY, 2011

PRAYERS

Meeting commenced at 9:09 a.m. with the Honourable Speaker reading the Prayer of the House.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Pray be seated.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Prime Minister has an urgent matter that he has to pay attention to and he has indicated to me that he would be late. Think that is about the only excuse I have so far. Honourable Member for Marriaqua, Minister of Education and Deputy Prime Minister, you would then move the charge.

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Section (12) Subsection (5) I beg that the proceeding of today's sitting be exempted from the provisions of the Standing Order hours of sitting.

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: I second the Motion.

Question put and agreed

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I will now ask all persons, Members and strangers in the Gallery to check your Cellular Phones to ensure that they are either off or they are in a vibrating position; so they would not disturb the proceedings of the House this morning.

When we suspended yesterday evening, we recognised the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Senator the Honourable Douglas Slater, and we are inviting him now to make his presentation. Give one minute to get the time sort out, all right Honourable let us ...

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to make my contribution to the Debate on the Appropriation Bill. Mr. Speaker, I begin by expressing my gratitude to the Honourable Leader of this House, the Honourable Prime Minister who thought it wise to invite me to join his cabinet and thus giving me the authority as a Senator to participate in this Honourable House. [Knocking on the desk] Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I am humble and proud to have been selected and nominated as the Minister of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Consumer Affairs of our beloved country St Vincent and the Grenadines. I pledge with the help of my staff, my colleagues and of course of Almighty God to fulfill the expectations that all or most people have in my apparent, if not real ability to so do.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the debate of the Appropriation Bill involves the discussion of the policies of the Government that would be utilized and implemented to carry out the budgetary proposals as outlined in the Estimates. So, I think it would be useful to remind the Honourable House of the Mission Statement of the Ministry, which I lead. It states:-

“To promote and safeguard the vital national interest abroad in trade, and foreign policy;”

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Page?

HONOURABLE DOUGLAS SLATER: Page 505.

“through a range of bilateral and multilateral engagements; and interdependent relations within the international community; and domestically, for the sustainable development of the Vincentian economy; and the better humanization of its people.”

I think it is a very solid Mission Statement and I will try in my debate to justify the importance of that Mission Statement. So, Mr. Speaker, this Mission Statement is followed by a philosophy of our administration, where as a small developing island state with very limited resources especially natural resources; we seek to use our foreign policy to extract the best benefits for our country and our citizens.

Mr. Speaker, the works of our government over the years have demonstrated that we have lived up to that philosophy. Mr. Speaker, to demonstrate that I would give an outline of some of our achievements over the years; especially over the past year. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry has sought to develop an institutional strengthening of the Ministry in order to put in place the necessary measures to exploit as it were the benefits of foreign policy. So, we have completed a foreign policy strategy; a draft of a Foreign Service Orders, because Mr. Speaker, this Ministry is one that is required to utilize international agreements, participate in them – a lot of debates and discussions all in an effort to ensure that us as an individual state, benefit from multinational agreements, bilateral agreements et cetera.

Over the past years especially last year, we continued to host the annual consultations of our diplomats from Missions overseas in order to ensure that we keep abreast with the work of our Missions. And this is very important, Mr. Speaker, because as stated before it is through our foreign policy - because we do not have all the resources that we require for our development, we have to ensure that we employ the right negotiation skills.

And I used the word negotiation purposely because often when we negotiate for benefits, we hear some on the other side say that we beg. Well, some people may say colloquially that it is better to beg than to steal. I do not want to use language that is not appropriate for the House.

But Mr. Speaker, it is our ability to properly negotiate that has brought several benefits to this country, and I can give examples. Mr. Speaker, this country has benefitted tremendously over the past ten years from the astute application of our foreign policy. [Knocking on the desk] And before I continue I want to use the opportunity to say thanks and to pay sincere gratitude to all those countries that have supported us traditional and non-traditional. You know, sometimes some people do not know how to say thanks or sometimes we forget to say thanks. I want ... I will do so again, but just in case I do not have the time or remember to, I want to thank all those countries. I can name them but I want to say all; I want to give special thanks to our Caricom neighbours; our Latin America neighbours such as Cuba and Venezuela. We have established and are deepening relationships with others – members of the ALBA Group of countries; Brazil; we have received benefits from Taiwan and from Malaysia. We have established relations with other non-traditional countries in the Middle East – Libya and Qatar. Mr. Speaker, there are many.

Many of these countries, Mr. Speaker, some of our citizens never even heard about them or do not know much about them; but thanks to the aggressive and progressive foreign policy of the Unity Labour Party in administration [Knocking on desk] we now know about them and we are benefitting significantly.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, in foreign policy we are proud of our representation overseas to have excellent representation and we have benefitted from that. I can start from our Mission in the UK where His Excellency, the High Commissioner his efforts over the years have brought tremendous benefits to citizens of this country in many aspects; but I want to highlight the project where Vincentians citizens have enlisted in the Military Services of the United Kingdom. Mr. Speaker, we know that recently due to a change of government in the UK, they have cut significantly as part of the global economic problem, they have cut significantly that programme; but how many of us know that currently there are 800 Vincentians citizens in the UK Military? [Knocking on the desk] Thanks to the policy of this government. Mr. Speaker, this is important because when I come to discuss about trade; we trade in goods and we trade in services and certainly this is one category of service. In fact, we will know that the contribution of trade in services to our gross domestic product has now surpassed the contribution of trade in goods. So, it is very important that we pay attention to that and I will come with more details later on that.

Mr. Speaker, it is important for us to note in our representation overseas also, the appointment of our Ambassador to the United Nations as the Co-chair of an ad hoc working committee for the revitalization of the United Nations. As Vincentians we ought to be proud and applaud that success [Knocking on the desk]. Mr. Speaker, we must remember when Ambassador Gonsalves was appointed – Oh! There was a hue and cry; there were criticisms of nepotism as if that citizen was not a Vincentian; as if he did not deserve to be appointed; as if he did not have what it takes to be an excellent Ambassador that he is. [Knocking on the desk]

Mr. Speaker, not only has he performed excellently in that position, but Mr. Speaker, St Vincent as Chair of the CARICOM caucus of Ambassadors last year was able to get on the Agenda of the United Nations Assembly for

this year September on an issue about which I am very passionate, based on my previous position as Minister of Health and Environment. An issue that plagues us in St Vincent and the Grenadines and plagues our CARICOM citizens in the world: that is Mr. Speaker, Ambassador Gonsalves has been able to negotiate and get on the Agenda the discussion of the effects of chronic non-communicable diseases on the health of our citizens. And that is a significant achievement. [Knocking on the desk]

So, in September we ... Why is that significant? It is significant because it is through the attention gained on the debate on these issues that financial and other technical resources are better mobilized. I know that, Mr. Speaker, because one of my first assignments as a Minister of Government I addressed the United Nations on a similar issue that of the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and the world developing countries especially have benefitted tremendously, and so has St Vincent and the Grenadines. That is why I say it is very important and I am proud that the Leadership of the move to get it addressed at the United Nations has come from our Ambassador Camillo Gonsalves.

Mr. Speaker, St Vincent and the Grenadines has through our Ministry participated in debates internationally and nationally on many multilateral agreements, which are very important. We have agreements related to human rights, rights of the child, rights of migrant workers, rights and interest in fisheries, the environment, tourism et cetera, and a very important one the trafficking of persons. Mr. Speaker, I would want to get into a little more details on that in a while because it is very, very important. Mr. Speaker, but we will continue with these policies because they have proven to be successful. And so for the plans for 2011 we intend to continue along that line by completing negotiations and signing technical corporation agreements bilaterally and multilaterally and I want to outline some of the countries. For example, in Asia, Latin America and Africa we intend to strengthen the relationship with the UAE (United Arab Emirates), the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, South Korea, Brazil, Mexico, Cuba, Venezuela from Latin America, Argentina also and South Africa. Mr. Speaker, we have established an appointed Honorary Consul in some of these countries, but we intend to increase the number of Honorary Consuls we have in these countries.

Why is this important, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, especially in the countries where we have significant Vincentian communities as in students, and again it comes back to what I was saying before – our progressive foreign policy has benefitted us by having hundreds of students overseas studying and developing our human resource base to further develop this country. [Knocking on the desk] And Mr. Speaker, as I said, it is important that we have some form of representation should they need, and from time to time invariably that need arises. Counselor services like visas and passports; somebody might lose his or her passport and he or she needs to travel. Somebody may have a problem with the law and need some representation and it is important for us to do so.

Mr. Speaker, I want to attempt to put a value, a money value to the benefit of our foreign policy in some aspects. Mr. Speaker, tertiary education is very expensive, in private colleges say in the UK, in Europe or in the United States the average cost can be as high as US\$40,000 per a year, and most courses are for four years; but let us take also there are state colleges where the cost may be under US\$20,000 or under US\$15,000. Let us say then and for UWI the cost including economic cost may well be over EC\$50,000 per year. So, Mr. Speaker, I think it would be safe to say that the average cost for a university student degree is anywhere close to

EC\$200,000 so if we multiply that by the several hundreds of students studying overseas, you see the millions of dollars worth of value to our citizens. And that is just the direct dollar value, I am certain actuaries and other economists and accountants can extrapolate the future value of that training. So, Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of our progressive foreign policy and I hope that it would continue and I know it will continue because it is the policy of this government. [Knocking on the desk]

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, all this what we are debating here is important with relation to the Budget, because in order for us to implement the many projects and programmes outlined in the Budget we need among other things and especially the human resources with the adequate training to do so. Of course, the finance is important and we have heard a lot of discussions about that, but we are confident that we can mobilise the resources - financial resources. But even more so I want to say that we have confidence in our civil service, and I want to take the opportunity to thank my office staff, my Ministry – my new Ministry because, Mr. Speaker, as you know this is new grounds for me and I would not be able to be presenting this debate were it not for the support of my staff which is here. I thank you very much. [Knocking on the desk]

Mr. Speaker, I am a very willing learner, I do not leave nature to take its course when it comes to education. [Knocking on the desk] In biology there is a concept known as diffusion and one as osmosis, I am not waiting on diffusion for knowledge to come into my head, I will do it actively. I prefer the term osmosis where you have to have a pull. I will make the effort, I will read and I will study where necessary to ensure that I am prepared to present in the Debates of the House, so that Honourable Members will understand what I am saying and the citizens of this country will so do. Mr. Speaker, I urge other Members as the Honourable Leader of the House did at the beginning of this debate; he urged especially the new Members to do so, to study the Estimates. Mr. Speaker, we were all invited the entire House to a meeting we called the Finance Committee and had there been attendance by all Members, I am certain that some of the errors committed here especially as exemplified by the lack of understanding of the Estimates demonstrated by one Member, I am certain had that offer been taken up that may not ... I feel strongly certain it would not have happened.

Mr. Speaker, I can tell you that in order to prepare, this side we organised a session for the new Members to get familiarized with the procedures. Mr. Speaker, I want to tell you that every single Member those of us who have been here for twelve years in the House we are not too old to learn. We decided we will attend and it benefitted us; you are never too old to learn and learning does not just go by diffusion.

So, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, in our efforts to develop our foreign policy more, we as I said, we intend to revive relationship with countries that we have nominal diplomatic relations with. It is like you have a formal indication of relationship but it is not active, and we want to do so with many countries especially in Latin America, which are our neighbours. Mr. Speaker, I do not think it was by accident that I was nominated or appointed to the post of Foreign Affairs. I think most people who follow international relations and understand the International Politics would realise that with all the challenges of globalization and trade liberalization we fall in a group and in a zone: Latin America and the Caribbean, which is dominated by Spanish speaking people. I think the fact that I am bilingual with Spanish being my second language which did not come by diffusion, which came about by thanks to the Government and people of Cuba. [Knocking on the desk] And I want to say it is an invaluable education. It is one of the reasons why we continue to send hundreds of students

and encourage them to go to study in Spanish speaking countries [Knocking on the desk] Cuba and Mexico. So, that is a new resource we are developing.

Tourism is important to us. I have spoken to my staff recently and I have indicated to them, I cannot direct them or enforce them but I suggested strongly that all Members of staff should try their utmost to acquire working knowledge at least of a second language. And I have suggested that Spanish might be the most appropriate not because I might want to speak to them in Spanish, but of course, I am offering to help you in the practice.

Mr. Speaker, our foreign policy with Taiwan - we have dozens of students there, again is another very important one. Mr. Speaker, Mandarin Chinese is spoken by well over a quarter of the world's population; the Chinese population alone. Mr. Speaker, can you imagine the benefits that can be derived when our students, let us say especially those in Journalism, and I know we have an outstanding Journalist there in Taiwan, Mr. Kenton Chance. Could you imagine that one day we might be seeing ... because the mixture of Chinese and English is not so common around these parts: we see a Vincentian being an anchor or a Reporter for CNN or Algeria or BBC because of our policy? Mr. Speaker, we have to think about these things and then we can understand the importance of our foreign policy.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, as I was saying, we want to develop more of these policies: more of the relationships and Africa is one that we are targeting. Mr. Speaker, just recently because of our advances: diplomatic advances we have benefitted by the presence of a team from Egypt. They are here, they are leaving very soon, and I think they are leaving tomorrow. What is the benefit of this relationship? Well, they are experts in archaeology and we know we have discovered during the excavations for the construction of our International Airport that there are valuable archaeological relics in the area of the International Airport in Argyle. In order to preserve them we needed some expertise and we are grateful to the Government of Egypt. This started by negotiations by former Minister of Culture Rene Bapiste, and Mr. Speaker, Vincentians are benefitting from that move [Knocking on the desk] and I want to thank the Egyptians. We intend to develop that cultural collaboration et cetera.

Mr. Speaker, another aspect of our foreign policy is to in an ongoing manner to negotiate visa abolition agreements with friendly countries. Why is that important? Mr. Speaker, it is important because we aspire to have hassle free travel. Which of us would not like to be able to travel wherever you go without having to get a visa? We know the stress, the disappointments that people go through when they have to get a visa, especially the American Visa. It is not for us to determine what policies the Americans may use, and I am not criticizing them, but I am saying we know that it is important if we can negotiate visa abolition, because it is costly especially now to get a visa. We know it is costly to travel - the airfare you have to pay and it adds up: you have to pay for the visa.

Mr. Speaker for those of us who travel to what we call the Schengen States in Europe: the EU, we have to go overseas for a visa; it costs and it is inconvenient even for us who hold diplomatic passports; and that is one area at least that is one step we are negotiating. Actually as I speak, there is active negotiation at a CARICOM level and also bilaterally to have these abolitions for official and diplomatic passports to the EU countries, very important ,Mr. Speaker. So, that my good friend the Representative of North Leeward, if he wants to go to

Brussels for a holiday now that he is entitled to a diplomatic passport, he would not have to travel to St Lucia to get a visa. So, that is good policy, right? Good, I see him give an approving nod.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to come back to some of the agreements that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Consumer Affairs have to handle and there is a very important one that is fairly topical. Mr. Speaker, you may recall for those of us who are not aware, the United States State Department, has judged St Vincent and the Grenadines as being not satisfactorily in compliant with their Trafficking of Peoples Act and St Vincent and the Grenadines, I think it was 2008 or 2009 was placed on a classification called Tier (2) Watch List. There is Tier (1); there is Tier (2); and Tier (3) Watch List. Mr. Speaker, this has very serious implications because we are in the second year on the Tier (2) Watch List and when the time comes for a further assessment which is soon, the options are we either move down to Tier (3) or we move upward.

Mr. Speaker, I want to explain what this means because it is very important to us as citizens. Mr. Speaker, we have been accused basically of not conforming to practices that will allow us not to be considered on the Tier (2) Watch List. The trafficking of people is a complicated issue, for most people in St Vincent it might even be something that sounds foreign, alien to St Vincent. Do we have trafficking of people in St Vincent and the Grenadines? If you ask the average Vincentian, in fact, if you were to ask each Member of this Honourable House I am confident that we will get a response that no we do not have that problem in St Vincent. Mr. Speaker, the trafficking of persons is a complicated issue as I said. It is suggesting that there may be incidents of child labour, there may be incidents of persons being brought to this state and used as prostitutes, and I am using the term exactly as outlined in the correspondences. And also St Vincent may be used as a transit point for persons going from one country to a third country more or less against their will. Mr. Speaker, our diplomatic representative overseas Ambassador Prince in Washington was very upset, and St Vincent is upset by the classification named on St Vincent and the Grenadines, because we do not think it is fair; we do not think it is correct but Mr. Speaker, unfortunately in life there is a saying that “sometimes might is right” and we have been so listed.

Mr. Speaker, when we tried to get from the State Department you know, proof or reasons – why are you saying that we are guilty of this? They have not been very clear. Mr. Speaker, they have mentioned some incidents that are very interesting. Mr. Speaker, they have also said that we are to be aware of behaviours, practices that may lead to persons who may be vulnerable to trafficking of persons. Mr. Speaker, in the Report, which I do not have, I am not going to quote exact, I am going to paraphrase but in that report there is one speaking about pedophilia. Mr. Speaker, this is a word that is invoked in our lexicon these days.

Mr. Speaker, pedophilia on the 26th of November, I tried to define that term and as a result attempts were made to charge me criminally. Mr. Speaker, lest anyone rises to query the relevance of this to my debate, I want to reiterate that the State Department of the United States of America has outlined to St Vincent and the Grenadines, measures and they have suggested ... we had a meeting just a week ago with representatives from the State Department and they have outlined to us a work plan that they suggest that we need to follow to adopt and to facilitate our promotion as it where from Tier (2) Watch List.

And in that outline they have suggested that we make this issue a public one, that we debate it so that we raise awareness of the issue, and Mr. Speaker, I shall so do. [Knocking on the desk] Because Mr. Speaker, my training, my special training, my post grad training is in preventive medicine and there is a colloquialism that you must kill the egg of the snake, you must kill the snake in the form of the egg: that is prevention is better than cure. And Mr. Speaker, in as much as concepts and practices like pedophilia which is part of statutory rape are cited as practices, which may lead to trafficking of persons; I feel very justified in raising this issue. [Knocking on the desk] Mr. Speaker, but it is not me alone you know, Mr. Speaker, The Vincentian of the 14th January has an interesting article, and it is headed “Pedophiles Walk Among Us” and it was written by a Karielle Sue-Ann Richards. I am not too sure if I know who the person is but I think I do. It is an excellent article and Mr. Speaker, for those of us who have missed that article I recommend it to you.

Mr. Speaker, the trafficking of persons as I said is related to pedophilia and it is ironic. I want to prick the consciences of Members of this House and the citizens of St Vincent and the Grenadines on this issue. Because Mr. Speaker, to me it is ironic that people who claim that they are beacons of human rights instead of mobilizing people to support who we may call whistle blowers on those who are guilty of pedophilia, they are mobilizing people in the interest, in my opinion of narrow political interest and probably personal malicious intent. [Knocking on desk] Mr. Speaker, I am not a criminal. Mr. Speaker, what I have tried to do and what I am doing now, and will continue to do in the interest of the human rights of the young people of this country especially our underage girls is to raise the issue of pedophilia which walks among us in St Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, I did not define it yet: pedophilia is the practice of adults. ‘Pedo’ is a Latin derived word meaning child and ‘philia’ means love. I do not even think I like the definition, because any adult who seeks to abuse children sexually does not demonstrate love. So, I do not quite agree with that simplistic definition of it but it is an attraction, which is deviant from normal behaviour where adults ... and as I said on the Radio it is not gender specific. The majority of cases of pedophilia are committed by males but it can also and it is also committed by females. Mr. Speaker, we need to have our citizens aware of this issue and if I am to be committed to jail for raising this issue I will be a proud jailbird. [Laughter] [Knocking on the desk] Because Mr. Speaker and I want [Laughs] I want Mr. Speaker for all of us Members of this Honourable House who are responsible for legislation; we are legislators to understand what is happening, let us wake up and smell the coffee.

And I want the citizens of this country who sometimes are blindly led by politicians and I am speaking generally to be aware of what is happening, because when they mobilize you to come to support laws that want to stifle whistle blowers against things like pedophilia, you must realize that you are acting against your own interest. Because Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to feel comfortable as a leader and as a citizen of this country that the young girls of this country must feel comfortable to ... and boys too must feel comfortable that they can trust me and they can trust us as leaders. So, Mr. Speaker, for example in Questelles and in other parts of the community, we have youth groups, I have a lot of friends there, I love them. Mr. Speaker, you know how nice it is when I have friends ... there is a group in Questelles with the steel band girls like Orisio, Sherika and Lizann, when they come up ... I remember recently they came up they had a function and they said “Doctor Slater, you know we love you”. I felt good and I know when they said that they did not say it with any erotic

intent and they knew it was safe to say that to me, because I love them, I care for them; I have their interests at heart. Mr. Speaker, we want that to continue.

Mr. Speaker, I want for example that if my good friend the Honourable Representative of Southern Grenadines who has a beautiful daughter and he has relatives in Questelles. I want to know, Mr. Speaker, that if one afternoon or sometime his daughter is in Kingstown, and she wants a ride down to Questelles, I want to know that he should be comfortable, if he meets me he could say, “Doc give my daughter a ride down to Questelles”, because he must have a trust. Mr. Speaker,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Just a minute, I have a note here; we have to be mindful of the fact that the Court of Appeal is meeting downstairs, and they are requesting a lessening of the noise as in the case of pounding of the desk and so on.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: So, we will clap by hands.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: While I am on that I am asking the technician to check with the quality of the sound – the reproduction here, because there seems to be some problem there, a sort of ringing of the sound. Honourable Member, start rolling.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Can you just tell me how much more time I have?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You are into your forty fifth minute.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Okay.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: And you have one hour and a quarter; that is what seventy five?

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Mr. Speaker, I would like you to repeat that because I was chided to be a Senator; [Laughter] but I just want Honourable Members to know that I am a Senator but I am a Minister and I am entitled to one hour and fifteen minutes or not?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You are a Minister; you are the Minister of Foreign Affairs that is my understanding. [Laughter]

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: International Trade and Consumer Affairs? Thank you, Mr. Speaker

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes, therefore as a Minister you are entitled to one and a quarter hour.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Thank you very much. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: And you are on your [inaudible] minutes.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: For the record.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Maybe you can move on.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Yes, Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I think I have said enough about that issue for now, to prick the consciousness of our people. Human trafficking and the implication it has, because if we do not meet the requirement I want the Honourable Members and the citizens to know that the implications are that there might be certain relationship and financing of certain programmes that we do enjoy now that may be curtailed by the United States Government.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take the opportunity to congratulate the United States Government for their kind assistance in donating two coast guard vessels. And I want to remind Honourable Members as I noted a comment made by one of my Honourable friends last week when we raise this issue that he found it interesting that the United States is giving some notice. Mr. Speaker, we have enjoyed traditionally very good – excellent diplomatic relations with the United States. Mr. Speaker what happened you know, I think the Members of the other side do not really understand diplomacy and the use of diplomacy [Knocking on desk]; and they are cowards because they think that they must only pay yes to some masters. We are bold, we are aggressive and we are progressive.

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

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: What is your point of order?

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Insulting and offensive language, Mr. Speaker. I think the Honourable Member in his exuberance has gone a little bit overboard to describe us on this side as being cowards on the basis of a difference on a foreign policy matter as he perceives it. He can use language that is much more neutral than that in which he expressed himself, Mr. Speaker. I am certain I am not a coward.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay. Maybe I will ask the Honourable Member please to tone down his rhetoric and I do not know if he can find ...

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the Standing Order indicates in anyway that the use of cowardice is ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No! No just a minute! I am seeing the Honourable Member of the Central Kingstown looking at me fiercely: what is it? What is it? [Laughter] You have asked me ... you have moved on a point of order and you said the Honourable Member used insulting language and I am addressing that and I see you are looking at me very fiercely. [Interjection] Honourable Member, would you please tone down on your language.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: That is why I look askance; I thought I was asking for him to withdraw the reference to us as cowards that is what I consider to be offensive.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Mr. Speaker, I am on the floor.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I did not hear you ask for ...

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: That is what I ask for, Mr. Speaker, and in fact I emphasized that I am not a coward.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: But Mr. Speaker, I am on the floor, you cannot have that interruption.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Just a minute. Just minute, sit please Honourable Minister. I did not hear you ask that is why I turn to you and ask what happened; what is it? And the way I see you looking at me, I asked what is it? Honourable Member, I am going to ask you to withdraw the word coward, I do not really honestly share that. You know we have to be very careful, you know; we have to be careful as I keep saying with the ... (Sit please.) we have to be careful with the lines we walk in this Honourable Parliament because if certain language or words are used that we are going to be objecting to there are several which I myself as Speaker, could object to as being used here from time to time by Members. And we have to be careful when we are making points of orders and objections because I am saying I also as Speaker can also object and ask that certain words be withdrawn. We have to be careful; you might just be walking a very thin line. Let us be careful.

I am asking you please to withdraw the word and I myself will be very careful as to words use in this Honourable House. Thank you.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Much obliged, Mr. Speaker. If my Honourable Member is offended, I do withdraw the word and maybe I should say less courageous or something like that.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I think I have said enough on that issue and I leave it to the court of public opinion to decide and to ponder on my debate on what I have just said.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, my Ministry is also charged with the management of Trade and Consumer Affairs and Mr. Speaker, this comes in the face of many challenges, which all of us have heard, we know, we read and we see the challenges of being a small multi-island territory. I heard an Honourable Member from the other side acknowledging some of the difficulties when you have to replicate institutional arrangements for governance in the many island states in the Grenadines and St Vincent. Challenges of small markets and those who are more versed in economics will know about the issues of really economies of scale. It is a challenge because it is one of the issues why we are suffering now from the lost of the preferential treatment trading arrangement for bananas. If you cannot produce large quantities cheaply, it is going to be very challenging to sell the small amount of any products, in this case bananas at a price that is workable. That is compounded by

the high cost of production, our topography, (and I remember that word is topography, yes) which is very arduous; it is mountainous, it is hilly, it is not easy to produce crops with such a topography and small land masses.

Mr. Speaker, the challenges include vulnerability to external shocks like economic shocks that we are undergoing now. The challenges of globalization, Mr. Speaker, some of the multilateral agreements we are engaged in, including the World Trade Organization. Mr. Speaker, one of the things I like about being in this Ministry as I said before, it has forced me to read a lot and learn a lot. Not that I did not have some notion of these things but I am now forced to know more. Mr. Speaker, we hear about the Doha Round Negotiation, basically it is a procedure in the World Trade Organisation and a lot of us should know about that because part of the reason why we are having the problem with our banana prices is because of decisions regarding World Trade Organisation. This is a challenge because there is not yet any resolution to the Doha Round of negotiations, and I will advise Members of this Honourable House who are not yet au fait with these things to take some time and learn.

Mr. Speaker, we are in an internet age and internet is much more than Facebook being able to go on Facebook. I have a Facebook account but just being on Facebook does not make one an authority on internet. Mr. Speaker, access to the Internet is important and it is desirable, but I want people to use it, because if we cannot get information otherwise or easily, it is one area which we can get information. So, Mr. Speaker, the challenges of Trade liberalization basically what it is saying is that they want to remove the barriers to trade, the International Community, but invariably it is disadvantageous to us small poor developing countries and what we are trying to do our Ministry is charged with assisting the political directorate in understanding those issues, and negotiating for a better deal for us. And I really want to give again commendation to my staff for over the years having been able to do a commendable job on that. We have challenges; we have problems and some of these negotiations include the EPA (Economic Partnership Agreement) which is one between the EU – the European Countries and CARIFORUM countries including CARICOM.

In fact, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to have been the person to have been signed for St Vincent and the Grenadines. It is true that there are many challenges because, Mr. Speaker, there are many challenges because, Mr. Speaker, there are many commitments that we have to meet, and they are not easy to meet but the fact that they are not easy does not mean that we will not aspire to meeting them. I am confident that my technical staff will find a way for us as a nation and working together with the Caricom nations to extract whatever benefits there may be. And there are opportunities, as well as challenges in implementing these agreements. Mr. Speaker, with that in mind, I am pleased to say that we have set aside in the Capital Budget provisions for the establishment of a unit an EPA Unit and that unit will be charged with the responsibility for what I have just debated.

Mr. Speaker, there are other multinational agreements that we are engaged in. Mr. Speaker, we know about the CSME and the OECS Economic Union, and we know that there are challenges there. CSME seems to be not much different from what is happening with the Doha Round, it requires a lot of commitment and it requires a lot of engagement of our partners and generally that it how it is when you have multilateral agreements. But Mr. Speaker, this administration is proud of the fact that we have been leading the way in many respects in ensuring that regional unity as exemplified and as expressed in CSME is one that is worthwhile to aspire to.

Mr. Speaker, we are also engaged in negotiations with Canada which is called the CARIBCAN Negotiations. It is essentially an analogy to the EPA Agreement with the European Union, where we are trying to negotiate with the Canadians ways of sustainable development with them. And Mr. Speaker, we are actively engaged right now at the CARICOM level with these discussions, and my Ministry has the charge together with the Redo to help in the negotiations here.

Mr. Speaker, I recently attended the budgetary consultations with the Private Sector that was held by the Ministry of Finance. And at that session, I was fortunate to have been able to interact with many members of the Private Sector and I want to take this opportunity to thank them for the role they played in the economic development of this country. I know and it has been stated that they invest some hundreds of millions dollars per year in the economy, and yes it is desirable, it is welcome. But as I said then and I will say now again: I have been on record of being fairly critical of the efforts of the Private Sector in this country, which sometimes sound contradictory because some people say and think that our policies are too state oriented, but I know that our policy is one that facilitates and enables the Private Sector. And I want to see the Private Sector being more active. Mr. Speaker, I told them then that I am not satisfied with one hundred or two hundred million dollars worth of investment in the economy. I want to see us reaching the billion dollar mark because, Mr. Speaker, if the Private Sector is to be the engine of growth of the economy, then they have to play a bigger role in the economic activity in St Vincent and the Grenadines. [Applause]

And I see my Honourable friend applauded from the Northern Grenadines

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: You finally get it.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: I got this long time ago, excuse, Honourable friend, I have this long time ago and that is why I continue. And you know that I criticize the Private Sector because I want them to do more. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member of the Northern Grenadines recently was debating just yesterday and he was lamenting the lack of activities in the Tourism Industry in the Grenadines. [Interjection] yes, in the country but in a friendly cross talk, which by the way is good and I think even welcomed by the other side, because it stimulates the debate a little more. Mr. Speaker, I suggested ... he was lamenting the fact that we do not have enough activities and I suggested that the Private Sector needs to get more involved. Mr. Speaker, I thought though that he was a little unkind when he lamented the fact that tourist arrivals to the Grenadines or to St Vincent and the Grenadines may have been affected by the high cost of air travel. I suggested that well we should develop fast ferry more and he was upset. I did not understand then and I do not understand now. Because this government has facilitated and encouraged and I believe it is part of the policy of the other side to develop the whole regional integration process and in an effort to facilitate movement of people we encourage the Private Sector by giving them concessions to bring in fast ferries.

The fast ferries are not only to travel between the Grenadines, we are hoping that it would be extended to travel ... I know in the argument the proposal for fast ferry to travel between St Lucia, Grenada, Barbados et cetera. So, Mr. Speaker, (my Honourable friend)

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Mr. Speaker, if my Honourable friend will give a way, I think he will.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Yes.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that now that my Honourable friend has explained in greater detail when he referred to the fast ferry I thought it was a flip comment referring just simply to the Jaden Sun which runs in the Grenadines. So, if he is saying that he is interested in expanding transportation service by fast ferries throughout the region, then I am all for it because I think that we need to have a more effective transportation system competition for the air services and anything that benefits the tourism sector and the economy of St Vincent and the Grenadines, I am for it. So, I am in one with the member there on that one.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Thank you, my Honourable friend. You see that is the problem about responding before one understands the intent of a comment. [Applause] [Laughs] Mr. Speaker, that as you have explained it is exactly my position, on fast ferry. Thank you my Honourable friend, we remain friends. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister you have fifteen minutes.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Fifteen minutes. Yes, Mr. Speaker, so as I was saying in terms of our trade policies, I know I believe that we need to do a lot more. Mr. Speaker, I believe it is fair to say that we have excelled in the area of our foreign policy generally. Mr. Speaker, I may not be as generous if I were to say that about our trading policy and I know my good friend and Representative for Central Kingstown will agree with me on that. I know he has some expertise in trade matters and he has offered to assist and since my time may not be enough to debate all the intricacies of trade matters he has offered to so do in his presentation.

Mr. Speaker, I want to mention the responsibility of the Trading Services because I think earlier I mentioned that. Mr. Speaker, I want to show you how very much integrated is our foreign policy and our administration policies in the Trading Services. Mr. Speaker, the Education Revolution of which we are proud of [Applause] is reaping benefit in this respect. And Mr. Speaker; it is lamentable that some people seemed not to understand what is the Education Revolution, because to narrow the debate on the Education Revolution to the Universal Secondary Education is really simplistic. Because Mr. Speaker, the Education Revolution in St Vincent and the Grenadines has seen hundreds of young people getting opportunities that hitherto they would not have gotten; to develop the human resource base of this country.

And Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier that the contribution of the trade of services in St Vincent and the Grenadines has surpassed to the GDP (Gross domestic product) has surpassed the contribution of the trade of goods; this is saying a lot. Some people say that agriculture, which is the main source of goods, should be the backbone of our economy unfortunately it is not. That is not to say that we ought not to emphasize the very important role that it plays including for food if not only for food security, and I am a strong proponent of that. So, Mr. Speaker when our Education Revolution implements policies like training nurses more than we will

require it is an expression of the recognition of the importance of services. [Applause] Because Mr. Speaker, we took a definitive decision to do so because we recognised this fact and now we are proud to say that we are exporting the services of nurses trained in St Vincent and the Grenadines [Applause] and our GDP is benefiting from that.

Mr. Speaker, what we spoke about the military in the UK is another example. Mr. Speaker, the training of persons in other areas where we may not at this time be able to employ them in St Vincent and the Grenadines, but they are prepared. Mr. Speaker, I hear criticisms often from supporters of the other side that “you talk about Education Revolution and hundreds of people go university - they come back, can’t get a job”. My response to that is that I prefer to have a citizen of St Vincent and the Grenadines being prepared to take advantage of any opportunity when it comes that is educated and employable instead of being uneducated and unemployable. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I am proud of the policies of this administration. Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons I am here today is because I was called again to national service. Let no one feel I am here because I cannot do differently; let no one feel that I am here because I am holding any position. I heard a comment yesterday that I am holding this position. I do not know if the person who made the comment thinks that I am holding the position for him. [Laughter] I really sincerely hope not, because Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to take the opportunity to thank constituents of South Leeward for the confidence they placed in me, while I choose to be their representative. I know that they must have been proud at least of my representation in the House and the debates. And I think the fact that I have been elevated to Minister of Foreign Affairs is an expression of the confidence, and I believe, Mr. Speaker, that Vincentians whether they are supporters of Green Party, NDP our ULP feel comfortable with Doctor Douglas Slater as the Foreign Affairs Minister. You may not support me politically but you would have the confidence that I can ably do so. [Applause] Enough said about that.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, in trade we want and we are going to develop trade policies, we have a draft National Trade Policy that will help to guide the interest group and especially the Private Sector because we want a good mix of private and public sector to do what is necessary. As I said before, I think we need to improve on our trade policies and trading. Because Mr. Speaker, I have already been engaged in discussions with some of our partners: the Venezuelans and the Cubans. Up to this morning I had a meeting with the Brazilians, they are interested in developing trade with St Vincent and the Grenadines. I remember the Ambassador of Venezuela once telling me Venezuela is big St Vincent is small almost anything that we can produce that can be sold to Venezuela can get into their market without they ever really noticing it; and therefore, I believe we need to look at niche markets. Areas where we can pick some little product that we have here in relative abundance to trade. They have identified agricultural products, plantains and ground provisions and we need to find somewhere to work with the private sector because I think I hear too often from the other side a dependency on the state apparatus to do these things.

We need the private sector and that is when I criticize the private sector. We need them to engage, we will facilitate the process, we will enable the process but you know the irony, Mr. Speaker, is that when the state chooses to get engaged then they come and say the state should not be involved in those activities. I am

confused. Mr. Speaker, I believe and I intend as Minister of Trade and Consumer Affairs to step up the game in ensuring that we utilize our diplomatic channels and our relationships in Latin America especially to develop trading partners. For example Brazil, I went to a supermarket recently and saw chicken wings for four dollars plus a pound and I was accustomed to seeing it at two something. I understand that Brazil, I know Brazil is a major producer of chicken products. They are our friends and our partners; we have to explore the possibility and I believe we may be able to get things from Brazil at a cheaper rate.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, I was just seeking a clarification from the Honourable Minister of Trade on an earlier statement to confirm that he states that they do in fact have a draft National Trade Policy. I want if he could confirm that it is still at the draft stage?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Yes, Mr. Speaker, we do have a draft, a completed draft and we hope in this year to work on implementation, and getting it operationalised.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying we need to really use our diplomatic channels to develop our trading policies. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the Venezuelan Government just recently I had an informal talk with the Ambassador and they have plans for doing some major development in housing in Venezuela, and they have already spoken to us they said there are certain resources that they will need and they want to engage St Vincent as a member of ALBA in participating in this. They intend to build a few million houses; they do not have all the raw materials and all the human resources to do so and I believe that the Private Sector as the discussions unfold we intend and I want to state to the Private Sector that my door is opened and suggestions as to how we can develop trade. I believe this is an area where we can take advantage of the opportunities of our foreign policy.

Mr. Speaker, I know time is limited so I have to say something on some other things. Consumer Affairs. Mr. Speaker, the Consumer Affairs Division of our Ministry is responsible for processing things like Trader's Licenses, Import and Export Licenses, and for the Price Control Regulations. They do so to protect and promote the interest of our consumers and all of us are consumers, and therefore it is important that they do a good job, and we want to encourage them to do so.

There are many problems. I have been informed that we have problems in collection of Traders' License. Mr. Speaker, you might be surprised to know, you know that some very prominent business persons - traders in this country are refusing to pay their trader's licenses. Mr. Speaker, when in cross talk I mention things like that; that the Private Sector these business people should pay their taxes; pay their NIS and pay their licenses I am serious. Because it is not fair that small shopkeepers and traders which are easily identified must be meeting their obligations, but those who turn over million of dollars per year do not. It is just not fair. I want to express my concerns about them and ask everybody to pay and everybody needs to play their role in national economic development.

Mr. Speaker, one area of concern in Consumer Affairs is one that I believe will interest all of us here immediately and citizens in St Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, the importation of used vehicles in St

Vincent is a major activity. Most people these days who purchase a vehicle, purchase a used vehicle because generally it is perceived as good value for the money or bang for your buck. Invariably it is probably about half - fifty percent of the cost of a brand new vehicle and if you are astute, you may select a good used vehicle. But Mr. Speaker, there are some unscrupulous vehicle dealers and I want to use this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to alert consumers as we would do through the media that they are being ripped off. I want to repeat it, persons who intend to buy imported used vehicles you must be aware of your rights: your consumer rights, it is price controlled item. The dealer or agent has an obligation to display the cost of the vehicle or the price and you have an obligation to find out what are your rights, because otherwise you may be paying a couple thousand dollars more than you should.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want you to listen to the programmes of the Ministry of Trade and Consumer Affairs, we use radio programmes, we use publications in the printed media and we have consultations. Unfortunately, sometimes we invite people to consultations; we raise these issues and people do not bother to listen or pay heed; and they to their detriment. I want to use the opportunity here to alert the citizens of this country that they must play their part in their own interests in getting a fair deal in consumer relationship. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my staff for their efforts in doing this in terms to the basket of goods at the supermarkets, I use it and so too should all citizens of St Vincent and the Grenadines. It is used so that you can know who has a better deal, and everybody wants a good deal. It is not easy to consistently do that and I want to commend them. It is like you know, there are persons (on a side now Mr. Speaker)

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Kindly wrap up for me.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Okay. Since time is of essence I would change that but it is really commendable persons who make the effort to continue and educate the people like Mr. Parnell Campbell and the Law and You, it is really commendable; I know there are some Journalists who write weekly despite we may not agree with what they write sometimes, but it takes a high degree of discipline.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I heard some comments from the other side, I will wrap up by addressing some comments describing this Budget, Mr. Speaker, as “impractical”, “inappropriate”, as an “Humpty Dumpty concoction” et cetera. Mr. Speaker, if all that I have debated and all that has been presented in the interest of St Vincent and the Grenadines are not practical and if they are inappropriate, well then we have a problem. Mr. Speaker, therefore I believe those comments were made glibly in the cut and thrust of opposition politics with no sincerity or seriousness.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Ministry of Finance, the staff for preparing such a practical and pragmatic Budget in the face of the challenges that have been outlined by several speakers. And we all know of these challenges, we cannot always blame the Government for things that we have no control on; but those that we have control on, let us step up to the plate, let us be more efficient.

I am sorry that I do not have much more time but somebody mentioned about energy conservation. It is important, Mr. Speaker, and I want to appeal to all Ministries and all households, let us make some effort in

conserving energy. Switch off the lights when you do not need them, switch off air-condition units in the offices when you are leaving for an extended period. Do not waste water and I know my good friend, the Representative of West Kingstown will agree with me there. The government agencies, schools et cetera are major sources of waste of water. It is not a government policy; the politicians do not do that, so all of us need to play our role because the less we spend on these things, the more we would have to respond to the many demands of social needs. So, Mr. Speaker, I want to unreservedly support this Budget and I wish it an easy passage. I am much obliged. [Applause]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable Member for South Central before I take you, could you sit; I recognise you but before I take you I just want to address one problem here. I have been having some requests to do what may be considered in the circumstance some unconventional things in terms of the debate. I have a request for the use of Laptop I suppose in terms of Power Point maybe presentation or Flip Board, Chart or such things of that nature. Now, I personally see nothing wrong with modernization or new technology, but one has to understand that we have to be mindful that these things are properly worked out. The logistics and the various methodologies are properly worked out in terms of how we go about these various presentations, because in some cases we do not want to affect the quality of the broadcast and things of that nature. It is my suggestion that I would rather want to discuss these matters prior. As a matter of fact, you know I am always an advocate to see that the Rules of this House that these Rules are changed, so that we can adopt whatever new technologies or modernisations we have.

I have somewhat struggled more or less with the former Minister of Tourism and the Minister of Telecommunications in relation to the use of the Laptop in making their presentation. And I said to them as I have said to those today, who have made their request then let us sit down as a parliamentary group or branch and discuss these things because we want to discuss the logistics and as I said the methodologies on these things so that when they are done we know they are done in a proper way.

And let me emphasize, I have absolutely no problem with the new technology or anything, because I do not believe that anybody loves technology like me. I mean, I change my Cell phone regularly because I want to keep up with the new technology. Members of the House would tell you that. So, I love technology, I enjoy it. They will tell you at home I spend nights just going through them; hours just going through these things, so I love them. So, let us really sit down, as I said, I am not just saying this to the Opposition, I have said this have a struggle with the Members of the Government previously, two Members particularly in relation to this matter. So, let us sit down and let us work it out properly so that we would not have a difficulty when it comes to making the presentation. Thank you very much. I hope I am understood in relation to this. No hard feeling against anyone. Thank you.

Honourable Member

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, I am going to crave your indulgence

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes Sir.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: As you are on the subject of what you call housekeeping which I think is very important to us. Maybe you want to send me back to the appropriate section of the Standing Orders, or you may want to waive that. But I just want, Mr. Speaker, because I think we are all working towards the integrity and the creditability of the Parliament to which we all must be committed that for one who has been here for a little while, I think there have been some developments that create problems for all of us and yourself as Speaker as well. Lastly, Mr. Speaker, you ruled on a matter that was very important, the so called statement from the Honourable Member of South Leeward, in which he was asked to withdraw the remark with respect to certain people: “That they would be pursued until they no longer exist”. And you would recall that it was the Honourable Prime Minister who raised the matter that it was an unfortunate expression and the debate that followed you asked that the matter be withdrawn and it was in fact withdrawn.

Mr. Speaker, the records will show that it is the Prime Minister himself who in public comment has made that very remark. And I am sure when you are able to take time out to do your own research ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: In the House you mean?

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: He did not make them in the House, Mr. Speaker, but he ...
[Interjection] [Knocking on the desk]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member wait, wait. Just a minute please let me hear the Member. No! I am just asking the Member, you go ahead.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: The point is, Mr. Speaker, you were making a distinction between the remark being made in the public, and if it is being made in the House that is your distinction Mr. Speaker? If it is so, I will end the debate ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I am indeed making that distinction. I am not responsible for anything that is out there in the public.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: I accept unreservedly.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: But if it comes into the House that is where my jurisdiction is.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: I accept unreservedly your distinction of matters outside of the House not being germane to those.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I am saying you see the things that come to my ear what I hear I can deal with it. I cannot deal with something that was said outside. I mean you are reporting a matter to me, I mean how accurate is your report? I do not know. I am saying let me deal when the issues comes up here in the House I will deal with them. Thank you very much. You are through?

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: I was drawn over the coals for something I said [inaudible]

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, I want to read the quote of the Honourable Prime Minister, if you would permit me Mr. Speaker?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No! Made in the House of Assembly?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: No, made outside.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No! I said I am not interested in that.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: You are not interested.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No!

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: On quotations outside of the House?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No!

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: It is in reference to matters inside of the House that he made it? Did he make that statement in the public in reference to something in the House; with reference?

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, maybe if you will allow me to read it then you may be able to rule [Interjections] which I will accept.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No! No! No!

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: You would not accept?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No! Let us be honest with what we are saying. Honourable Member for South Central

HONOURABLE SABOTO CEASAR: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise with great pride and joy to present on the Budget of 2011. And I do so especially because it is less than sixty days and we are still celebrating the victory of the Unity Labour Party at the polls. [Applause] That is a fact, Mr. Speaker, believe it or not. I know Mr. Speaker, if I may say so on a lighter note; I am already becoming accustomed to looking across at my colleagues on the other side who I know will be sitting there for the next five years. Not only that, on the completion of the Argyle International Airport they will be taking permanent residency on the Opposition side. There is absolutely no doubt about that [Applause] Mr. Speaker, I would like to pause for a while before I go into substantive sections of my presentation to give special congratulatory remarks and to congratulate a great man.

Mr. Speaker, this debate has gone on for hours, we have been here for days but I just want us for a while to place the Budget Debate of 2011 within the perspective of the global economic landscape. Mr. Speaker, if we look at history from 2001-2010, history will record that decade as one of the most trying periods for small vulnerable economies. [Applause] There is absolutely no doubt about that. We had 9/11 at the very start of the decade, terrorist attacks, during that period there were great uncertainties in our world. And at the end of the decade what were we presented with? We were presented with a global financial meltdown and in St Vincent and the Grenadines we experienced the ravishing winds of Hurricane Tomas.

When we look at our major productive sectors, Mr. Speaker, and it is very important that in any budget debate that we look at how our productive sectors have responded to external shocks and let me begin with agriculture. On the conclusion of the banana case at the World Trade Organisation a very, very important case, we would have experienced preferential erosion like never before since we were an independent nation. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the truth be told, the last time that we would have suffered from such great preferential erosion was in 1846 when there was the passage of the Sugar Duties Equalization Act and we know from our study of history the devastating impact that that had on the economies of the British West Indies. I am just placing the history into context because it is easy to come here and have a budget debate and look at result indicators in isolation and when we look at history, we can realise that during this decade we have experienced severe challenges. And I must say there was not a better government to have been in place than the Unity Labour Party administration. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker, not only did the banana case have a rippling and negative impact on the economies of the Windward Islands, but in all my life growing up in Diamond and San Souci I never knew of a disease by the name of Moko. I heard about leaf spot but the Banana Industry again suffered a severe impact when it was attacked by Moko and then Black Sigatoko. Also we experienced hikes in the cost of oil – oil prices skyrocketed and because of that one resultant implication quite naturally would be the increase for the cost of fertilizer. So, we have the Banana Case going against us at the WTO, we have Moko, Black Sigatoko, high fertilizer prices and the farmers are extremely thankful to the Ministry of Agriculture for subsidizing the cost of fertilizer. If it was not for some of those subsidizes our farmers would not have survived. [Applause]

And while we were of the view at the point and time that we were out of the woods and the bananas were standing again close to the end of last year we had Hurricane Tomas devastating these crops that we would have expended so much monies on to get back to the state of readiness. That is the backdrop in agriculture a main productive sector that we are faced with when we have to craft a budget in 2011, and Mr. Speaker, I need to say that a better job could not have been done by anyone else in this House than the Unity Labour Party. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker, if I may just shift my attention for a bit to tourism, the impacts of 9/11 tourist attacks did also affect the tourism sector negatively, but we also experienced the global economic downturn coming close to the end of the decade which affected our source markets. Mr. Speaker, two years ago I visited my uncle in Michigan and on driving I realised that sometimes you pass acres of empty parking lots, parking lots empty, you know they are parking lots because they are marked out. When I questioned my uncle as to where the cars, he said, “Well that is a Plant for Ford and they are closed and the workers are home”; and these situations were not

only localized to Michigan but they were all over the United States of America and Europe our sourced markets. And these are the persons who would come to the Caribbean on a vacation. So, when their spending powers were reduced and their propensity to consume a vacation in paradise was lost that was a rippling negative impact on our economy. And I must say any economic analysis [Applause] of this Budget must take that into consideration.

Mr. Speaker, not only that but with the rises in gas prices those of us not me, but those of us who travel a lot could make the comparatives that whilst I was a student at Cave Hill sometimes I would come home on a ticket for US\$50 a US\$100 now that is now out of the window. You are paying sometimes \$400, \$500 or \$600 to go right there to Barbados as the cost for international travel has increased significantly that has definitely cost a reduction in persons travelling.

And Mr. Speaker, I have moved from the Agricultural Sector and I am now moving from the Tourism Sector as productive sectors and I am going to point to an issue of hardship that we are facing currently not by anything that we would have done. But Hurricane Tomas struck our housing stock in St Vincent and the Grenadines was severely damaged. Many of us wake up on a morning, we put on our suits, we iron our shirts and we jump into our SUV's and we come to work and sit in air-conditioned office all day, but Mr. Speaker, there are 53 families who are still displaced, something that we have to take into consideration. Hurricane Tomas could have displaced many families who are still displaced today in spite of the efforts, the great efforts I must say of the Housing and Land Development Corporation and this Government.

Mr. Speaker, not only are families displaced from their homes but farmers are also displaced. Farmers right now with the assistance of the Ministry of Agriculture they are fostering up some hope and courage to go back to their farms because, Mr. Speaker, it is not an easy thing when you would lose both your house and your farm at the same time. So those are some of the realities that we are faced with, and those are some of the guidelines that we would have used in crafting this excellent Budget.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has again shown by his excellent scholarship in this budget that he is a man for all seasons; in time of plenty and in time of little. He is a man with a vision, a man with the ability to lead in times when others fear. And I know, I may not be alive then we may all be gone, but I know that one of these days someone is going to find it necessary and important to do a research on the excellent work of the Honourable Prime Minister to take this country through one of its roughest times economically not because of any doing of ourselves as Vincentians but because of the international economic environment. [Applause]

And Mr. Speaker, I guess that is why on December 13th, 2010 the people spoke and he is on this side of the House and the opposition remains on that side of the House. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the Honourable Prime Minister, the Cabinet colleagues, the Ministry of Finance and the Permanent Secretaries and their staff for crafting this budget in these times. And it reminds me of a story and Mathew Gospel is instructive: in chapter 25 of the talents which were distributed and Jesus was telling the story. He gave one man five talents, he gave the other two and he gave one; one and what is important, Mr. Speaker, is that he gave them in a similar economic environment, the variables were the same, the time period was the same, however the story is told that the one who got five invested it with fiscal prudence

and he got ten. The one who got two also invested it with fiscal prudence something I know that our Prime Minister would have done as we have seen is translated in this budget. And the one who got two invested it and he got two more. But the one who got one in the spirit of doom and gloom, in the regular oppositionist, pessimistic attitude that we see coming about here in the House by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition as it pertains to budgetary debates. Mathew chapter 25:25 to be exact was instructive on that point when he was asked: what did you do with your talent? He said, I buried it because I was not so certain that I would have gotten any returns on it, and because I buried it I am bringing back the one to you. I would like us who do not know what the Gospel says to read Mathew chapter 25:25 before we go to bed tonight. Twenty five twenty five: “O ye of little faith”.

Mr. Speaker, I sat and I listened very carefully to the presentation by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, and as my training has taught me as a lawyer that whenever I am in a debate, I must not only listen, I must write. Because when you write and you take copious notes no one can jump up and say I did not say that because I have it in writing. These were the words the regular pessimistic, oppositionist rhetoric coming from the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. These were his words not mine; that this budget did nothing to people who find it hard to live; it did nothing to people who find it hard to live. But in the Budget we see a 25% increase in public assistance to benefit over 5,000 persons. Is that doing nothing, Mr. Speaker? [Applause] Is that doing nothing? Then it was noted in no uncertain terms by the Leader of the Opposition that it is a hurried concoction coming after a general election. But Mr. Speaker, when you analyse the Budget and you look at the Recurrent side of the Budget and our large expenditures on the Recurrent side, our efforts in education and the Argyle International Airport, these did not come after the Elections. These were in train throughout the last term of the Unity Labour Party Government.

Then the Honourable Leader of the Opposition went on to state: that this budget, it is designed to take this country into misery. You see, Mr. Speaker, we have to understand when we speak in this Honourable House that there are vulnerable minds and vulnerable ears in the general public, who are listening. And when they hear these things sometimes they do not allow themselves to chew on what they are hearing because they are not exposed to the facts as we may have here in the House because we have the Estimates. So, we have to ensure that when we speak in this House that we do not misguide the general public. Mr. Speaker, it was said by the Leader of the Opposition that it was designed to take this country into misery. Mr. Speaker, in this Budget we see huge sums being expended on operation recovery and reconstruction, to put back the roofs on the houses of the poor. To help them put back the little electrical work that would have been damaged and to assist the farmers.

And I heard it, I would not say who said so; but we all know, I heard when a statement was made that the Honourable Prime Minister overestimated the damage to agriculture. I am asking this question, Mr. Speaker, if we are actually taking this country into misery when we spend monies to assist the poor and working class? In fact, it is the other way around; we are taking the country out of misery. [Applause] And Mr. Speaker, the last line I want to quote from the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, it was stated in his address that this budget has nothing to do with unemployment. Well, when you look at BBC and Fox a phrase has been coined in the United States of America “The receiving of your pink slip”, meaning when you turn up to work they hand you a pink slip and tell you that from tomorrow do not come back. I would like to see where in this budget that we are

cutting employment? And Mr. Speaker, we are going to continue in the same vein with the YES Programme, which is a major source of employment though sometimes in the short and medium term for young people; a very important project. So when I listen to the rhetoric coming from the Opposition, you know, I feel sad sometimes for persons who do not have the luxury I must say of hearing the other side; long winded phrases taking you almost nowhere.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to deal with two matters raised by the Leader of the Opposition, and also by the Member for the Northern Grenadines. And unlike the previous long winded statement these matters are matters of great appurtenance and I seek to clarify certain matters. Mr. Speaker, firstly I will address and if my friend could see with me on page No. 539 a page where the Opposition Leader made reference to and I think rightfully so, and this reference was also made to by the Member for the Northern Grenadines, No. 539; and it was questioning the figures for the cruise and the Leader of the Opposition noted that the actual figures we saw a - 30.5%. I just want to clarify the point that these figures were calculated up to September and not for entire year, and we know that the cruise season really goes into full swing October, November and December. So, I just want to clarify that point.

Also, if my learned friends would look with me at Page No. 540 the very next page, another matter for clarification because the Leader of the Opposition and the Member for the Northern Grenadines, and if I may say lightly, Mr. Speaker, I remember when he was debating the Estimates, he looked at me and he said I do not know much about tourism, I chuckled inside because here was one lawyer telling another lawyer that they did not know about a discipline that none of them had graduate studies about. [Laughter] But that is aside, in the court room it would be a different matter.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: But you are saying what I said was true.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CEASAR: No, I am saying that I take your invitation to come down to BLUES.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: That you do not know either.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CEASAR: Eh?

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: That you do not know, and you are the Minister.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CEASAR: Yes! But you want to be the Minister. [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, if I may just clarify these two points for the Honourable Members. If the Honourable Members may see with me, Page No. 540 - first table that deals with the Web Hits and the forecast was 250,000 and the actual was 261,000. The issue of contention here was the reservations generated, and I may just have to explain to you, Mr. Speaker, how this thing actually works. I do not know if it is now part of the formal language for me to use the word 'hit' because persons who are 'techno presence', I know the Speaker said that he is very au fait with the new cell phones but some persons may not understand what a 'hit' means. A 'hit' simply means you go on to a website; simply, you go on to a website.

So, there were 250,000 hits and the Leader of the Opposition said that and he was correct that as is stated here there was not a record of any reservations made. Now that was because of several reasons or could be because of several reasons. Firstly, when you hit a website and you are in Taiwan and you are browsing the web and you hit the website for St Vincent and the Grenadines Tourism Site; you hit it but that does not mean that the very next day you are going to come to St Vincent. You may come to St Vincent the next ten years, so it would not be reflected here that you would have reserved a room. Secondly, I remember I had a fantasy of going to Mexico but I chose to go to Mexico on Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines, so it would not be recorded that I went to Mexico and stayed in a hotel. And more importantly which I think will justify the anxiety of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition is that the search engine when you hit the site, it shows you a listing of all the properties. So, if you want to come to Caesar's Villa you do not have to book it through the Ministry of Tourism or through the website, you could just call the number there that is under Caesar's Villa. So that I think is a justifiable: and the truth as to why there is no notation there under the actual. [Interjections] [Laughs] Mr. Speaker, I would however hope ...

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: What is the purpose of putting it there?

HONOURABLE SABOTO CEASAR: What is the purpose of putting what there?

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Reservation.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CEASAR: And I am getting to that point. Mr. Speaker, in 2011 this year, what we are attempting to do is to attract persons to book through the Ministry of Tourism and not always directly through the Villa or the place that they want to stay. So it is a choice that the person has to make and that is why, Mr. Speaker, sometimes when you visit a resort upon filling out your form at the front desk, there is always a column asking, how did you find out about the resort? So, very well, there maybe thousands or hundreds of thousands of persons who came here who would have filled out that they learnt about the resort from making a hit on a website, but we did not put the mechanisms in place to collect that data. And it would be very hard and it would take time as living organisms we are growing and these are thing we would sort out in the not too distant future, but I just wanted out of utmost respect to clarify that matter or those matters as the case may be.

Mr. Speaker, I have before me a document an analysis of the Tourism Sector and Mr. Speaker, I would like to lay it as a document of the House. It is a document prepared, Mr. Speaker, by a brilliant young lady who works with the Ministry of Tourism in the capacity of the Chief Operating Officer. It is a snapshot of the Tourism Sector and Mr. Speaker, please permit me to quote some parts of this document because the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines they would have raised some questions and that is one thing I like, Mr. Speaker, when questions are raised I clarify questions; but when you are batting outside of your crease by calling this budget an Humpty Dumpty Budget I have to stump you and next thing you will end up crying for bad light as the Honourable Member for South Leeward said "You are crying for bad light in broad daylight".

Mr. Speaker, if I may read the analysis of the Tourism Sector, it deals firstly with the issue of airlift:

“Currently there are twelve daily schedules LIAT flights with a maximum capacity of approximately 50 passengers including nationals.

The LIAT flights are complemented by chartered flights from SVG Air, Grenadines Air and Mustique airways. This therefore limits the number of visitors that can arrive at the E.T. Joshua, Canouan union island and Mustique airports from the major source markets in the absence of an international airport.”

In other words what the author is saying is that it is pivotal that we push towards the construction and completion of the International Airport. [Applause] I know, I have heard in different areas former leaders of this country bandying about in Tokyo. I know it is a marketplace, it is a fish market but you do not have to behave like you are a fish market vendor if you go to a fish market. I heard with my own ears a former leader of this country told the people of this country that he had the monies for the International Airport in his back pocket.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: I was there.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CEASAR: I was there too.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: And what is wrong with the Fish Market vendors?

HONOURABLE SABOTO CEASAR: I never said that anything was wrong with fish market vendors, Mr. Speaker, I love fish market vendors. I am in love with fish market vendors [Laughter] but what is more is that a leader of a country went into the Fish Market and probably said something that not even the vendors would have said. He had million of dollars in his back pocket. Mr. Speaker, the New Democratic Party has no authority to speak about tourism in this country, since when they had the chance when banana was at its peak to build an international airport they did not. Now they are questioning tourism, how many persons are coming here to stay over when they would have closed the door on a very important opportunity. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker, cost of travel to St Vincent and the Grenadines. In the absence of an international airport, visitors to the destination from the major source markets pay an additional US \$200 to \$300 to travel from the hubs in the Caribbean. I was speaking to an official in the Ministry of Tourism yesterday evening and he was telling me that you can get a ticket now out of Barbados to go to the United States for US\$100. Now, if we had our own international airport we could see how it would have caused a deflation in the cost for travel. And if we take that argument to its logical conclusions then we could have seen how it could have been more affordable for persons to travel.

Currently, Mr. Speaker, there is work been done with LIAT to offer a special or discounted rate to travel to St Vincent and the Grenadines. The third point which was raised in the document has to deal with external shocks and it is noted here that ... and I also in addressing some of the questions by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, because at some point he was saying in his presentation that he is concerned about the number of stayover visitors. But in terms of external shocks not only were there external economic shocks in our source market but the volcanic eruption in Iceland which began in April 2010 and continued through to May 2010

caused a fall off in visitors arrival from Europe. So that also was a factor and the Ministry is working on intensifying its PR work in Europe to ensure that even though there are shocks that we can safely come through some of these problems.

Also, Mr. Speaker, on the issue of accommodation there has been the closure of major properties including Raffles, Friendship Bay and Villa Lodge which has resulted in loss of room space and also visitors. At present, however, we are encouraging persons who have facilities for accommodation or intention to develop, for example Sandy Lane, the Buccament, which the Honourable Leader of the Opposition noted was a phantom project. I do not know what stage of phantom it is but we see it as a really project and we support this project wholeheartedly.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the competition, in terms of rates, as a Ministry we are working steadfastly to ensure that the persons who run these guest houses and hotels and resorts that they compete on a reasonable basis. I know that sometimes we suffer from these economies of scale because we may be running a small enterprise and our operational cost is extremely high but we have to ensure that we do not price ourselves out of the market; very important.

Mr. Speaker, if I may continue, this budget seeks to modernise our tourism product. Mr. Speaker, I have grown accustomed to love what I know or what I have coined as the three “ACES”. If you are to build a modern tourism product there are three “ACES” and I see the Member for Central Kingstown is smiling, he likes these kinds of acronyms. You have to ensure that you have proper ‘Access’ that you have ‘Accommodation’ and that you have ‘Attraction’, because your access whether through seaports or airports that is the carriageway that brings the visitors, hence the need for the Argyle International Airport: the access. And when they come they have to be properly accommodated, hence the need for a public sector and private sector partnership to facilitate us developing in the area of accommodation.

And to a point where I know that this government has done excellently on and I must commend also the former Minister of Tourism. But I must critique the Honourable member for the Northern Grenadines when he did not sound such favourable commendations to the former Minister. But you just need to take a drive to Rawacou, to Mount Wynne, Peter’s Hope, to Vermont Nature Trail, Owia Salt Pond and Black Point. Yes take a leisurely drive. I know you like your Sunday evening drives. I see you when you pass up you know. [Laughter] You like your drives. Drive out on the Windward Highway and you will see the footprints still in the sand of the Honourable past Minister of Tourism [Applause] a young man who has done excellent work in this country; and I would ensure as Minister that he gets an opportunity to continue his excellent work in this country. [Applause] And I would not like to have anyone misguide his hard work. He did well and when our young men do well we must commend them, and when they do bad we must also not commend them; but we must also encourage them. I know the Honourable Member ...

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Mr. Speaker, could I ask the Honourable Member for a clarification?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Clarification.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Mr. Speaker; did I hear him to say that one of the reasons why there was a fall off in stayover visitors, in accounting for it was the fact that there were closures in hotels and so the implication being that there was lack of occupancy? Is that what he is saying? Because in his own Estimates at page No. 540, we see that the forecast for 2010 for St Vincent and the Grenadines was an occupancy rate of 38% in the mainland and 35% in the Grenadines. And the forecast for 2011 was for an occupancy rate on the mainland of 45% and on the Grenadines for 40%, so obviously we were under-occupied so that cannot be a cause for lack of visitors coming here.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member you would clarify?

HONOURABLE SABOTO CEASAR: Mr. Speaker, it is a trivial question.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: It is not trivial.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CEASAR: So, I would answer.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CEASAR: It is a trivial question, because what you are actually doing when you are asking that question you are saying that all the variables are set, that is what you are saying that all the variables are set but all the variables are not set. For example, if promotion goes up, if airlines ticket prices go down it can increase the number of persons coming in. I did not say that in isolation, because some hotels are closed that that is the only reason. I mean that is the most trivial point I have heard in this House since we are debating this...

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Go forward man.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CEASAR: It is a trivial point.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CEASAR: I will give way.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Mr. Speaker, a point of clarification. My Honourable Friend, I [did] not say that was the only reason, I am not such an idiot, Mr. Speaker, [Laughter] I know he said other things but he put it forward as one of the reasons. If it is one of the reasons for the fall off then obviously as the Minister he would try to correct it. But how can you correct a problem that does not exist that is the point I am making. And for him to say it is trivial it means he does not know his job.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Do not use insulting words on yourself, you know. [Interjections]

HONOURABLE SABOTO CEASAR: I do not be insulted. Mr. Speaker, I would not be bothered by trivia. [Interjection] Frankly speaking I would not be bothered by trivia. [Applause] I am still coming to Bequia for the weekend [Laughter]

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: It is a free country; it is part of St Vincent and the Grenadines.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CEASAR: Who said no? You are the only one who seems to be saying no. [Interjections] Yes! Treat us nice. [Laughter] We will be your guest. So, Mr. Speaker, remember it is not [Inaudible] square you are going, you know. [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, so we are doing our best to hold our own with the limited resources that we have to work with and we are not the only island in the Caribbean who would have suffered. All the islands in the Caribbean are experiencing the difficulties. It is just one of those things that you are faced with in life, and you just have to do your best to swim through it, hoping that you reach to the other side. And once you have done your best, once you would have put all the facets in place, you just have to let the good Lord do the rest. That is just the case. And I am convinced that this government, this administration and in this budget we have done the best for tourism with the limited resources that we have; [Applause] plain and simple.

Mr. Speaker. If I may now turn to the issue of accommodation and I know that it was with great relief that those persons who would like to develop resorts and hotels in St Vincent that they heard what was stated on page No 50 of the address made by the Honourable Prime Minister and it was very instructive. Basically, I would not read it but I would just explain it briefly. Those persons who fit the category meaning they would have reached the certain levels for investments, once they would have invested in a resort or hotel of a particular cost and they want to resell to another owner that they are given a tax credit of 5%. And I think that that would be extremely welcome and we would see the impact of this filtering down in the rest of the economy because now that person can employ more persons at start up, they can even improve on the initial plan with those monies that they would have received as savings from the start. So that was extremely welcome.

Mr. Speaker, because of the rugged terrain of our country, undulating relief, topography, many of our sites are placed in places where erosion is constant weathering, the hard beatings on the coast line of Owia would affect us going to some sites. I, Mr. Speaker, and I spent a day on Saturday last at Mount Wynne and the roads we have to do something to the roads and in the Budget we see that finances are placed to deal with the rehabilitation of roads at Dark View, Trinity Falls, the Vermont Nature Trail and other sites.

And if I might just say, Mr. Speaker, because I heard the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines said that he enjoyed going to the Montreal Gardens and he had an extremely nice time. And I am happy to know that we also explore as locals our sites, but something that I noted, Mr. Speaker, is that our investment in the Feeder Roads would also have a positive spill off in tourism because when you fix the Feeder Roads some of these Feeder Roads are actually leading you to tourist sites. Those of us who are old hikers would know that. We would know that because sometimes you are going to a site and you have to pass several cultivations of bananas and different crops, and these roads are being addressed within our means and I am certain that it would also have a positive spill off in terms of access to some of our sites.

Mr. Speaker, I also welcome on page No. 30 of the Address of the Honourable Prime Minister the fact that internet wireless connection will be at all fourteen recently completed tourism sites. [Applause] That is an excellent programme an excellent policy and definitely we are moving ahead in technology. Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss of me if I do not mention the Villa Boardwalk another project, I had a meeting recently with some stakeholders and they mentioned the Villa Boardwalk as Minister Beache's baby. An excellent Boardwalk and I know that the stakeholders in the Industry are extremely happy and we will be taking it to the next step in due course not only to build a boardwalk but to build a lighted boardwalk.

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Thank you. Thank you.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CEASAR: I now move on to the Hospitality Institute. In 2010 we completed the designs and in 2011 we will begin the construction phase. And Mr. Speaker, I must spend sometime on the Hospitality Institute. You know there is a misconception and I do not know where it actually came from, but it exists in our society where some of us are of the view that as it pertains to hospitality in tourism; that our locals do not have the know-how. It is something that pervades our society and it is a matter of great concern to this government and it is one that we are seeking to address by the establishment of the Hospitality Institute.

Mr. Speaker, when you go on Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines sometimes you wonder if you are in South Rivers or Park Hill or Diamonds or even Calder, because I remember one experience where for an entire day I was only served by Vincentians. And it was not that they picked out Saboto Caesar to attend to him but there are so many Vincentians on cruise lines. There is one Xavier Mathias who I know has reached to the heights of the Cruise Industry. He is sailing now on the Monarch of the seas, a South Leeward man, a Saint Martin man, a Labour man [Laughter] and this goes to show that we have the human resource here all we need is the added training. [Applause] Those of us who frequent the British Virgin Island when you go to the bitter end, when you are on Tortola it is Vincentians who are working who are giving you five class service.

And I know that many of the resorts here are benefitting from having trained human resource base, when many of the men who were sailing quit the ship and they come with the bulk of the training and they can easily fit in. What we are doing here and what we want to do here is we want to start the training at home so that even persons who want to go into sailing and become sailors on these cruise liners they could have a start at the Hospitality Institute and when they go on to the cruise line instead of starting as dish wash or pot wash you can start at a higher level. Mr. Speaker, what I am saying is resonating with hundreds of persons as I speak because there are many lives affected. I must take this opportunity to commend our brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts who are sailing on those cruise lines because in terms of remittances it has had a positive impact on our country.

NATIONAL SIGNAGE PROJECT

Mr. Speaker, in terms of the National Signage Project there has been attempts before as it relates to signage; and we know the importance of signage so that when a guest is travelling through the country you can know directly where you are and you can easily get directions to find exactly where you are going. Because though most of these signs were placed on the coastline previously would have suffered from the sea blast and if you travel around the country today you will see many of these signs either disfigured or looking in a very haggard way.

We are trying this time around to ensure that these signs are done in such a way that they would simply last longer.

Mr. Speaker, tourism is going to play a very important role in this country for a very, very long time. In fact, I think that Members on both sides of the House and the general public we all know in the Caribbean that the Tourist Industry and the Tourism Sector will be and will continue to be one of our main foreign exchange earners. But Mr. Speaker, there is a need for an intensified approach to the education and sensitization of our people as it relates to tourism, and I say that as a matter of fact.

An International Airport is right around the corner but how many young men and young women in Peruvian Vale, in Biabou, in San Souci, Diamond, Trotman, New Grounds, Greggs, Lauders and Marriaqua; how many of them are sensitized about how they can sell their labour to this new development and this new thrust in tourism. And Mr. Speaker, in 2010 excellent work was done by the Ministry particularly so when they collaborated with the Ministry of Education in sensitizing the young minds on the issue of tourism. I remember I went to one place I cannot remember exactly where it was; I think it was Lavande Haiti, and everywhere I went the children were waving only to find out that that was what they were taught in school: that when you see a stranger you give him a welcoming wave. Simple things like these, Mr. Speaker, go a very, very long way, when I as a tourist sad and walking through the areas of Lavande distressed and I want someone to tell me hello to make me feel better, a wave will go a very long way.

But Mr. Speaker, we have to ensure that the requisite framework is in place to educate and sensitize our people so that we can become aware. For example, sometimes you are walking through the streets of Kingstown a passenger van is coming, there are fifteen persons who have just come off of a cruise ship probably just had their breakfast and they are still walking a little slow and it is almost a causality; in the middle of Kingstown. We have to be more courteous and we have to be more welcoming, and I am certain that my Ministry would ensure that during the course of this year we continue our collaboration with the Ministry of Education to ensure that we have, we get and we receive the continued sensitization needed.

BOAT BOYS

The issue of the Boat Boys was raised and this will definitely be of interest to the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines. It is a problem not only in St Vincent; it is a problem around the world, in Hawaii, in Mexico and in the British Virgin Islands. If you go to St Thomas, to St Croix and to St Martins it is a problem that we are faced with and my Ministry will boldly approach the problem and would seek to fix it by incorporating the mechanism to fix this problem within the general education and sensitization for the national development of a modern tourism sector in this country.

Also the Ministry of Agriculture is partnering with the Ministry of Tourism as we work consistently and steadfastly on the agro tourism product.

INDUSTRY/CED AND STANDARDS BUREAU

Mr. Speaker, if I may just now turn to Industry, The CED and the Standards Bureau. When an economy, especially a small vulnerable economy, is faced with challenges because of resultant shocks and implications from the international economic environment, everything that you have to work with to create something

positive you have to use it. If you have a pepper tree you have to start to make pepper sauce, if you have a damsel tree you have to start to make damsel syrup and damsel juice and damsel wine. If you have [interjection] [Laughs] non-alcoholic wine [Laughter] and I hear the authority on wines, if I may say lightly, the Member for West Kingstown; he said there is no such thing as non-alcoholic wine. Well, when I go to the shop I order a non-alcoholic beer [Laughter]

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: You are fooling yourself.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CEASAR: He said I am fooling myself. [Interjections] [Laughter]

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: I agree with the Member.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR: And he said it is almost non-alcoholic. [Laughs] Yes, but the long and short of it is that during the period 20 ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Fifteen minutes.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CEASAR: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, 2011 we will see a closer partnering between Industry, CED and the Standards Bureau. And I must commend the Standards Bureau for doing an excellent work thus far. You know sometimes when some persons do their work there is no one there to see them. The general public is busy about their daily chores and many persons may ask you when I speak about the Standards Bureau- what is the Standards Bureau? What do they do? I do not go into an office in Kingstown and see the sign, but they are doing an excellent work in maintain standards in this country and I must commend them [Applause] And I know the poor and the working class, all classes are benefiting from their hard and diligent work. [Interjection] and they are located in Campden Park. I had a meeting with the colleagues at Industry and at CED and I must say we are blessed with the high quality of persons working in these area and we can only move forward from now on in a very positive way and to continue the excellent work and consolidate on the work done by the Ministry during the period of 2010.

YOUTH

Mr. Speaker, I am very close to the end of my presentation but I must speak just for a brief while on the Youth. It is still my dream, Mr. Speaker, to see in this country, and I see the Manifesto which has already been a document of the House, and I invite the Members on the other side of the House to take a look, a read at the Unity Labour Party, Youth Culture and Sports Manifesto of 2010. It is a document; its content will be implemented over the next five years – General Policy Framework. Yes! I heard somebody on the other side said five years. Five years it would be implemented, but I still hold fast to the belief that as a country if we are to move forward and develop and to harness our human resource base in the most efficient way that we need an exceptional cadre of multi-talented young persons, who will not only look selfishly inward, but who would have a vision of reaching out to their brothers and their sisters, to help develop a community spiritedness and community mindedness to take their communities forward, to take the nation forward, and to look beyond our shores into aspects and to trouble aspects of regional integration. To speak about issues of the OECS, CSME

and CARICOM and the new role that a young Vincentian male or female will intend to play in this new dispensation.

Mr. Speaker with globalization our borders are no longer only between Fancy and Union Island and our young people must begin to dream the world and become explorers. And I am certain that this Budget through the Education Revolution there are students all over the world they are bringing back new world views and new perspectives, but I still believe that we have to cement and put a structure in place to create that rebirth of learning, which will be necessary to take us forward and I am always willing to learn. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker, I will now turn to give my thanks to the wonderful people of the constituency of South Central Windward. Mr. Speaker, I have had an experience in my life and I know you heard the breaking in my voice a while ago. I have had an experience in my life that money cannot buy and that even though I get all the riches on earth, even though I get many of my other desires, I must say that I am indeed thankful to the people of South Central Windward who would [have] entrusted me with their confidence and definitely, I know that I would return that confidence in them by my performance. It was definitely a very trying period for me at the age of twenty nine years old at the time being the Minister of Housing; I am now thirty and the youngest Member of Parliament and Representative.

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: No!

HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR: There is a younger one? [Interjection] [Laughs] Yes Mr. Speaker, to be entrusted with such great confidence and I was on the point that at the time we were struck by Hurricane Tomas and to be faced with a general election for a very first time and you are the Minister of Housing, and you do not know whether to campaign or to fix houses [Interjection] and the Honourable Member for Central said that the hurricane was a Godsend. I would not say that because there are persons still in shelters and persons who just suffered great hardship. But what I have to say is that I would have already perused the Estimates because whilst I know that I am the Minister of Tourism and Industry, I am also the Representative for South Central Windward, and I intend to play two separate roles. I am going to live and stick in my constituency, even though rumours have started that I have moved to Cane Garden and that I am now sleeping at a big white house below the bank in Cane Garden, in the corner by the pot hole.

I was born in Diamonds, Mr. Speaker, the villages in Diamond shaped me, I grew up in San Souci on some lands my father bought from the deceased Mannie Francis, and I will begin the construction of my house in Mount Greenan. I am a South Central Windward man. [Applause] Mr. Speaker, I am obliged, thank you very much. [Applause]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Further debate? I thought you were coming to live near to me in Cane Garden. [Laughs] any further debate? Honourable...

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: If not, it might be a good time for us to take the lunch break, I suggest, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: All right. Well, it is either we take the luncheon break or we wind up the session. You said, of course, two hours, we normally go for two hours.

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Yes.

**Question put and agreed to
Sitting suspended at 11:55 a.m.
Until 2:00 o'clock
House resumed at 2:07 p.m.**

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, this Honourable House now resumes its post lunch period. Debate, Honourable Member for Central Leeward, I recognised you. Just sit a while, while I deal with the preliminaries. All right Honourable Member.

HONOURABLE MAXWELL CHARLES: Thank you. Honourable Members, I rise today to give support to this budgetary proposal tabled here by our Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance. When we look at the proposals, Mr. Speaker, and the Budget overall, it must be considered against the economic situation that is in our world today. And whatever happens, Mr. Speaker, in terms of economic failure or economic development in the world at large has to impact on this small nation we call St Vincent and the Grenadines. We look at the world over, for example, the United Kingdom where I lived for the past three years, we note the economic situation there, it has affected the Diaspora and in turn it would affect us in terms of remunerations. The same is true of the United States of America. And as we look through Europe we noticed that a lot of countries there are having economic difficulties around this time. So, against all these background we here in St Vincent are able to carry on a successful Education Revolution; [Applause] a revolution that will continue in the year 2011.

Housing, we are providing Health Care for our nation and one of the most important things we must notice is that there is no provision to cut the Civil Service as other nations are doing and for this I want to applaud my government. [Applause] In the midst of it all a devastating storm Tomas hit our country and I will say more about it later, but suffice it to say that this government responded well to the needs of this nation in their time of need. Against the background of economic failures in the world the larger nations, we still are able to build an international airport. Of course, we do so with the coalition of the willing but our efforts must be applauded because of what is happening in the world. Besides this, Mr. Speaker, we were able to increase the remunerations to the poor of this nation, something that many persons did not believe would happen. When we look at what has happened in terms of the hurricane, our commitment to education and our commitment to health many people felt that this was not possible but I am proud to announce that this has been done this month. Applaud our nation, our government.

Like as I said before there are no cuts in the Civil Service, many nations of the world are doing this but we here through good management; we are able to keep intact our Civil Service. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank Prime Minister for putting the confidence in me to head a Ministry because the Ministry of National Reconciliation, Public Service, Labour, Information and Ecclesiastical Affairs. But as I talk with people and as I interact,

coming to the fore and of great interest is the National Reconciliation Affair. I would like you to listen to the Mission Statement of our Ministry. It is not in the book but a supplemental was sent so I will read, and I quote:-

“To initiate, execute and advise on the formulation of a national reconciliation policy, and coordinate and implement policies pertinent to the public service, labour, information and ecclesiastical affairs, through effective and efficient programmes by using available human and financial resources for the sustained development of St Vincent and the Grenadines.”

The Ministry of National Reconciliation to my mind and of course the thinking of the vast majority of Vincentians is a very important Ministry coming at a time like this in our history. We need reconciliation. The type of politics practiced in these parts can and most times lead to divisiveness, disunity and what we may call bad blood. So, because of this I am putting it to this House that the Ministry of National Reconciliation is important and is a must if we are to succeed in our endeavours, [Applause] in St Vincent. This Ministry would simply be a facilitator. We need to work together as a nation in these tough times when we have to cope with economic woes, climate change and what have you, we need to work together. And national elections should not make us be divided to the detriment of the state.

This Ministry has four objectives permit me to quote them.

1. To advise on the formulation of government’s policy as it relates to National Reconciliation.

Our Ministry has to advise government? Why? Because it is not a relatively new, but it is a brand new Ministry.

2. To implement a National Reconciliatory Policy that guides the workings of government agencies: Central Government, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGO’S) and civil society in their approach to reconciliation.

We need a policy on reconciliation, like as I said before; we need to be reconciled to several things in this nation. We need to work together and our three parties need to work together. Our three parties need to work together, the NDP, the Unity Labour Party and the Green Party, we need to work together. This is our nation and in the final analysis when politicians would have gone off the scene most of us would still be around, we will still have a nation and we would still have problems to cope with; and it behoves to work together regardless of the result of elections.

3. To develop and to integrate an approach to this process.

Not only the Political Parties: our NGO’s and most of all our churches, we need to work together so that national reconciliation can be a reality in St Vincent and the Grenadines.

4. To sensitize the general public and educate key stakeholders on the issues of the reconciliation agenda and policy.

We need a method; we need to work step by step, and one of the things I would say later on and perhaps I should say it now and get it over. As I think about reconciliation it is not so much a goal you know but it is a process; a process that may take years but we need as a nation to start somewhere. There are some ideas that I have written here, indicators it is not in the book but I thought it must have been sent as a supplementary but nonetheless I shall read them and go slowly.

After I was given the post, one of the first things I did was to get our Cabinet's approval for the appointment and operationalisation of a body or a group to help steer the nation in this direction, and Cabinet of course give that approval. So, very soon and the indicator that I have here, by the end of April such a body would be formed and my recommendation is nine persons. We will call that body the NRAC – National Reconciliation Advisory Council, because as far as I am concerned reconciliation the politicians cannot do it alone, we need a body properly constituted to help lead the nation into reconciliation. And so because of that this body would be chosen by the end of February and brought to Cabinet for its approval. It will then begin its work soon after that.

Another indicator and Mr. Speaker, if you look at the budgetary proposals you would see on page No. 109 that for this Council \$12,000 is earmarked for the running of this council, so therefore we mean business.

5. To obtain the services of a coordinator by the end of may 2011 to spearhead this process.

In other words, there will be somebody working in our Ministry of National Reconciliation to help oversee this process and if you look at the Estimates on page No. 109, you will see we are going to get someone there, Grade G and also a clerk to help with National Reconciliation. So, it shows that this government is serious when it comes to National Reconciliation and you would agree with me St Vincent and the Grenadines need reconciliation.

“To conduct at least five consultations on the national reconciliation process by the end of 2011.”

So, this group, this body will be meeting with different groups throughout the length and breadth of St Vincent and the Grenadines to help steer things forward.

“To conduct at least five meetings with faith based organisations to discuss the reconciliation process.”

As Minister of Ecclesiastical Affairs and as a practicing Christian I have no problem in dealing with our faith based groups and from all appearances I know that they are ready and willing to work on this process of reconciliation. I have not met formally with them because of time and because we had quite a busy two weeks but meetings are earmarked alright to meet with the faith based organisations and of course the topic of national reconciliation would be high on the agenda. Not that I want to preempt and tell them what to do because this will be left up to the NRAC.

Mr. Speaker, it is our hope and it is our wish that all Vincentians would come on board when it comes to national reconciliation. Not too long ago, Mr. Speaker, I came across a story and it is South African based

because if it is one nation that needed reconciliation it is South Africa. It is a story that was told by the Reverend Empanbene and the short story goes like this: -

“There were two guys, one named peter and one named john ...

[Laughter] We have Peters in here? No! Peter and John this time

... They were friends, they had a good working relationship but peter stole john’s bicycle and this caused some bad blood between them. But peter decided that reconciliation is a must. So he told john “hey, it is time for reconciliation we cannot go on like this”. And you know what the first thing that john said was: “i want back my bike”. Peter turned to him and said, “let’s forget about the bicycle reconciliation is more important.”

Of course, I do not agree with Peter.

“In that same meeting, there was a doctoral student by the name of Heidi Grunbaum Ralph and he said, “we sometimes run the danger of forgetting who was wrong, and of creating a kind of amnesia which devalues the experience of the victims”.

So, what I got from this story is that somehow somewhere along the line in the reconciliatory process, there must be some sort of restitution and some sort of rehabilitation, if we are to be successful and if we are to go down the road of reconciliation. I said before, it is not necessarily a goal, it is a process, it would take time. My Ministry is open to suggestions and already I have been having quite a lot of suggestions, some negative, and some positive but at least we have made a start on our way to reconciliation. My Ministry is opened to suggestions. Suggestions from all Vincentians: from all walks of life because this is our nation, and we have a nation to build both government and opposition alike. [Applause]

Mr. Speaker, public sector, public service ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member.

HONOURABLE ANESIA BAPTISTE: Mr. Speaker ... [sat down]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No! No! You stood; I am trying to find out what is happening.

HONOURABLE ANESIA BAPTISTE: Yes Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Point of order. State your point of order.

HONOURABLE ANESIA BAPTISTE: Yes. Mr. Speaker, I state standing order No. 35, I actually wanted to interrupt before – 35(b) that is but I wanted the Honourable Member to continue his story, but with respect to ... I seek clarification. I heard the Honourable Member made reference to Result Indicators for this Ministry, and I

think I recall him they may have been in the Supplementary but when I look back at my Supplementary there are no Result Indicators, so I was wondering if he could advise if these would be made available to us on this side of the House afterwards, or if that is indeed what he said. Because I looked in the Supplementary documentation and I did not see any Result Indicators pertaining to National Reconciliation.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

HONOURABLE MAXWELL CHARLES: Thank you.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: What Supplementary?

HONOURABLE MAXWELL CHARLES: Yes, they will be made available.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: What document you are referring to really?

HONOURABLE MAXWELL CHARLES: The Result Indicators.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You have a document with additional Result Indicators?

HONOURABLE MAXWELL CHARLES: Yes. I will make it available to the House soon.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You have not answered my question. Hello, I am asking whether you have a Supplementary document with additional indicators.

HONOURABLE MAXWELL CHARLES: Yes.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Oh! You have such, all right.

HONOURABLE MAXWELL CHARLES: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: And you will make it available to the House.

HONOURABLE MAXWELL CHARLES: And I will make it available.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay. Thank you.

HONOURABLE MAXWELL CHARLES: Public Sector and Public Service Reform. The functioning of government in this century has become as we know it increasingly complex and one of the duties of this unit, the Public Sector Reform Unit is to help measure the performance of our civil servants. This sometimes is a touchy issue, and I know that they are doing quite a good job because if we read through the Indicators we would see that they are well on the way to do such. One of the Indicators, Mr. Speaker, is to develop standardised job descriptions for 40% of the Public Service by the end of December, 2011. When servants have

a proper Job Description they are able to work better, they are more efficient and those who monitor them can at least have a better instrument to monitor those who work under them. So, I applaud the efforts of this Reform Unit in doing just that by the end of December, 2011.

I came across a quotation Mr. Speaker: “The Budget Call 2010-2012”; I quote, it says: - “To continue the reform of the Public Sector to improve efficiency, innovation and service delivery”. And this is one of the priorities of this unit as they carry out their duties using a six member staff.

Other objectives, Mr. Speaker:

“To assist at least five ministries to develop budget proposals consistent with established framework by August 2011.”

Again, helping in the efficiency of our workers, our civil servants here in St Vincent and the Grenadines. There is going to be a workshop sometime next month around the 14 February, to be conducted by a commonwealth organisation that we call CAPAM (Commonwealth Association for Public Administration and Management) and I want you to permit me Mr. Speaker, to quote three lines from them. It says:-

“Principles of tradition, stability, innovation and change can co-exist to build a public service for the future.”

What this workshop seeks to instil in our civil servants is the fact that many persons do not like change but they are saying that using their traditional methods that we are accustomed to we can marry them with change. So, as [inaudible] and other such changes and both can co-exist to build a public service for the future. And I think this is the road that we are encouraging our civil servants to go down where tradition can be successfully married to change and we have a successful public service. Other indicators; well I think I covered the three. There are others that we would go into as we go through our 2011 year.

LABOUR

Labour is also one of the areas that come under my Ministry. We in St Vincent and the Grenadines, on the 9 November, last year we ratified the Maritime Labour Convention 2006. We call that the MLC and we did so with the International Labour Organisation. And we are told that we are the eleventh maritime country to ratify such a convention. So, it means then St Vincent is continuing to place itself in the International Arena as we adhere to international standards as laid down by the ILO. [Applause] Of the Conventions that we have ratified: The Employment Policy Convention; the Labour Inspection Agriculture Convention of 1964; and also the Tripartite Consultation the International Labour Standards of 1976, No. 144. To date research shows that we have ratified at least twenty two such Conventions.

The Labour Department, Mr. Speaker, has different units at least four different units that deal with:-

- Policy and Labour Relations.
- Employment and Training.

- Standards and Labour Market.
- Labour and the Labour and Safety Inspectorate.

And I must commend the Labour Department for helping to see to it that we have a good worker climate in St Vincent and the Grenadines. On a daily basis they have consultations with the current laws and regulations of the Labour Commissioner and the Technical Officers. They administer on a daily basis:-

- Security of workers.

They deal with the agriculture workers, domestic workers, the hotels workers, the industrial workers, workers in offices of professionals and shop assistants. And when it comes to the hotel workers as we continue to construct our hotels and my mind goes out to the one in my constituency, a five star hotel and of course later on, the other one that would come in Mount Wynne. We need not only to train our workers in this direction but also to educate them as to how to deal with five star hotels. And I think the Labour Department is doing quite a good job in this area.

Worthy of mention also is the Labour Market Information System Project. The stakeholders of this project are different departments, the NIS, the Ministry of Education, the Employers Federation, the National Labour Congress and at least two private employment agencies. So, Mr. Speaker, we have quite a vibrant labour department here in St Vincent and the Grenadines. I would just like to briefly state some of the Indicators:

- **To have at least one consultation on the draft Occupational Safety and Health Bill with the Social Partners in 2011.**
- **To have a functional Labour Market Information System by the end of first quarter in 2011.**
- **Training workshops targeting 500 students (for School Leavers in SVG) in the first two quarters of 2011. To be conducted during the period Feb-may, 2011.**

Again: the Labour Department targeting our young people and instilling in them ethics of work. This is what we are doing here in St Vincent and the Grenadines.

- **Also to collaborate with the Employers Federation to implement three work place policies on HIV/AIDS and other diseases by the end of 2011.**

And this of course, because we know we should not discriminate against anybody with this disease, and I think I heard something on the radio this morning where one of the officials of the Teachers Union was reminding us of this.

My Ministry under the Labour Department is also in charge of the Canadian Farm Programme and last year we only managed to get approximately 280 workers off to work on Canadian farms. We would have liked to send much more, but what we are finding out more and more, is that more and more Canadians are drifting towards these jobs because of the economic climate in their countries and so therefore we could only get a certain amount going up to Canada. Personally, I would like to see this number quadrupled so that our people could get

employment so that remunerations can come back to their families here in St Vincent and the Grenadines. I must also tell us that with the farm programme, many of the persons whom you see would be going off starting last week would be, what we term, (and I know we would understand this) request workers. Persons who would have worked faithfully and well on the Canadian farms and their bosses would have said we want you back again. So, these are the persons who would be given first priority in going and then if any room is left of course, first time would be workers would be given a chance to go up and make a living on the Canadian farms.

Of course, as I said before, I would like to see this programme continued and expanded but Canadians are going more and more for their own jobs like these and I would not say squeeze out but it is affecting the numbers that we send. So, we do hope that this year we would get quite a few new workers to go and earn a living in Canada.

INFORMATION

Mr. Speaker, Information is also part of our Ministry and I am referring here to NBC – the National Broadcasting Corporation and it is twenty five years old as a corporation and we can look forward starting in the next few weeks, starting in March for a year long celebration as we would celebrate this important milestone, because twenty five years in an organisation is quite a lot. [Applause] Mr. Speaker, the NBC promotes national development through the giving out or the dissemination of information. We are opening our projects, we have live broadcasting like we are having today and it really educates the Nation as to government policy, what government is doing on a weekly or monthly basis.

The NBC has conducted 360 such hours in 2010; and our researchers tell us that this has a book value, whatever that means, of over one million dollars. All our Ministries benefit, Tourism and Health every day and Agriculture. And it is a facilitator of our good governance plan of regional unification and other policies that we are famous for in the government, and which we would be more famous for in 2011; NBC would be bringing these things to us. Also during the storm we had in October, NBC did a real good job there in getting the message out not only to Vincentians here in St Vincent but in the Diaspora because we operate the AM and the FM and discussion goes on as to whether or not we should continue both the AM and the FM because of the high cost of energy that comes as a result of operating these two frequencies. FM of course can be heard internationally. We target a lot of the Diaspora when it comes to AM but this is up for discussion and more of this would be held in 2011 as we seek to make NBC extremely efficient.

We also have a limited assistance to medical persons to the tune of quite a lot of money, last year \$16,000. Of course, the energy cost is very high and one of the projects that we would be pursuing this year in 2011 is to look at the possibility of having solar energy and also wind energy to cut cost as far as energy is concern. So, these are some of the things that we here would be pursuing.

The corporation employs thirty-six workers and if you look at the Estimates a subvention of \$.6 million goes to this corporation on a yearly basis. We would also appreciate the fact that because it is a government station, sometimes peak hours are taken up with broadcasting, for example today, government programmes and so the remunerations that comes as a result of advertisements are greatly reduced. But there is nothing we can do to this at present because the government message must go to the nation.

THE API

The API we know for sure has certain problems and one of those problems is housing, where they are at present and one of things that my Ministry will be doing this year is to at least get them into better quarters until they can move into their own quarters whenever that time comes. We would be working this year to ensure that progress is made so that the API can get into quarters where they can be more efficient, where they can do their recordings properly and so get the message of the government out to St Vincent and the Grenadines at large. So, this would be one of our objectives for this year 2011.

This organisation, this unit the API has four different units, Current Affairs, Production, the Technical wing and the Secretariat. The Technical Unit maintains and repairs equipment and they advise the Director on appropriate technology with respect to technical support and I think we have three or four technicians working in that department. API has to compete with many radio stations here in St Vincent and this presents a challenge. I would just like to read, permit me, Mr. Speaker, to read some of the strategic priorities and objectives of the API as I end this section of it.

- **To expand the use of the internet as a tool for the dissemination of information.**

Lots of its information would be on the Internet, and you see this government does not do anything in isolation because our students would be able, because remember each student would be getting one Laptop and they too would be able to follow the programmes on the Internet. And this is the type of government that we have. We do not do things in isolation, so come 2011 our students would be able to follow on the Internet programmes of the API. [Applause]

- **To reintroduce radio programmes to complement the use of television again to disseminate information.**

The other one I mentioned before, accommodation.

- **There will be in improved accommodation very soon in the first quarter 2011.**

As a temporary measure of course, because our ultimate aim is to get them into their own quarters.

- **To acquire adequate and up-to-date equipment.**
- **To expand and deepen television programming for the API.**
- **To produce and air three one hour TV programmes weekly on SVG TV.**
- **To produce and air two radio programmes weekly on the radio NBC.**
- **To produce a quarterly magazine.**
- **To construct and operate an API website by the second quarter of 2011.**
- **To arrange training for our camera men and our video crews by the second quarter of 2011.**
- **To purchase and install new equipment and furniture by the third quarter.**

So, we look forward to a very good and successful year to the API in 2011.

POSTAL CORPORATION

Mr. Speaker, under my Ministry also is what we used to call the Post Office but we say the Postal Corp now. In St Vincent and the Grenadines and perhaps the worldwide over, the posting of letters and that sort of thing is on the decline. And so, the monies that were made here through the postage of letters are no longer possible because we have the internet et cetera, et cetera and so... [Interjection] and Facebook yes, so we have to reorganize our post offices or the Postal Corporation. Mr. Speaker, by international law government is obliged to provide such a service to St Vincent and the Grenadines and the Postal Service, the universal service obligation ensures that this happens not only in St Vincent and the Grenadines but in other countries too.

The SVG Postal Corp despite all this has made improvements over the years. They are charged with also the reform of the sector to ensure that the Corp is financially balanced and modernised. And the Postal Corp has some programmes that are pretty innovative and they have to compete also.

ELECTRONIC MONEY TRANSFER

And we have outlets in at least two areas outside of Kingstown; there is one in my constituency Layou and the other is in Georgetown and plans are at foot to have another outlet in the valley in Mesopotamia. These services enable our people in the countryside to carry on business close to home and they do not necessarily have to travel into Kingstown. Bill payment. Utility bill payments at the remaining post offices in St Vincent and the Grenadines, the US Mail Box Service in Kingstown in the capital for those who shop online and have freights. Electronic Advertising Service that is another one. They operate in a highly competitive environment and like as I said before the decline in the traditional posting is also a problem that we face at the Postal Corp and this is why we were forced, we were very reluctant in doing this, to close quite a lot of our post offices. We had 55 and in 2009, we had to close most of them and so we have remaining still 22 post offices.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to end this section by speaking a little about some of the activities that the Postal Corp; I am not going to go through all; would be embarking on 2011 and 2012.

- **To improve the recently implemented home delivery system.**
- **Introduce the use of domestic mail boxes to the public.**
- **To automate SVG Post counter operations.**
- **To develop a government postal sector policy; which would define the government's long term vision of the postal sector, in the context of the future dynamics of the postal industry.**

Because you would agree with me that the post office as a Postal Corp is constantly changing, it is constantly evolving to keep up with the times in which we live.

- **To develop a strategic business plan to modernise the operations of the organisation.**
- **To retool and train staff.**
- **To develop and launch a series of new products to generate additional revenue.**
- **To enhance security measures such as the mail, the equipment, the building, the vehicles and the personnel.**

- **To implement an integrated postal development and reformed planned project.**

These are some of the activities that the corporation would indeed have during the next two years.

ECCLESIASTICAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Speaker, Ecclesiastical Affairs, at the beginning of my discourse I said that I have projected meetings with the different Faith Based Organisations because as I said before when it comes to national reconciliation et cetera we cannot leave out the Faith Based Organisations, because we are a Christian nation and we do believe in God, we do believe in the Grace of God, we do believe that we because we are Christians can ensure that national reconciliation is realised in our island state. During 2011 I plan to continue having meetings with these organisations. The Indicators that we have under Ecclesiastical Affairs:-

- **To consult with the legal department to produce the draft amendment to the ... and facilitate the marriage act and draft regulation to the marriage act.**

Those two things; I want to assure this House that during the first quarter of this year, I would see to it that this is done using of course our legal department.

- **Also to establish an appeals community for the review of the rejected applications for Marriage Officers licences at the ministerial level.**

I assure the House again that we as a Ministry would indeed work on this. Ladies and gentlemen or Mr. Speaker, as I look at the Budget, at the beginning of my presentation, I enumerated world conditions and the fact that we are able to deliver the goods to our people says a lot for the economic and financial management of this government here in St Vincent and the Grenadines, and so Mr. Speaker I want to wish that this Budget be given a safe passage through the House.

But Mr. Speaker, I would not end without saying a few things about the capital of the Leewards: Central Leeward [Applause] I want at this moment, Mr. Speaker, to thank ... and I know they are listening, the people, and the constituents of Central Leeward for ensuring that I come to this House of Assembly. Central Leeward you are dear to my heart and you know I lived most of my life in Central Leeward. I lived in my own little village Buccament Bay from 1958 to the present time. I have worked in Layou as far as Church leadership is concerned, I have been at a church there from since 1958 when I came back from Aruba and in Barrouallie I taught and worked there from 1977-2005, so Central Leeward is my stomping ground, and it is my home. [Applause] And so I repeat again that I want to thank the people of Central Leeward, Buccament, Layou including the capital of Layou, Texier Road, Barrouallie including the capital of Barrouallie, Three Acres and of course Keartons. I want over the airwaves to pledge my support for Central Leeward and I want to offer myself as your representative for the next five years. [Laughter]

Mr. Speaker, our Vision Statement for Central Leeward:-

“To set up a constituency council to ensure that there is vibrant constituency with equitable participation of all constituents.”

So, it means that everybody would have a part in the running of Central Leeward, the working class, teachers, and doctors: everybody. [Applause]

Our Mission Statement:-

“To promote the development and enhance the sustainability of the Constituency Council, for the primary purpose of joint representation training, networking and advocacy at the national level.”

I would like to take the next few minutes just to bring to us this House some of the plans in my constituency, Central Leeward. Of course, I spoke about the Constituency Council; I am just reading them through:-

“To ensure that the lands at Glebe are apportioned to the existing landowners and that lands are surveyed, and title given to landowners.”

In the Barrouallie area there are many people living in the Glebe area who are simply on what we call Church lands and they do not have title, during this term I am going to make sure that these people get title to their lands so that they can go to the bank when they want a loan and they can be more secure in their properties. So, dead property will be made live property. The same will be done for the people at Bethrimy, also in Buccament some householders near to the Park, they have built some small houses there but we are going to get you out there soon. We have a problem with the plot of land that we have earmarked, but we hope that this year that problem would be solved and that you will move away from the riverside there, and be nearer Upper Cane to put your house spots there.

Also the people of Wallilabou we have given most of you your plots there and we are also hoping to have more no income homes in Central Leeward during 2011/2012. Even as I speak one is being built in Wallilabou and of course we applaud the ones who send these monies [Applause] the Government of Venezuela. Let me say here in passing ... Mr. Speaker, can you tell me how much more time I have please?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You have fifteen minutes remaining.

HONOURABLE MAXWELL CHARLES: Mr. Speaker, I want to use this forum to again applaud the benevolence and help that the Government of Venezuela is giving to St Vincent and the Grenadines. [Applause] It is as a result of our foreign policy and one of the things that we have in common is our love for the poor. The Government of Venezuela you do the research what the accent is on, the poor and working class and sometimes when governments of wherever focus on the working class, focus on the poor and the destitute and the downtrodden this is sometimes a problem to the powers that be. I will go no further but we thank the Government of Venezuela.

The relocation of persons near the Buccament Park; no income homes I said that already. One of the things that we are going to do in Buccament, the recipient of a home for girls who get into trouble; the Salvation Army would be in charge of this. And this home will be built near to the Golden Years Centre there in Cane Grove. The people of Buccament came to me during my election campaign and said; one of the things that they wanted is a community center; but again land is a problem. And we during this year would be looking for some spot there so that we could have a community center in Buccament one of these days.

The Black Fish Facility at Barrouallie, again aid is coming to renovate that and the place where our people wash their clothes we might have to close that down but we would ensure that you be given pipe borne water in every single home so that you could do your own washing in your home [Applause] that is the people of Bottle and Glass.

Mr. Speaker, one of the things that I promised the people of Bottle and Glass during a consultation, they said they want to learn to repair boat engines and that sort of stuff. I consulted with an organisation and they are making a study of that and I do hope that positive results would come out of this. We are going to work closely in the Central Leeward with Harlequin Resort as you know; there is a big and a successful five star hotel in Buccament Bay and we would continue to work closely because let me tell you Central Leeward and the people of St Vincent in a whole we have to work closely with these people so that they would be the winners 100% and we also would be the winners 100%. In other words what I am saying and we have begun this already, I have had consultations with the Directors there to ensure that there is a harmonious relationship between the people of Buccament Bay and those at the resort there, because we need them and they need us. They cannot be successful unless they have our backing and so far we have been successful.

We have also had consultations with them on other matters because when complaints come from either the resort or from the villagers, we are quick to handle it and so I want to report at this moment that they are doing well down there and the relationship between the Hoteliers there and our people there in Buccament is quite good for the time being. [Applause]

We are going to also encourage that more people get trained because we have the Resource Centers where they can be trained. I remember going to one of the Resource Centers, that is the one in Layou and they were training them to do massaging and one or two of them have gotten employment at Buccament on the Bay. [Applause] And this is the direction in which we are going in Central Leeward to see what we can offer and hence make a living from that hotel.

We are going to continue the upgrading of the Layou Park and also the one in Buccament. The Harlequin people have said that they want to develop the Park in Buccament; and we are grateful for this. Of course, when this is done we would have committee in place and of course the Sports Council will still be in charge. Talking about the Hotel again, we want to ensure that our people get training even in the Crafts because in consultation with the Hoteliers last month, they said they want to have Craft Shops near to the beach there. Why is it that our people cannot be trained so at least one of these shops can be owned by the locals? This is the direction in which we are going, as far as the five-star hotel is concerned. We want also in Central Leeward there is a lack of organisation in that constituency, more NGO's so that we can tap into aid from the different agencies.

Mr. Speaker, there are some others that I would not mention now but I am now thinking about the bridge we are building in Layou the Swamp Gut Bridge that would link Layou with Rutland Vale. We started that bridge some months ago but it is held up because of elections et cetera, but I have been given the assurance, and you heard the Honourable Minister spoke about that the Swamp Gut Bridge would be finished during 2011, linking Layou with Rutland Vale. Also the occupants in Layou are saying that they need a similar bridge further downstream we would see about that also.

In closing Mr. Speaker, in consultation with BRAGSA there are some roads, footpaths that we have in mind.

1. The road to be paved near Ron Phipps in the Rutland Vale area, at a cost of \$90,781
2. There is a drain at Rutland Vale opposite Lelia Walker; we want to see about that also.
3. There is a drain near [inaudible] in Texier Road we would like to take care of that also.
4. The footpath leading to Sergeant Bobb at the Keartons Hill.

And we also would take into consideration during the year, maybe not to start,

5. The entrance to the Macca Ground Road in Keartons.

Of course, in these tough economic times some of these projects according to funds available we are going to see what we can do for Central Leeward.

Mr. Speaker, you see I always think I am always getting the idea that I am in a church setting [Laughter]. You see, I have been a preacher for the past forty years, so it has not gotten out of me as yet. As I close I want to reiterate again that this government has St Vincent and the Grenadines at heart and St Vincent and the Grenadines are in the right hands as we go through at the right time and I have no doubt that this government shall deliver the goods that we state in this Budget. [Applause] Thank you Mr. Speaker [Applause]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister, you want to make a ...

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, may I crave your indulgence and that of Honourable Members to report to Parliament a matter which came in this morning, and which I have been working on. It concerns a vessel known as the MV PERSEAS; this vessel is registered in St Vincent and the Grenadines it flies our flag and this morning at the office of the Commissioner of Maritime Affairs in Geneva a report was received that this vessel a cargo ship 4354 tons was attacked at 1:01 a.m. this morning, while anchored at a place known as Onne Roadstead, which is 14 nautical miles off the coast of Bonny Town in Nigeria. The Chief Officer and the second Officer reported to the shipowner management company that while at anchorage the radar watch noticed the fast boat manoeuvring close to the ship but before the crew could be mustered a party of ten pirates boarded the vessel, shot two crew members in their legs, took all the mobile phones and took the Master and Chief Engineer hostage.

The situation has been stabilized in that the ship has been moved to a different berth; the two injured crew members were taken to a hospital in Bonny Town where they are in reasonable condition. Unfortunately, the

whereabouts and condition of the Master and the Chief Engineer remain unknown. The shipowner management company is taking all necessary steps to establish contact with the Pirates and to locate the Master and the Chief Engineer. I have reported this matter to the government of Nigeria through the High Commissioner of Nigeria to Trinidad and Tobago which is the nearest High Commission and I spoke to the High Commissioner and a letter has been transmitted to the President of Nigeria. I have also been in touch with the United States Charge d'Affaires so that they can inform their authorities for transmission to assist us with this matter.

As you probably are aware this government has signed the series of agreements with a number of countries which have the capacity to assist us in addressing this matter of Piracy. The countries with which we have signed agreements include France, the United Kingdom, the European Union, the United States of America and Canada. This matter of piracy has moved from the Somali Coast, it is still there it is now on the Western Coast of Africa and other parts of the world and we have to work together to address this particular international menace.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that this matter be reported to the Parliament, since the Parliament is missing this vessel because it carries our flag, St Vincent and the Grenadines territory and any assault on our territory anywhere must be reported to the Parliament whilst the Parliament is sitting and I have taken all immediate steps. There are other steps to be taken I have been trying to get our maritime Commissioner in Geneva, Ms. Dabinovic, there is of course a time difference and I am having some difficulty finding her, but hopefully if you are to see me leave the Parliament at anytime it would be in relation to this matter.

Mr. Speaker, it is also important for the whole world to appreciate that we take the protection of our flag very seriously. We earn a lot of money from ship's registry, depending upon which count you get the sixteenth, seventeenth, eighteenth or nineteenth largest ship's registry in the world. It brings us a lot of revenue to help to do a lot of things for this country and therefore it is as matter which we all as parliament must take very seriously. So, I have put it on record, I have done what I have to do and I would be following up so that persons when they register with us they know that they are registering with a registry which is a responsible registry. And that is why we have also established a maritime administration, this government and we have a new shipping law, Shipping Act. We comply with all the requisites of the International Maritime Organisation because we also have to be responsible internationally. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Further debate, Honourable Member for West Kingstown. You have 45 minutes to make your presentation.

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to begin my contribution to the discussion on this debate of this Budget by referring to the last speaker on the Government side and to say to him how I wish that his leader was present to hear his presentation.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I heard it.

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: I want also, Mr. Speaker, in keeping with his comment to offer some suggestions along the line of the much touted reconciliation. The Agency for Public Information must be an agency for public information. I want to suggest that as a minimum all parliamentarians profile should be done by the Agency for Public Information, this especially in a time when all of the students need to have information on the composition of their parliament. I want to suggest that 705 Radio should become a national radio and should permit the broadcast of public addresses by the Leader of the Opposition and public statements put out by the Leader of the Opposition.

I want to suggest further to the Honourable Member through you, Mr. Speaker, that all elected parliamentarian must be accorded minimum amount of respect. And in keeping with my colleague Major Leacock, the Honourable St Clair Leacock his proposal with respect to parliamentary representation, I want to ... and I say this, Mr. Speaker, having served this parliament for five years as Senator and being cognizant of the manner in which matters are dealt with in this country be it from disasters associated with fires to requesting assistance for distress families of various forms, these matters in my experience are dealt with as though is only one half of a country that exist and the rest of the people do not belong to that country. So, I wish to suggest that certain requirements for the assistance for school children, to families and all the norms in the Ministry of Social Development should be accorded to all of the Parliamentary Representatives. And I leave it with you Honourable Member.

Mr. Speaker, in my contribution to this debate, I wish to make a simple observation we hear far too often of this government being the first to do this, and want to take responsibility for doing just about everything. Mr. Speaker, governance is a continuous process every government so far has to build on what was to correct what was wrong and to add innovation and improvements. Oftentimes we on this side of the Honourable House make comments and observations and I suggest, Mr. Speaker, in fact, I say in the most serious way with every intention to be helpful I find unfortunately too often these sentiments when expressed are taken in a very narrow and partisan political light, and for me personally it is becoming quite distressing. Even with that what I want to offer as my contribution to this debate, Mr. Speaker, is a series of observations and recommendations for enhancement, because I believe as a citizen of this country when government performs well all of us would benefit in various ways. Because indeed if our youths especially are given an opportunity and they have a belief that the opportunity is equally disbursed a lot of the violence that we experience could significantly be reduced, and that would mean a better life for all of us.

I live in a community that is noted for criminal activity, I have never been afraid of living there and as long as I have life, I will continue to live there. Mr. Speaker, I wish to start with the Ministry of Transport and Works I believe it is, and I wish to start by using the construction of the Custom Building in Kingstown, as an example of how a Ministry ought not to function. Mr. Speaker, the simple fact is that as a people we have lost substantially on that project, a lot of money is wasted. When we look at the way various Ministries function we have BRAGSA, the Ministry of Works and we have hodge podge of SIF and you name it.

When international institutions such as the European Union Development Fund or howsoever it is called Caribbean Development Bank and other agencies require us to adhere to strict procedures for procurements, for monitoring and evaluation it is not by accident. They naturally operate around the world and have an

understanding of how things can and do go wrong. I will be the first to admit that some of these institutions have requirements that are far too onerous but, Mr. Speaker, I speak from experience when I say that it behoves us as a people to be skilful in our negotiations to adjust the requirements to meet our unique particular circumstances yet at the same time receive the blessings of these international agencies. As I said, I speak here from experience; the World Bank and Solid Waste Management Project. St Vincent and the Grenadines is the only country in the grouping that was able to use a local contractor and was able to execute its projects within budget and within time. Within the World Bank stipulations and that is testament to the quality of local people who worked side by side with the foreign consultants to make sure that everything went well. So, it can be done.

In the case of this building, Mr. Speaker, clearly there are problems that relate to the award and supervision of contractors and as a people as a Ministry we need to do much better. It is our money, money that we do not have a lot of that is going down the tube further it is the Customs people who have such a difficult and hazardous task and have been working for sometime in very cramped conditions whose office accommodation has not been improved for a considerable period of time. So, we all are the losers. Mr. Speaker and I crave your indulgence if you will kindly advise me when I have ten minutes. Of my time left. I thank you very much.

I wish to turn to the Capital Estimates as it relates to the Ministry of Transport and Works beginning on page No. 608 (very, very, fine print) Mr. Speaker, my Leader, the Leader of the Opposition quite correctly pointed to the number of other projects that cannot be executed though they exist under the Capital Estimates because the money is not available to do them. I wish to just pay some attention to a number of projects that for me I find if they were not so serious I find the Capital Estimates would be hilarious. Mr. Speaker, the Central Leeward Highway Project for example, there is no provision to support any work as far as the rebuilding of the road is concerned, but this is a project that was put in, in previous years with components of it to be done. And we come back this year 2011 with the same kind of projects but again with no provision of funding. In fact the preparatory work which we know takes a considerably period of time is still to be done.

We have under Bridges, Mr. Speaker, in this parliament year after year I have been asking about the repair of the Fort Charlotte Bridge and the Verbeke Bridge and we were promised by the former Minister of Works it will be done this year and next year et cetera, et cetera and I look in the Estimates, the Capital Estimates this time again to see whether there is any hope that during 2011 work will be done on these bridges. And I say, Mr. Speaker, if my understanding of what I see here is clear the people of West Kingstown are going to be disappointed again, Central Kingstown and other areas because the focus quite clearly is still on the all important Colonarie Bridge, the construction of a bypass and then the reconstruction of that bridge, so we down here have got to wait maybe close to the next election for that.

Mr. Speaker, river defences. Every year since I have been a parliamentarian I look in the Capital Estimates and I see provisions for river defences, North River Road et cetera, et cetera and this year it is on page No. 610 River Defences No. 2, but Mr. speaker, there is no provision for this kind of work. I simply want to reiterate how very important I view this particular project. Every year we continue to have some amount of flooding in Kingstown, we continue to have the erosion of the banks of these rivers and Mr. Speaker, I am quick to point out that a properly designed project of this kind will not only prevent this erosion and this flooding but will create

substantial land space primary land space in Kingstown that could be put to good use. I do not have to stress the lack of land area in Kingstown for various projects. Mr. Speaker, to show how this Capital Estimate is a joke in my view, we have a project here called Gibson related to Gibson Corner, before the world was one, long before this ULP government came into office there was a problem in Gibson Corner. There was a big song and dance and inquiry today we have provisions here for doing work in Gibson Corner, one for the demolishing of these buildings and two for work to relocate people who have been removed from Gibson Corner and one wonders if this is a real world that we are living in.

Mr. Speaker, I see a provision for Learning Resource Centres and I see one for West Kingstown and Central Kingstown. You know, Mr. Speaker, it reminds me when my Leader speaks of Humpty dumpty, you know. In West Kingstown this government spent nearly a million dollars to build a wall in an area similar to Gibson Corner for a Community Center before it found out that the site was not suited. Just before the last general elections a contractor was assigned to build a Learning Resource Center in West Kingstown not far from the first site. To date, I want to urge the Honourable Minister of Health to reduce the mosquito infestation in West Kingstown by sending the people to spray the ponds created by the start of construction which was abruptly stopped and materials taken to other sites last year, late last year; but I see we talk again about providing Learning Resources Centers in West and Central Kingstown. Mr. Speaker, I raise this simply to say to the folks of West Kingstown that like you I will believe when I see a Learning Resource Center in West Kingstown.

Mr. Speaker, I want to look at the Ports and this comes in under national Security et cetera. The reality is, Mr. Speaker, is that Port Kingstown and the main Port in Canouan have been for a considerable period of time in a serious state of disrepair. It is nothing new the support systems for the main port in Kingstown are so badly damaged for so long that a lot of people who know how these structures function are fearful of a major catastrophe waiting to happen at Port Kingstown. Under the Ministry I spoke of a while ago a project has been there for sometime, a project to redesign and rebuild both Kingstown's main Port and Canouan's main Port. Mr. Speaker, if you look at the Capital Estimates for that section you would see that that is another project that is not worth the paper it is written on because there is no provision for any expenditure. There is no provision for any expenditure in this year with respect to solving this serious problem.

This is a project, Mr. Speaker, I submit which needs to be given serious attention, it must not be shunted from year to year to year. We do not want to bury our heads in the sand and suddenly find when we wake up one day and Port Kingstown is completely destroyed we are privilege to have Campden Park Port built by the New Democratic Party government that can relieve some of the pressures. But everybody knows the problem that will develop if Port Kingstown is allowed to collapse, which collapse has been imminent for some time.

Mr. Speaker, the Port in Canouan was built and you know that we are a developing country; I am not placing blame on past or present government. The developments in the Grenadines have been taking off in some instances almost exponentially, so the Port in Canouan was not built for the kind of operations that it has been subjected to over the last five to ten years. And for some time now it is in a very serious state pending collapse, but it has got to be used and it continued to be used like the situation in Port Kingstown this is a project, Mr. Speaker, that needs some attention, and I want to suggest ... Mr. Speaker, when I look at this Capital Estimate for the first time I see that in a sort of backdoor way the Government is taking the Cross-Country Road from

under the microscope [laughs] and I say in a kind of backdoor way. Because when you look at the Capital Estimates for this year unlike previous years when they were talking about expending millions and millions and millions [Interjection] yes and in fact, they had budgeted one hundred and something million for this thing. They have very little if anything assigned to this project. [Interjection] Well that is a horse of a different colour.

Mr. Speaker, I am suggesting that instead of these projects which are like the Cross- Country Road specifically which can only do harm to our country which requires no argumentation we need to focus on critical infrastructure projects which are germane to our survival as a nation, and I submit that the redesign and reconstruction of Ports Kingstown and Canouan are such projects. And I know when I speak Mr. Speaker, people have their own strange comments.

Mr. Speaker, I turn my attention for a brief moment [Interjection] Honourable Senator, you are not the people I am referring to. [Interjections] [Knocking on the desk with gavel] Mr. Speaker, under the fiscal package enunciated by the Honourable Prime Minister, I noticed that there is a proposal for the increasing of licensing fees for professionals, and Mr. Speaker, it triggered in my mind and of course, there are a lot of professionals in the grouping for which the Prime Minister himself belong I believe who would not quarrel with that my colleague Senator may not agree with me. But when it comes to construction in this country, Mr. Speaker, there is a matter which has been on the back burner for a very long time. I remember when I was President of the Engineers Association the then Minister, the Honourable Glenford Stewart was about to take some action in this matter, but nothing has happened.

Mr. Speaker, we as a people have been very lucky but the earthquake of Haiti should remind us of the vulnerability to which we are exposed. There is no mechanism in our country for the licensing of professional engineers, believe it or not any Joe blow could function and purport to be a qualified engineer that is the reality under which we operate in this country. There is no licensing mechanism for professional engineers in this country, it is a serious matter. It is a matter that requires the attention of all, the Engineers Association, Contractors Association various Ministries and the Planning et cetera. We find building Plans are being submitted by persons who call themselves contractors and even engineers not just for single story buildings but for multi-level buildings which are intended for public use; and the people who serve as contractors there are a number of them who though not professionally qualified available themselves of a level of training that would allow them to function properly. Unfortunately, though, Mr. Speaker, there are too many persons in this country who are not prepared to learn and who do not open themselves up to teaching. The Ministry seriously needs to address and I hear over the years a lot of talk about this you know, talk, but it is high time that we embrace this matter in an opened candid approach, embracing all of the people who can make a contribution and leaving out the partisan nature of this thing. It is in the interest of all of us so to do.

Mr. Speaker, BRAGSA, I want to look seriously at BRAGSA especially in relation through the functioning of the Ministry of Transport and Works and the Ministry of Housing and the local government agencies and SIF. I listened, Mr. Speaker, with interest to Members on the Government side suggesting, more than suggesting I believe that BRAGSA should be competing with private entities in the construction field. Now, this in itself Mr. Speaker does not give me a problem, it is healthy provided and the proviso Mr. Speaker are critical. One has to ensure; one has got to ensure that there is an opportunity for all parties justly to compete. Mr. Speaker, again

from my own experience an institution that avails itself of competent Civil Engineers is well placed to execute its own projects depending on the number of projects and depending upon the numbers of support staff it has at the technician and other levels, and its management both financial and operational expertise in order to executed these projects.

I fail to understand Mr. Speaker, where is the regulatory component of this type of work. What I mean, is it that the Ministry of Works is the sole arbiter of all of the government's capital works? In other words, here is the clearing house that is involved in the design, the costing and the supervision of all of the government's capital works or is it that BRAGSA itself is in the process of contracting out work and supervising that contract work while at the same time government departments are contracting work to BRAGSA? Therein lies my dilemma; there has to be a clear policy; who is responsible for the design, costing and supervision? Supervision not just to the point of selecting a contractor but supervision to the final delivery, cradle to the grave approach, because we have seen and that is why I started with what is happened at the Customs Building, it is the classic example of the lack of a management system with respect to the awarding of major contracts.

I would like to have an appreciation of what the true role ... and I believe firmly that it is the Ministry of Works the Chief Engineer and his support staff that should be the agency that carries out this ex ... it is a critical job. It is for that reason, Mr. Speaker, why I was discussing the creation of BRAGSA I raised the issue of the [inaudible] structure that remains in the Ministry of Works. Mr. Speaker, we have very limited resources, we need to make sure that these resources are utilised in the most efficient manner and I am not satisfied on the basis of the information I have that this is the case.

I wish to turn very quickly, Mr. Speaker, if I may ask you; if I have a half an hour left.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You have twelve minutes remaining. [Laughter]

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: I wish to turn very quickly, Mr. Speaker, [laughs] to the question of energy. No I am not being funny. I wish to turn to the question of energy and Mr. Speaker, in his budget address the Honourable Prime Minister spoke of the possible direction of wind turbine at Ribishi and as we have accustomed we hear talk about geothermal and other energy, but Mr. Speaker, unfortunately all I hear is talk. You know we have been for years lamenting the fact that oil prices have gone up and though they may come down a little the cost of oil going forward is not going to come back down to where there used to be some years ago. And it is a matter of common sense therefore that a country that is blessed with the potential for a series of alternative energy; should make haste to safely and effectively utilise this resource.

I remind us, Mr. Speaker, that Nevis is on the brink of exploiting this resource. The technology I keep saying is improving on a daily basis. I remind us again of the tremendous advantage we as a people; the competitive advantage we will have if we have a cheap source of energy and the real possibility exists. We have other natural resources; we have industries here like ECGC and others that are high users of energy and with reduced energy cost my colleague and I we are talking about agriculture, we could not only become self sufficient in poultry and so forth; we could become exporters if ... because energy is the main cost in the raw material for these things. It offers us a tremendous opportunity and I am disappointed that we continue to talk about it.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Senator, Honourable Member, (sorry) for West Kingstown, your ten minutes ...

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. And Mr. Speaker, you know the Honourable Prime Minister spoke about encouraging public officers to reduce energy costs in their buildings and so forth, but you know charity begins at home. Charity begins at home [laughs] I have been lamenting over a period of time how in the Prime Minister's Residence at anytime you could see so many lights on, unnecessary [Interjection] you know this is not a joke, people learn by experience. The best way to *coerce* people, to encourage people to do something is to demonstrate it yourself and all of us as leaders have an inherent responsibility to act if we want people to do what we are preaching.

So, Mr. Speaker, with the time remaining I want now to turn my attention to the constituency of West Kingstown and to note that the former Minister of Culture saw the wisdom of not attempting to compete with me in the last general election [Laughter] and to note, Mr. Speaker, that a former Senator has been castigated and thrown aside for not performing too well in the West in Kingstown. Well, Mr. Speaker, in all seriousness, I want to thank all of the people of West Kingstown especially the young people of West Kingstown who threw their support behind the New Democratic Party and in the process enabled me to be their representative in Parliament. Mr. Speaker, I pledge to the people of West Kingstown that I will be with the Grace of God a representative of all of the people of West Kingstown. And today, Mr. Speaker, I wish to make on their behalf some proposals for works to be done in West Kingstown. I am a realist Mr. Speaker, I know that we have constraints and I know that over the next period as long as this government remains in office I will have to be repeating these requests but I shall do it.

I want to start, Mr. Speaker, with a road coming from Ottley Hall and Edinboro coming into town, the bypass road. Mr. Speaker, the Neversons, the Brownes and the Cambridges who owned the piece of land beyond where ... the proposed bypass road where Dr. Kirby used to live, the late Dr. Kirby; those owners are prepared to sell the portion of the land that will make it possible to build a proper bypass road. Mr. Speaker, if you see the number of school children who go to the new school in Edinboro trying to traverse that short-cut when it is wet and the conditions that they experience. I want to urge ... it is not a long piece of road Mr. Speaker, it is relatively quite short but it is a critical road as a bypass, it is not the first time I am speaking about it. Again in Edinboro next to the school Mr. Speaker; another short piece of road that links Middle Road. The retaining walls are there the place just has to be filled and that would have enhanced transportation arrangement in Edinboro significantly, because the vans will be able to make the complete loop and those of us who do not have transportation know how painful it is when the vans have to drop you a long way from your home. It is a small request, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the people of Buddy Gutter in particular those displaced by the Electricity Project have suffered greatly and are still suffering today even as the Ministry of Housing attempts to build a road where they have been living for more than a year, it is hard, I urge that the Housing Ministry give greater consideration to the concerns of the individual house owners as they I believe continue to fulfill that project. Mr. Speaker, the road into Edinboro and Ottley Hall built by concrete under the time of the former representative John Horne was intended to continue down to Lowman's Bay to allow an alternative road through the Leeward Highway in

cases of emergency. There are several issues associated with completion of that again, Mr. Speaker, I wish to suggest to the Honourable Minister of Transport, I wish to invite him and his staff to a site visit at his convenience because there is a distinct possibility of constructing that road with slight variations to the original proposal but it requires, Mr. Speaker, the collaboration of his Ministry and some of the homeowners. But the road is too important to be left to chance, and the sooner the design be looked at the sooner we will be able to stop further squatting that will prevent any possibility of the continuation of that road.

I do not here have to underscore Mr. Speaker, how critical it is for that road to be built. It would mean a whole lot of difference for transportation in this country. We all know of the difficulty if something happens on the South Leeward Highway between Milton Cato and Campden Park there are no alternative roads. This road can and will serve as an option, and we know that with the Port in Campden Park and the number of containers and all of that the probability of a major accident is always there. It is imperative that in our development we have options.

Mr. Speaker, with respect to Rose Place all I would say the conditions under which human beings survive is painful. Those of us who visit these souls on the sand and on the bay front: the size of the families, the deplorable conditions, the health risks, the threat to their own lives, anybody who has ever visited this place and has a heart cannot stop, contemplate and plan for relief. Mr. Speaker, Rose Place is in Kingstown, the land value even in the worst part of Rose Place is quite high. There are a lot of derelicts; there is a lot of everything that should not be in a city or in every development. I place on record Mr. Speaker, my commitment to work with this government and any agency with a view to relieving the suffering of so many people who fall prey to this neighborhood.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Time up now Honourable Member, you need to speed up a little more.

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: Mr. Speaker, thank you. Mr. Speaker, I offer to the people of West Kingstown my wish that this government would heed the call of the Honourable Minister of Reconciliation and commence with the people of Rose Place in working with all parties concerned and to relieve their sufferings once and for all. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Further debate, [Knocking on desk] Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and the Environment. Just a minute; soon as you ready Honourable Member.

HONOURABLE MONGOMERY DANIEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I wish to make my contribution to the 2011 Appropriation Bill that is before this Honourable House and I want to indicate first and foremost, Mr. Speaker, of my unstinting support to this Bill. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Prime Minister and the Ministry of Finance for presenting to this country of ours St Vincent and the Grenadines a budget that can take care of the services of Vincentians for this year 2011. Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Finance for being able to present a Budget in such a harsh financial time. [Applause] Mr. Speaker, St Vincent and the Grenadines is not the only country that is facing such difficulties, and of course the Prime Minister in his Budget address on page one indicated of countries like Portugal and Spain countries that are referred to as pigs. These are countries with better economies than St

Vincent and the Grenadines yet these countries are having great difficulty in providing for the services of the people.

Mr. Speaker, until now the majority of Vincentians, they have the privilege of having at least three square meals per day despite the difficult economic times. Mr. Speaker, when I look at the present economic environment the impact of the WTO on bananas in this country causing reduced preferences to our farmers this, Mr. Speaker, has affected us greatly. When I look at rising oil prices skyrocketing to prices that were never before; and for this country to be producing when oil is so expensive, Mr. Speaker, it creates even more difficulties. And Mr. Speaker, within the last couple of years we would have seen disease intervention in St Vincent all these are factors that would have severely eroded our gains to the extent that the Ministry of Finance had to be very crafty enabled them to have a budget to take care of its people.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is the forthrightness, I believe it is the wit within the Prime Minister that has been able to guide this country through this tough economic times so that this country has continued to realise a livelihood that is until now very decent. Mr. Speaker, I listened to the Honourable Member for West Kingstown a while ago and Mr. Speaker, making mention of funds within the Budget for Gibson Corner and that was on the books for quite a long while. Mr. Speaker, I can say to you that in the constituency of North Windward under seventeen years of the reign of the NDP administration; there were drains and roads that were not cleared for all of those years. Yet Mr. Speaker, the economic climate was better then and so if when things were better even the drains could not have been cleaned then tell me. Mr. Speaker, there is no joke that the financial crisis has hit the world hard.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, kindly recognise the Deputy Speaker.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE DAVID BROWNE: Honourable Member, please continue.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, in my mind there is no doubt that the economic crisis has hit this world very hard and so I am aware of large financial institutions that would normally assist many countries particularly in the ACP that these institutions they are finding it very difficult to meet their commitments. Mr. Speaker, it is not those institutions alone. We can come right back here closely to home. Last year an earthquake shook Haiti causing millions of people to be disrupted. After one year the majority of these persons are still in conditions that you and I would not like at all. Mr. Speaker, late 2010 Hurricane Tomas struck St Vincent and the Grenadines likewise St Lucia the majority of houses home owners in St Vincent, the majority of those houses have been repaired since. [Applause] Mr. Speaker, the same cannot be said for St Lucia it shows, Mr. Speaker, that it has to be something that this government has been doing right.

Mr. Speaker, I listened to the presentation particularly of the Opposition Leader and I wish to say, Mr. Speaker, I am no economist but in my limited training economics tell me, economics is the best utilization of limited resources and we all know for a fact that St Vincent and the Grenadines is limited to resources and so what I heard really from the opposite side understanding the climate, I cannot believe that the arguments can hold. Mr.

Speaker, much has been said about the Budget in a deficit; a deficit budget and where we should not place certain emphasis. Well, Mr. Speaker, the answer did not come where we should have shifted the resources. Mr. Speaker, should \$20 million be placed under the Ministry of Transport and Works for Roads, against \$20 million placed for Education? Despite the fact of course that some of the roads are terrible or should \$20 million be placed in the Ministry of Agriculture rather than the Ministry of Health; despite the fact that Hurricane Tomas have ravaged the Agriculture Sector terribly? I believe that these are questions that were before the very mind of the Prime Minister but the decision has to be made.

Mr. Speaker, I would wish if I were the Prime Minister and I have to make any shift I would start with the area as I see it in the Budget known as the House of Assembly, I would start cutting from there and to see what response we will have. Mr. Speaker, I will agree that every Ministry can do with much more than what it has gotten but resources are not unlimited. Mr. Speaker, I know the Opposition Leader criticized the Budget of its joblessness and also criticized the amount for the YES Programme but I know that the YES Programme has offered tremendous support to poor families particularly in the constituency in North Leeward, and so I support the YES Programme very well.

Mr. Speaker, in the Estimates Debate, I heard of an analysis of a dollar value being placed on the various units in the Ministry of Social Development but I wish the analysis could have gone further only if we would have understood that \$19 million which could have been made available to this country was paid in interest payment for a project known as Ottley Hall, \$19 million and if that \$19 million was available to the Ministry of Social Development then the Public Assistance could have been twice time what it is today [Applause] Mr. Speaker, the Opposition Leader made reference to this government and its credit worthiness and that a local bank could not and would not have given credit of \$30 million to this government but the same Opposition Leader acknowledge the fact that \$100 million was borrowed from CDB. Mr. Speaker, is \$100 million not more than \$30 million? [Interjection] Eight is more than seven why not? [Interjection]

But what is also interesting Mr. Speaker if we are talking about creditworthiness, Mr. Speaker, I have been here when I realised that the NDP could not have gotten debt forgiveness for \$12 million and all that is because understanding how the Ottley Hall Project was conceptualized, understanding how the governance issues at that time were. So, Mr. Speaker, it is unreasonable in my mind that the creditworthiness of this government is in question when I know for a fact that many Vincentians throughout of the world today are lifting their heads high wherever they are. Mr. Speaker, this government has done well; it has done well under the circumstances that prevailed during this time.

Mr. Speaker, after the passage of Hurricane Tomas the Ministry of Agriculture did an assessment of the damages that were done at that time and the Ministry placed a dollar value of some \$67 million that is the damage almost immediately that was done to the Agriculture Sector at that time. But Mr. Speaker, having established that fact it was in my mind really not statesman like, for in my view, the Leader of the Opposition to have gone on radio indicating that the value that was done of the Agricultural Sector was too high; it was not that amount; it cannot be that amount. But what is interesting, Mr. Speaker, the final fingers would have shown that the damage to the Agricultural Sector then was approximately \$76.6 million. Really, Mr. Speaker, I could

only imagine that the level of compensation that the Opposition Leader would have seen for the farmers was that he did not really want the farmers to be fully compensated.

Mr. Speaker, in a quick response by this government, Mr. Speaker, the government established a level of compensation to both banana and plantain farmers, where \$400 per acre and 3 sacks of fertilizer was given to the farmers for their immediate rehabilitation. Mr. Speaker, this has cost the Government so far \$3.45 million. You see, Mr. Speaker, the Government acted very quickly because I know how our farmers can respond sometimes. I recall when I was an extension officer; I recall that there were some outstanding farmers, one considered himself to be *'the maf'* one considered himself to be *'the big maf'*, the other considered himself to be *'the little maf'*, one considered himself to be *'paper maf'* and one considered himself to be *'Sunday maf'* in other words there were different levels of *'maf'* at that time. The *'maf'* is the general of all; but the Sunday *'maf'* is only there on a Sunday, you know when have not seen that *'maf'* is because he has problems in paying his workers. And so we did not want the situation to arise where when the weekend comes and the workers turn up to the farmers to be given cheques and only to know that the cash keeps bouncing around and cannot reach the workers. So, we acted immediately Mr. Speaker, and to the extent the Opposition Leader recognised the fact in his delivery that we would have done well, we acted quickly and I congratulated him for acknowledging the Ministry for acting very quickly.

Mr. Speaker, in this budget of 2011, there are \$3 million that is allocated for income support to our farmers and this will be disbursed over a six months period. Equally, Mr. Speaker, there is also a sum of \$1 million to assist in the rehabilitation of farms be it vegetable farms, root crop farms or livestock farms, there are funds for such rehabilitation. And I want to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that under the Banana Accompanied Measured Programme St Vincent and the Grenadines is expected to receive approximately \$35 million, which will be used in many ways in assisting the Agricultural Sector. The Prime Minister would have made mention of it. The monies are not really placed in the Budget but of course the monies are expected before the end of the year and when they are here the monies would be entered into the Consolidated Account and the programmes will be effected then. Mr. Speaker, I believe if the monies were placed in the Budget that equally the Opposition would have said, well we would have increased the Capital Expenditure and that kind of thing you would have been getting; but Mr. Speaker, I want to say that this Budget will not put people in misery.

The Opposition Leader made reference that the Budget will put our people in misery, Mr. Speaker, this budget would assist our homeowners in refurbishing homes, it will assist our farmers in rehabilitating and replanting of their farms. It will assist in poverty reduction; it will give more money to the poor; it will continue that of healthcare; it will continue to improve on the Education Revolution and it will assist in ensuring that the Argyle International Airport is a reality. All of that is in this budget, Mr. Speaker, and in my mind that is not misery. [Applause] Mr. Speaker, I turn to the Ministry of Agriculture Rural Transformation, Forestry and Fisheries. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture has been a very vital Ministry in the economic development of this country and it will continue to strengthen the food security of this country, create jobs and to ensure foreign exchange.

Mr. Speaker, this year as you know we had the Elections in 2010 and the Ministry of Agriculture this year would have had a new unit placed to it: Rural Transformation. Mr. Speaker, this unit will indeed assist the work of the Ministry in ensuring the further development of our rural communities. But Mr. Speaker, the work of the

Ministry of Agriculture has not been an easy one over the years, there would have been tremendous challenges that the Ministry would have been facing things like, inadequate and low productivity of labour; high cost of inputs; market which were and has been disorganised. Of course, the question of feeder roads and so on would always appear; damage to crop and livestock and a host of all of these. And so, despite all these difficulties, Mr. Speaker, the Sector continues to do well. I recall, Mr. Speaker, understanding the difficulties that the Ministry would have been facing that development financing which we hope coming out of the Banana Accompanied Measures can be part of the way forward that that has been a tremendous problem over the years.

Mr. Speaker, just a few nights ago I was looking at BBC World and there was a Correspondent who was seriously discussing issues on agriculture and the way forward, and one of the areas that he stressed forcefully was one of development financing who indicated that it is indeed quite time that the Leaders and donors look seriously at development financing to agriculture. This was done, Mr. Speaker, not in isolation of course, we all know that there is a tremendous shortage of food in the world, there is increase in oil and food prices. Reference was made, Mr. Speaker, of the severe floods in Australia and the cost of rehabilitation, Mr. Speaker, besides all of this there are 9 million people starving in the world today, therefore there is need for development financing. But I recall, Mr. Speaker, in 2006 Caricom having understood the need for development financing in agriculture held a meeting in Trinidad and Tobago with governments and donor agencies seeking to have development funds into agriculture. Mr. Speaker, there were many, many financial institutions including the World Bank and though CARICOM had a target of \$250 million to move the Agriculture Sector forward in this region the meeting realised an amount of \$10 million in spite of all of the international donors in the world.

Mr. Speaker, what interested me at that meeting is that you had the presence of CDB at that meeting and Mr. Speaker, I was amazed that CDB existed in this region for the past 40 or so years and of the 40 years \$120 million went to agriculture in the region. In other words, for every year \$3 million went to agriculture to help to develop agriculture in the region but you have in Caricom in the region 14 countries therefore how much of this money per year would have gone to one of these countries, yet the opposition is coming to put pressure on this government as to more and more [Inaudible] of course, we appreciate, I appreciate very much that more should be put into the Ministry of Agriculture. But one thing I know, Mr. Speaker, food you must eat and the Sector will provide food to ensure the six nutritional food groups that is required for healthy lifestyle here in St Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, when one reviews this sector, the agriculture sector in 2009, the GVA – the Gross Value Added by economic activity in constant prices moved from 9.01% in 2008, to 9.17% in 2009. Mr. Speaker, despite all of the difficulties the Sector has still shown an increase in its performance. Mr. Speaker, the increase has been attributed to improve contributions in the non-banana sectors of crops and of course, of fishing as a subsector. Mr. Speaker, if I may just crave your indulgence where the data has shown that dasheen in 2008 moved from \$4.38 million to \$5.44 million in 2009; eddoes moved from \$2.80 million to \$4.72 million; sweet potatoes moved from \$1.9 million to \$2.59 million; yams moved from \$.69 million to \$2.78 million; and tannia moved from \$.28 million to \$.4 million over that period. Mr. Speaker, I know that during that period many of our farmers, banana farmers, that is, went out of production and so many of them because of the challenges, the Global Gap Standards, the Certification Standards all of that would have attributed to a lot of our marginal farmers going out of production and would have gone into root crop production.

But what also can be attributed to such improvement, Mr. Speaker, is that Vincy Fresh that is a subsidiary company of Win Fresh and ETACD a local company they would have intensified their operations in buying more and more agricultural produce hence the encouragement was there. Meanwhile the Ministry of Agriculture continued to offer certain incentives to ensure that the farmers were given that kind of encouragement. The Ministry assisted in ensuring that there were inputs, the Ministry assisted in tractor services where possible, the Ministry assisted in training on farm, practices of soil and water conservation as well as legislations to strengthen the farmer's confidence to produce. We would have brought the agricultural produce and [inaudible] to ensure that we gave that kind of support to farmers.

Mr. Speaker, bananas as we all know bananas would have served this country well and the challenges of the '90's no doubt would have caused a reduction on the production at the moment. The WTO challenges would have created difficulty but, Mr. Speaker, there are a number of farmers out there who would have shown great resilience and who would have withstood the test of time and continue to produce under those difficulty circumstances. There have always been the challenges in 2009 of Moko, Leaf Spot Diseases both of Yellow and Black Sigatoka, there would have been the problem of the standards: the Global Gap, the Certification Standards, the high cost of input but Mr. Speaker, despite all these difficulties for 2009, 18,338 tons of bananas were exported to a value of \$21,151,984.

Mr. Speaker, we know that the glory days are not with bananas anymore; however, the Ministry of Agriculture has set up a specific unit to deal with the production and productivity of bananas in 2011. Mr. Speaker, that unit will seek to replant approximately 1200 acres of bananas and to rehabilitate 1250 acres with a target export estimate of approximately 30,000 tons, while that is so, Mr. Speaker, it is expected that every farm will be 100% certified with the Global Gap Standards. It is going to be difficult as the Trade Liberalization as that is before us with the challenges that it entails. And it is important Mr. Speaker, to implement the full quality assurance; Mr. Speaker, consumers, housewives whether it is in St Vincent, Trinidad, London or wherever consumers want to know when they buy a product that it can be traced back to the farms. And so the standards are necessary if we have to compete in the International market.

Mr. Speaker, this unit will also be responsible for the effective management of disease control, it will work together with the biotechnology Lab at Orange Hill to produce approximately 140 plantlets to ensure that there is planting material for the farmers. Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate that as the industry would have been reduced into a smaller size institution that were affiliated to the industry they too were realising great difficulties and so Win Crop, which is one of these institutions have been finding it real difficult to sustain the insurance premiums that it had to do prior to 2009. Mr. Speaker, I recall at a meeting in Dominica in 2008, at the Annual General meeting of Win Crop the matter surface that should there be a hurricane due to the low production and the contributions that is being realised that Win Crop will have serious difficulties in meeting its obligations, and certain directions were given to the management of Win Crop.

The reality came in 2010 when Hurricane Tomas hit the islands and where Win Crop has to make payments. Mr. Speaker, Win Crop has to find approximately \$3.8 million for claims to be paid to banana farmers in the Windward but here in St Vincent and the Grenadines the amount to be paid is \$1.812 million to our farmers. But when Hurricane Tomas struck and Win Crop had to pay its reinsurance Win Crop found itself in great

difficulty and has come to the Government for financial assistance. The Government at a Cabinet meeting has agreed to assist Win Crop to the tune of \$716,000.00 to assist in the payment of the farmers who would have suffered in that storm. Mr. Speaker, these are some of the difficulties we have been facing and equally Win Fresh which used to be WIBDECO of course, every two years depending on the contractual agreements would have contracted its shipment arrangements so that even though there is no bananas in St Vincent and St Lucia to be moved, every week the ship is still here and that is a cost to Win Fresh and so equally one expects in the financial year of 2009 -2010 one expects what is going to be the financial position of Win Fresh. So, Mr. Speaker, the sector has not been an easy one the challenges are great but we in the Ministry of Agriculture, we have been trying.

Mr. Speaker, when I am at 15 minutes please let me know what is happening.

HONOURABLE DAVID BROWNE (Deputy Speaker): You have 20 minutes Honourable Member.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Mr. Speaker, I want to stay on another important crop in the diversification process, and so we will continue with arrow root, of course, Hurricane Tomas would have created tremendous damages to the factory at Owia, we have since then rebuild the factory, we are at the moment doing the electrical works and so harvesting of this crop will begin on the 31 January, 2011. Mr. Speaker, livestock. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that since this government came into office in 2001 livestock would have been on the priority list. We have not only seemed to have been working with the farmers in terms of upon their farms improving their pastures, improving their housing and so on. We have established a hatchery at Dumbarton; we are producing our own birds. We have brought in new pedigree stock to ensure that our stock locally is improved by better pedigree and so Mr. Speaker, we have also been working with ECGC to help to improve the Poultry Industry. It is interesting to note that during last year that feed that came from ECGC seemed to have had some problems, the Ministry of Agriculture would have been working with ECGC and in an effort to bring some relief to our farmers, ECGC has decided to compensate the poultry farmers who would have suffered losses over the period.

Mr. Speaker, within the Livestock Division work will continue in small livestock in pig production in large scale cattle production, rabbit production, disease monitoring and all of that will continue with the view of reducing the high importation bill on meat and meat products.

Mr. Speaker, in the area of Forestry as you are aware, Mr. Speaker, Hurricane Tomas would have created severe destruction on the forest; this would have been valued at approximately \$31 million in damage but the Forestry Department will continue to work in terms of its reforestation, it will continue to work in silviculture, forest protection, wild life, the Nicholls Wildlife Complex as well as other environmental educational programmes. I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, that in the next few weeks the Department of Forestry will be out in three teams across the country. They will be out assisting in logging of the trees that would have fallen on farmers holdings from tropical storm Tomas because for us to speed up any work within the sector we have to give that added assistance to the farms. So, there would be a team on the North Leeward side, there will be a team centrally and there will be a team on the northeastern side so that that kind of assistance will be given to farmers to try to help and clear the logs, and so on that do exist on those farms.

FISHERIES

Mr. Speaker, in terms of fisheries, Mr. Speaker, the Fisheries Sector would continue to play a very important role to assist in food security and of course in terms of job creation, but the Fishery Department will intensify its work on the fleet expansion programme in 2011. I know that we would have been working tirelessly on issues relating to the fleet expansion. Many of the farmers have made applications for the new vessels, but are somewhat hesitant, because of the higher price. But we would have been working with the Venezuelan government to ensure that we can find some smaller vessels at a cheaper cost, so that the fleet expansion can be expanded more rapidly, so we can have more fish to eat here in St Vincent and the Grenadines. Work would continue in the Fisheries Division in the areas of aquaculture, fisheries management and conservation as well as management of the high seas, as well as turtle cultivation.

There is a lot of work to be done in fisheries. We have recently placed certain fads in the waters around St Vincent and the Grenadines that is fish aggregating devices, so that fishermen would have it easier as they go out to fish they would find these devices, they can go straight there and find more fish than roaming up and down the seas. These are areas of new innovations that we are working with and so the Fisheries Department will continue to work in that regard.

RURAL TRANSFORMATION

Mr. Speaker, I turn to Rural Transformation as I had indicated before Rural Transformation is a new unit within the Ministry and so the unit will continue to work with rural communities partnership: that is Community partnership groups will continue to be established because it is important that the unit form groups that they can work with in terms of working with small projects. The Communities will identify small projects and from these small projects these communities can benefit. Already they have been working in three major rural areas and so this work will intensify in 2011. Within this unit is also placed the BNTF that is the Basic Needs Trust Fund and BNTF will continue to work with its steering committee to further establish programmes that will benefit rural communities. Mr. Speaker, under this unit we would have seen already at South Union a beautiful market for the farmers in that area [Applause] one is also in place at Chateaubelair and we are hoping to extend much more work particularly in the rural areas including Georgetown in this year 2011.

HONOURABLE DAVID BROWNE: Honourable Member you have 15 minutes.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry will continue to work with its partners and all of its collaborators to ensure a better environment for agriculture here in St Vincent for the year 2011. The Ministry would have worked tirelessly with FAO the Food and Agriculture Organisation, it would have worked with IICA the Inter American Institute for Corporation and Agriculture, it has worked equally with CARDI, the Caribbean Research and Development Institute; it has worked with the Taiwanese Mission and other Embassies and agencies to help to bring a better life to the farming communities. FAO has already pledged \$68,000 for seed materials of which the Ministry will receive very shortly, they continue to assist the Ministry with equipment and machinery as well as technical support and the Ministry is very grateful for that.

The Ministry has been working with IICA in terms of technical support; it has been working with Youth and Agriculture and many programmes to assist the Center. CARDI right here in St Vincent would have been working on a number of research programmes including sweet potatoes, cassava and even working with the Bio Lab in Orange Hill to produce the kind of planting material that would be required to help in moving the sector forward. So, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry is very grateful in working with its collaborators in this regard. Mr. Speaker, the Farmers Training Institute it is now complete and it would be opened very shortly for this year; and we would see many farmers trained to meet the challenges as it relates to the sector.

Finally, I want to say, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture has some sixteen units and departments of which combined have been working to give the production and productivity required, but I want to say Mr. Speaker that Hurricane Tomas would have shown some weakness in certain areas of the Ministry particularly in the area of the data captured for the sector. I want to say to this House that I intend to deal with the issues very seriously to ensure that the image of the Ministry is improved tremendously. [Applause]

I now turn to my constituency, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the constituency of North Windward for once again electing me to this Parliament for the third time [Applause] Mr. Speaker the Constituency Council would have worked hard, the Chairman, the Youth Arm and the Women's Arm all have played a very important role in ensuring that the constituency of North Windward returned to the Unity Labour Party and to form the Government of this country. Mr. Speaker, since I got into politics I want to establish the fact that I have never begged or negotiated to come to this House for a position in this House. I came to this House because the constituency of North Windward would have seen in me that value and so in 2001, in 2005 and in 2010. The constituency Mr. Speaker, has never been one of labour; but I have worked very hard in bringing this constituency as to where it is today. [Interjection] and so when I leave this stage whoever takes over, Mr. Speaker; can guarantee that the North Windward seat is a seat for the ULP.

Mr. Speaker, I recalled on the night of the Election at around 7:15, I got several calls just around that time. Why? Because the Campaign Manager began to put the results on the radio; the results came in from Fancy, from Owia and from Dickson and those are areas traditionally would have supported the NDP. And the results as I understood began to create some alarm and fear and so one of the calls was from the Prime Minister and he said, "Comrade what is happening man"? Because he too, I am sure he wanted to know what was happening [Interjections] Of course, he was anxious.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I was at Mt. Benedict so I [inaudible] [Laughter] [inaudible] I was not worried. [Laughter]

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: I said comrade all of the results are not in yet what you hear is the worse of the best to come.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR: He did not hear the three something in Sandy Bay yet?

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: The result of Sandy Bay was not there as yet. [Laughter] and I got a call saying that the best wines and champagnes were already cold in a certain area

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Hotel Sandy. [Laughter]

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: I do not know where it is. And so

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: And he had ague. [Laughter]

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: The truck done set up with music.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: “You have to make sure that you bring home the seat”. Well, I said, Sandy Bay is the bastion of Labour in this country [Knocking of Gavel on the desk] and whenever you hear Sandy Bay you can start jumping for joy and if you are the one who would have put champagne and the best wines to cold start drinking. [Laughter]

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: You have to sap him with Alcolado and Limacol [Laughter] [Interjections]

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Sandy Bay, Langley Park, Caratal and Orange Hill you have been great to this country. [Applause]

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Yes! Yes!

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: You have ensured that the Unity Labour Party formed eight seats in this Party, enough to form government in this country. [Applause]

HONOURABLE MIGUEL GIRLYN: Oh yes.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: I recall our last meeting in this House in 2010, I heard from the opposite side [Interjection] that whenever the next election is called: “*Alyuh would be over here and we will be over there*”. Well, where am I, Mr. Speaker? [Interjections]

HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR: That was a figment.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Of the imagination. [Interjection]

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: That is figment, and so Mr. Speaker, I am indeed thankful to the constituency. Though, Mr. Speaker, I should say that when the Prime Minister was sworn in I was at that ceremony, and when I was travelling home I got a call from my son “Daddy where are you”? “I am driving coming home.” “You are sure”? I said, “I am driving coming home.” At the time I was eating bread coming home. So, I said, “I am eating and I am driving coming home.” He said, “But I heard that you are in the hospital”. I said, “No Sir, I am driving coming home.” I got calls, a barrage of calls, asking what is happening. You know, Mr. Speaker, I do not have life in my hand but, Mr. Speaker, I can only feel in my bones. My doctor

has indicated to me that I am still fit and well [Interjections] Thank you very much. And so I intend to serve this Party and to serve this country to the best of my ability. [Knocking on the desk]

Mr. Speaker, I have no intentions of leaving where I am living. There have also been rumours going around that I intend or that I have moved to Cane Garden [Interjections] Mr. Speaker, there is nothing in Cane Garden that will attract Montgomery Daniel to be living there; nothing whatsoever [Interjections] [Laughter] Except for the Prime Minister and Vincent Beache. I do not believe that there is any other politician who lived on more lands than I do. Why should I want to go to Cane Garden to live? No! No! No! I have lived very ...

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: You cannot carry your cattle down there.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: No Sir [Laughter]

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Marcus does carry his cattle there you know. [Laughter]

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the constituency that this year we will continue to see work in the constituency we will continue to see the feeder roads and so on being improved. Work will be done on the Primary School at Sandy Bay. Work will be done on the Primary School in Langley Park. The Rabacca National Park, Mr. Speaker, will see construction begin. In the Estimates there is a sum of some \$350,000.00 and therefore the Rabacca National Park will become a reality. Of course, through Rural Transformation we would see a lot of community projects and at Dickson we will continue work during the year. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you once again for working with you for yet another five years. I believe that for the last two consecutive five-year term we have worked well and indeed I want to thank you and your staff for working with you. And I pledge to continue working with you. I am much obliged. [Interjection] [Applause]

HONOURABLE DAVID BROWNE [Deputy Speaker]: Honourable Member, we pause to welcome back the Speaker, of the House.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for South Windward, I recognised you just sit for a moment. Okay, as Minister you know you have 1¼ hours to make your presentation. Just before you start, I think the Supplementary Result Indicator that you would have received, the name really; it should have been called the National Reconciliatory Advisory Council. So, it is NRAC and not as it is printed on the form; so you will kindly correct that please. Okay Honourable Member, you could start your presentation now.

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I too rise to make my contributions to the 2011 Appropriation Bill Debate. And let me hasten to say, Mr. Speaker, that I give my wholehearted support to the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and by extension to the excellent team in the Ministry of Finance for crafting in these most difficult and trying times a budget that is geared to the continued development of St Vincent and the Grenadines, and one which seeks to give a measure of hope to the poor, the destitute and marginalized in this beautiful nation state of ours, St Vincent and the

Grenadines. [Applause] After all, Mr. Speaker, this Unity Labour Party Government of which I am a very proud team player has always been a bastion of democracy and hope for the poor of the land.

Mr. Speaker, before I go any further I want to take this opportunity to express thanks to Almighty God and in the words of the Prophet Isaiah in the book Isaiah 49 and part of verse 5 which says:-

“For I am honourable in the eyes of Jehovah and my God is become my strength”.

[Interjections] [Applause] And further to thank the people in the constituency of South Windward who have voted overwhelmingly for me in the last general elections. [Applause] Mr. Speaker, this is the very first public opportunity that I have to thank them very much and I say to them a hearty thank you. To the Leadership of the Unity Labour Party I thank you very much for having me as I said before as a team player and for having me on the winning team, the dream team, the star team. Yes! To my mother who is not too well, a few days ago she broke her ankle and I know that my father would have loved to have been here but two years ago he left us. God have mercy on his soul. To my brothers, sisters and my other relatives and friends for all their support, to the Leadership of the Anglican Church of which I am a very proud member: the Bishop – His Lordship Bishop Friday, all the members of the clergy and the entire church family I want to thank them all for their continued prayers, for their love, for their encouragement and for their support, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I listened very intently as I heard some of the phrases and the terms used in this Honourable House to describe the 2011 Appropriation Bill, we heard phrases like “A shameless budget”; “The budget is an insult to the intelligence of the people of St Vincent and the Grenadines”, “It is impractical” “It is inappropriate”, “It is an Humpty Dumpty solution to the problems in St Vincent and the Grenadines”; and on and on and on. We hear some persons say it does not deal with the bread and butter issues in relation to our peoples, but Mr. Speaker, it is the poor among us who eat bread and butter, not those who are wealthy. So, if you are saying that this Budget does not deal with the bread and butter issues I am happy and so this budget is geared to improve the lives of the poor in such a way that they too can come up to eat bread and cheese, bread and turkey and bread and ham.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of National Mobilization with its several attendants department has as its mission statement and I refer us to page 173 of the Estimates and it reads thus:-

“To engage in social transformation through social empowerment, social protection and social justice using National Mobilization, Social Development, Youths Sports et cetera.”

And I say, Mr. Speaker, that this Ministry may be referred to as hub or the engine for the workings of this ULP Government. [Applause] And so in this year’s Budget Estimates Mr. Speaker, the Ministry has been allocated the sum of \$29.62 million on the Recurrent side and a further \$3.62 million on the Capital side giving my Ministry a total sum of about \$33 million to work with. Mr. Speaker, this Ministry would have love to have more but in these trying times we have to work with what we have. [Interjection] Yes, we have to be content with the little that we have.

Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight some of the prevailing conditions that contribute to the presence of the pockets of poverty in our nation state. Mr. Speaker, we look at the crippling global economic melt down resulting to the decline in Capital flows from bilateral sources. We have a decline in the Banana Industry and the erosion of preferential market access. We have deficiencies in the Labour Market, shortage of workers in agriculture and so on. We have increased hardship on our households due to the lack of fathering presence and support and most recently Hurricane Tomas.

Mr. Speaker, Hurricane Tomas left us with an estimated cost of approximately one hundred and thirty or so million dollars damage in agriculture and I am putting them together in agriculture, in forestry, fisheries our water systems and our housing stock a total of about \$137 million. Mr. Speaker, the Country Poverty Assessment Report of 2007 and 2008 states that in spite of the difficulties over the period, poverty have seem to fallen and indigence even more. Mr. Speaker, the indicator shows us that in 2007 and compared to 1998 in terms of poverty head count per index in 1995-1996 we had 37.5% poverty and in 2007-2008 we have reduced that to 30.2%. The indigence level Mr. Speaker, in 1995-1996 was 25.7%, we have reduced that to 2.9% [Applause] commendable work of this Unity Labour Party over the last ten years.

Mr. Speaker, the Report also highlights some of the difficult challenges for our country that requires appropriate programmes to necessitate the root causes. Mr. Speaker, when we look at the adverse global conditions and trends it points us to a year of difficulties but notwithstanding that, Mr. Speaker, the performance of this government over the last ten or so years will show us that despite difficulties we can make it if we try and trying we are, Mr. Speaker. [Applause] Let me look secondly, Mr. Speaker, at the legal agenda of the Ministry. Mr. Speaker, my Ministry has lobbied over the years for enactment legislations that would in effect need legal uniform surrounding the social issues such as child abuse, sexual harassment, age of consent, gender equity and equality, protection of rights of the family, the child, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Mr. Speaker, the Child Abuse Protocol and Reporting Guidelines abbreviated CAPRG including a Child Care Board and three other pieces of OECS model family legislations namely the Child Justice Bill, the Domestic Violence Bill and the Status of Children Bill and I hasten to add, Mr. Speaker, that my Ministry is pleased to report and to note that the OECS Model Legislation Children Care and Adoption Act was passed in this said House of Parliament on the 30th August, 2010. The Status of the Children's Bill would have the second reading a little later on in this Parliament, Mr. Speaker, and the Ministry will continue to collaborate with the National Committee on the Rights of the Child NCRC, which is now an approved body of Cabinet, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Legal Affairs and other relevant stakeholders to ensure that critical laws are put in place.

Mr. Speaker, in 2011, the Ministry will start to prepare for the implementation of the Child Care and Adoption Act and we are hoping that by March of this year, this piece of legislation will come to reality. Also this year we would be enacting other draft laws in relation to OECS Draft Family Legislations including the Status of the Children's Legislation.

Mr. Speaker, this morning when the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Consumer Affairs, made his presentation, he spoke in terms of the issues relating to human trafficking. I will not go further into it but just to inform us that this Honourable House and the AG's Chamber would be working diligently to

get the legislation in place for human trafficking. Mr. Speaker, we know of the serious implication if we do not put these legislations in place in relation to the United States Government.

Mr. Speaker, the Church in the province of the West Indies the Anglican Church for the year 2011 has designated this year as the year of 'The Family' and the month of June 2011, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, is proposed as the month of 'The Family'. Last Saturday throughout the province we had the service for the start of the year of 'The Family' and Mr. Speaker; I know that a resolution has been submitted to the Honourable Prime Minister and it is a document before this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, in relation to the proposals for 'The Year of the Family' and I want to say that the Ministry of National Mobilization will give every support and ensure the success of these activities relating to the empowerment of the family, and I want to commend the Anglican Church in the province for seeing it fit [Applause] Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move now towards in relation to a number of programmes through which the Ministry will continue in 2011 and these programmes are geared to bring enhanced quality of life to all our customers. Mr. Speaker, I want first of all to look at the Youth Affairs Division and most importantly the Youth Empowerment Service or the YES Programme. This programme was first started by the Unity Labour Party Administration in 2011. This programme engages school leavers and other unemployed youth in practical on the job training in preparation for the job market while at the same time paying them a stipend. Mr. Speaker, participants are placed in both private and in the public sector. These youths, Mr. Speaker, are also encouraged to study and so as a result of improving themselves, they can go on to various divisions at the Community Colleges, the A 'Level Colleges, the Technical College, School of Nursing and the Teacher Education Programme.

Mr. Speaker, these young persons are given stipends some of them \$400.00, some \$800.00 or more to assist them in their training. I realised when my Honourable colleague on the other side was making reference to the Youth Empowerment Programme, he said that there was only \$19,000 earmarked for this programme but I want to refer him to page No. 208 of the Estimates and to say to him that there are about 1000 persons on the Youth Empowerment Programme and the allowances for that is \$2.7 million. This is a government that cares about the young people and cares about the youths in St Vincent and the Grenadines [Applause] and that is what this programme is geared to Mr. Speaker. They called it the Youth Exploitation Service.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: And they are rowing to get people over there. [Laughter]

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: And I hasten to say, Mr. Speaker, that this programme the Youth Empowerment Service Programme of which we are very, very proud was awarded for Job Creation Opportunities at a Conference on best practices in Youth Policies and Programmes in Latin America and the Caribbean in Mexico from the 4th-6th November, 2009. Mr. Speaker, what a good programme.

Of critical issue, Mr. Speaker facing the Ministry and the Youth Empowerment Service is the number of males who are accessing this programme, it is a cause for concern, Mr. Speaker, and in the Ministry we are seeking diligently to find ways and means, of getting our young men onto this programme. We want to get them off the streets, being trained and being gainfully employed, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this programme which was started as a Capital Project is now ten years old and so this year we have decided to place it on the Recurrent

Expenditure Programme of the Ministry. And this year the sum of \$2.8 million has been allocated for this programme. This programme is financed by the Republic of China on Taiwan and Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government and peoples of St Vincent and the Grenadines I wish to formally to thank the Government and people of the Republic of China on Taiwan for their generous support for this programme from its inception [Applause]

Youth on the block and the youth friendly space: Mr. Speaker, this government is making every effort to engage the youth in meaningful self and national development. Mr. Speaker, in 2010 a survey was done in relation to the youth on the block situation and some areas that we looked at were Ottley Hall, Block 2000, Cane Hall, Byera, Questelles and Park Hill. And the purpose of these workshops and so on, Mr. Speaker, was to seek to engage the young people in meaningful community enhancement and development work. Mr. Speaker, a youth friendly space with the support from UNFPA was established in the constituency of North Central Windward that is the Prime Minister constituency.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: In Park Hill.

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: Yes. And so we will continue to work with these organisations, these associations and these communities in this year, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I turn now to the Family Affairs Division. And I want to speak in relation to our Public Assistance Programme. Years ago it was referred to as Poor Relief. [Interjection] [Laughter] It was referred to as Poor Relief Mr. Speaker. The Ministry provides relief to the poor and the needed in St Vincent and the Grenadines through the following public assistance programmes. First of all the general month to month public assistance: this is one that was referred to as the Poor Relief. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the monthly cash payment made to financially disadvantaged persons including a large number of children and youth whose parents are poor, in prison, terminally ill and have been deceased are what we have on the Public Assistance monthly programme. For the period January-December 2010, there were a total of 5,200 average persons on the Public Assistance list and the Ministry, the Family Affairs Division paid out more than \$10.8 million in payments to these persons.

As from January 2011, Mr. Speaker, and during the Elections Campaign one of the promises of this Unity Labour Party was to increase the Public Assistance Programme by a further 25%. [Interjection] Mr. Speaker, it was this Unity Labour Party Government that moved the payment from \$50.00 to \$100.00 the first century and from 2001 we had increased it, and now the payments have gone over \$200.00 [Knocking on the desk] Mr. Speaker.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: [Inaudible] Around Carnival [Inaudible]

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: Mr. Speaker, in this year's Estimates to cover the 25% increase this measure would cost the Government an additional \$3 or so \$4 million. This measure, Mr. Speaker, demonstrates the continued love support and care for the poor, the elder, and the needy persons in this land of ours, but yet we hear on the other side it is a "Shameless Budget". "An insult to the intelligence of our people"

[Interjection] “Humpty Dumpty”, but Mr. Speaker, it is measures like these that show that we are a Labour Government and labour means love. [Knocking on the desk] Let me repeat that we are a Labour Government and labour means love. [Interjection] Let me give you an idea of the increases, Mr. Speaker. In the category of Public Assistance, the number of persons who are over 65 amounts to 2,631 and their payments have increased from \$175.00 to \$220.00. Those under 65 they are 2,711 persons and that payment have increased from \$160.00 to \$200.00. Foster care parents we have approximately 161 persons on that programme and those payments have moved from \$220.00 to \$275.00.

Mr. Speaker, we must commend these foster parents. Sometimes we hear parents saying it is not easy to go with a child, their own child much less to someone taking care of somebody else’s children and I hasten to say that I would have loved to see a little more but in these times with God’s grace \$275.00 may be just sufficient.

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: A labour of love.

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: Yes. Mr. Speaker, the persons on the ...

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: The extra \$50.00 is shameless.

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: That is what we heard when the Leader of the Opposition presented in his reply to the Estimates:”Shameless” and “Humpty Dumpty”. Persons receiving transportation subsidies have moved from \$100 to \$125.00 and those who would have received \$80.00 now receive \$100.00.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry does not only provide for Public Assistance but we also provide for housing material, and we also have a Housing Material and Supplies Programme and this programme, Mr. Speaker, provides building material to destitute persons for the repair of their homes and to improve their standard of living. Mr. Speaker, a total of 640 households benefitted from this programme at a cost of four hundred and sixty four plus thousand dollars [Knocking on the desk] labour of love.

Mr. Speaker, we also provide a support for examination fees, providing supplies, we have helped persons with damage to their homes due to fire and we have also been granting Funeral Grants to several persons. I see the Honourable Member for North Leeward nodding his head in support of the programmes of [Interjection] well I noticed that myself and the Honourable Member for South Leeward carrying the same name so if I am on this side maybe he may want a chance to come over on this side [Interjection] [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, the Ministry also provides immediate financial assistance given to persons in disaster who have lost their homes due to fire and floods and so on. Additionally, we also give contributions in the form of helping persons with their house rents, provision of food items and personal effects, medical and educational aid and so on. As I said before, we also provide school uniforms, school supplies, payment of school fees, external examination fees and so on and so forth. What a government, a Unity Labour Party Government.

HOME HELP FOR ELDERLY

Mr. Speaker, I turn now to the Home Help for the Elderly. I do not even want to talk about this because I remember listening sometime ago and hearing persons saying this home help for the elderly, you are sending persons in old people home to clean up faeces and so on and so on. But Mr. Speaker, this has been an excellent programme over the years [Knocking on the desk] and it has contributed significantly to our continued work in dealing and in helping the poor of our land. And Mr. Speaker, programmes like these must continue, and we must complement this Unity Labour Party Government for instituting such programmes. [Applause] Mr. Speaker, there are currently over 437 elderly persons who benefit from this programme. In 2011 my Ministry will continue with this programme, the Government has spent over \$1.2 million on this programme in 2010. [Applause] Mr. Speaker, a number of persons want to get in on this programme because they too feel a sense of love and care for the elderly.

Mr. Speaker, for this year the Ministry in relation to the home help for the elderly conduct at least two refresher training workshops for the Health Care Providers by June of this year, we are hoping that we continue to train and facilitate the employment of 30 new Home Health Care Providers by August, in addition to those now on the programme and we continue to influence legal reform around social issues such as discrimination, domestic violence, harassment, protection and respect for the elderly by year end.

CHILD CARE AND PROTECTION

Mr. Speaker, I now choose to speak about our Child Care and Protection through the Street Children and Pastoral Care Programme. Mr. Speaker, there was a Street Children survey which was done sometime ago to determine the number of abandoned and or neglected children living on our streets and coming out of that survey, Mr. Speaker, a Pastoral Care Programme was developed and executed to work and to give support to those parents and to seek to reintegrate them into their families and to provide for them alternative place of safety. Mr. Speaker, to some extent this has worked but more needs to be done and the Ministry will continue this year to work for the wellbeing of these street children. They come from us they are our families and together with the Ministry and the families we have to ensure that we take care of the street children, get them off the streets back to homes Mr. Speaker. [Interjection] Yes bring them back into the fold.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

Mr. Speaker, I will now turn to look at the Community Development Division. Mr. Speaker, on page No. 195 of the Estimates we see the programme objectives there for the Community Development Division and it reads:-

“To facilitate National Development through the involvement of communities and people, in search for improved standards and conditions of living for themselves and for their communities.”

Mr. Speaker, we have several community centres throughout St Vincent and the Grenadines, and this year my Ministry seeks to with one [inaudible] be more useful in utilizing these community centres as hubs for decentralising the Ministries and the Divisions outreach programmes. Some of them are in need of repairs and so this year my Ministry will continue to work on developing those community centres so that we can have

them as I said before as hubs for providing the much needed programmes for the Ministry. We would also (Community Development Division) collaborate with the other Ministries, Mr. Speaker, the Youth Department, the Division of Culture, Sports Division, Gender Affairs and other outside organisations to ensure that work would be done in disseminating information in relation to community development. And so to this end we will collaborate with agencies such as United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, SIF, OAS, BNTF, Central Planning Division and other key stakeholders, Mr. Speaker. And we will also, for this year, develop in-depth community profile for fifteen communities.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of National Mobilisation is a hub for development activities and improvement for our young people and the poor of our nation. Mr. Speaker, in relation to our Community Development Division Programme we have what is called the supply of potable water to poor households. Mr. Speaker, the Community Development Division implemented a sub-project funded by the Government of Venezuela under the Community Poverty Alleviation Programme. This programme is being done in collaboration with the Central Water and Sewerage Authority and it is aimed at providing potable water to poor households. Over the period 2007-2010, Mr. Speaker, some 1433 households throughout mainland St Vincent were connected to the main water supply at a cost of \$452,000.00, Mr. Speaker. It is anticipated by the end of this year over 2000 households would have benefitted from this programme. Mr. Speaker, I am sorry that the Honourable Member for West Kingstown is not here but I want to give him the assurance that Buddy Gutter would not be left out of this programme [Applause]

CHILDREN AGAINST POVERTY

The children against poverty programme; the CAP programme, Mr. Speaker. This programme was started in 2002 and it is the School Vacation Programme that provides among other learning opportunities remedial education training for students from the ages 5-13 from low income households who are low academic achievers, whose parents are low income earners or unemployed, who have behavioural problems and who have low self esteem. Other components of the CAP programme include behavioural modification, after school support and parenting education. Mr. Speaker, the 2010 CAP programme catered for over 1487 students from poor families attending 56 primary schools throughout mainland St Vincent, Bequia and Union Island in the Grenadines. This programme last year had a total cost of nearly \$200,000.00. The students participated in various activities including art and craft, drama, field trips, sports, music e tcetera, Mr. Speaker, and they were designed to be creative and more relaxed than their rigid classroom setting. This year we would also continue that programme.

LIBERTY LODGE BOYS TRAINING CENTRE

Mr. Speaker, I now speak in relation to the Liberty Lodge Boys Training Centre. Through the Liberty Lodge Boys Training Centre, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry provides a caring environment in which boys from the ages 7-16, who are from poor and disadvantaged families having familiar educational, emotional or behavioural difficulties can acquire skills that can enable them to become responsible and productive citizens. Mr. Speaker, these boys engage in a number of skills training activities such as woodwork, craft, agriculture, computer and other soft skills. They also participate in various sporting activities; they are involved in workshops, building

self esteem, human rights, understanding adolescents, human growth development, conflict management and conflict resolutions. Mr. Speaker, the parents of these young boys are also integrally part of this programme. The Ministry is currently strengthening the security at the Centre, Mr. Speaker, and will implement an effective exit strategy using a graduation system programme by March this year.

There are also plans, Mr. Speaker, to improve their conditions there at the Liberty Lodge Boys Training Centre, and if we notice Mr. Speaker that some funds have been allocated for the improvement of the Liberty Lodge Boys Training Centre for this year.

GENDER AFFAIRS DIVISION

Mr. Speaker, the Gender Affairs Division. It is worthy to note, Mr. Speaker, that the Deputy Director of the Gender Affairs Division is a male [Laughs] Mr. Speaker, this will aid to dispel the myth that in relation to gender it is a woman. And I recalled when the Honourable Senator Baptiste in presenting on the Estimates spoke in relation to the Crisis Center, she only thought of it as being a place for women and children, but Mr. Speaker, men are battered and abused too and maybe if some of them are willing they might turn themselves into the Centre one of these days. The Honourable Representative for North Leeward knows what I am talking about, I see him smiling over there. [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, the Gender Affairs Division will continue to diligently work towards achieving the millennium development goal No. 3, which is to promote gender equality and empower women. I hope there is another goal that would say - to empower men too and to promote gender equality and to empower men. Some of the men in this country need empowering, what do you think? Yes, the Ministry will therefore, Mr. Speaker, in this year increase its focus on gender equity and equality and continue to empower women through income generating projects for rural women and for men to continue with the male underachievement programme, the fathering programme and to collaborate with the Youth Affairs Division with the Youth on the Block Programme; the Crisis Center.

And I know the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, the Honourable Minister of Education, would have worked very diligently and hard on this Crisis Centre Programme. This programme will be operationalized, Mr. Speaker, early in this year. Mr. Speaker, the Centre will provide a shelter for the victims of domestic abuse and related acts of violence. The establishment of this centre, Mr. Speaker, is very critical to the area of development and empowerment for the Ministry in its provision of support services to disadvantaged persons in our society. Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the Centre is furnished and that we have a reliable security system which has been installed, and I cannot say to the Honourable Senator, I cannot tell you what the security system at the Centre is maybe some unsuspecting woman or man may hear and if their spouse is at the centre, may be able to go there and tamper with our security system and breach it. Maybe you could have a chat with me and the Ministry officials on a one and one, and maybe that might not be a secret we would want to disclose Mr. Speaker.

The Ministry will continue to work with the National Council on the Rights of the Child, the National Council of Women and other interested stakeholders. To date the Government has spent more or close to \$2 million on this project and the allocations are made here in the Estimates at Page No. 206, Mr. Speaker.

Child Care and Protection through effective fathering programme. Mr. Speaker, how much more time I have an hour?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You have half an hour.

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: Half an hour. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry is of the view that positive involvement of fathers in the lives of their children enhances their protection. And so Mr. Speaker, in this respect the Ministry will continue to promote effective fathering programmes and parenting and working collaboratively to engage men as partners in the society. Mr. Speaker, it is important that the men in our nation stand up to their responsibility and be counted. And those of us who are in leadership position must encourage them so to do, Mr. Speaker, and I speak for this entire parliament. [Interjection] [Laughs] Sound like a sermon eh? I am good at that you know. [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, [Laughter] not the voice of one crying in the wilderness: John the Baptist.

RE-ENTRY OF TEEN MOTHERS INTO THE SECONDARY SCHOOL

Mr. Speaker, we also have a programme that is called the re-entry of teen mothers into the Secondary School Programme. Mr. Speaker, this is a wonderful programme giving our young ladies a second chance. Mr. Speaker, I can recall many years ago as the President of the Anglican Youth Council I was nearly expelled from the Church because I choose to have a programme advocating the same issue and the then Bishop now deceased called the Priest who is now the Bishop and said to him after he heard this thing made news, “I am supposed to know these issues before the church could deal with them”. And I said, “Well; if you expel me, I still have work to do with the young people”; because I was concerned that in my community there were a number of young girls who got pregnant and who are out of school and I fully support this programme, Mr. Speaker. The programme is a very successful programme Mr. Speaker, and my Ministry and the Government intend to strengthen this programme in 2011 and we have provided support for these teen mothers through the Social Welfare Programme in the Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, when the programme commenced in 2003-2004 there were 16 persons, 2004-2005 we had 11 persons; Mr. Speaker, in 2007-2008 we had 11 persons enrolled in the programme, 6 of them graduated 3 dropped out but it is still a good programme Mr. Speaker. Presently, there are 23 students enrolled in this programme as from June 2010, and 46 others have applied and are waiting reentry into the programme for 2010-2011 and Mr. Speaker, 15 schools are currently participating in this programme.

CO-OPERATIVE DIVISION

I now speak of the Co-operative Division. Mr. Speaker, there are two components of the school’s co-operative programme, firstly

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable ...

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member, I am just a little curious if he would want to spend some time on how the Ministry measures the success with the Teen Parenting Programme because it is one of those awkward assistance programme to determine your success. How do they go about it, they repeat the numbers, the preventatives? You know it is a little challenging I believe as a measure to determine, so if you could indicate to us how the Ministry measures success in that programme it would be helpful to us.

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: Mr. Speaker, I believe that maybe those details if the Honourable Minister (sorry) Honourable Representative for Central Kingstown could come to the Ministry and discuss some of those issues with the personnel in charge there, Mr. Speaker. [Interjection] And also at the Ministry of Education, Mr. Speaker, these are the two agencies that are responsible for these programmes.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, maybe it will involve ... (Sit Honourable Member, please) it will involve some time factor here and you are of course debating on sort of limiting time, so I do not know how that would affect you if you are going to give details on these various programmes. Maybe I would like to also suggest if these could be obtained elsewhere that we seek to have them obtained once they are available, I ask that maybe you can seek to have ... you know, instead of encroaching on your own time to debate. Okay, thank you.

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, the School's Co-operative Thrift Programme, Mr. Speaker, is one of the components of the School's Co-operative Programme. This programme comprises of 87 schools and as of June last year: June 2010, Mr. Speaker, they had a combined savings of over EC \$630,000.00. Mr. Speaker, this programme is where children are empowered through the management of money and the maintenance of a savings account.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: These things brandishing across are they doing as weapons oh! Oh! [Laughter]

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: They are just displaying colours.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay. [Laughter]

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: Mr. Speaker, this poverty alleviation through co-operatives involved a collaborative effort of all stakeholders of which the youth is the prime participant and beneficiary. And secondly, Mr. Speaker, we have the School's Co-operative Agri Business Programme; this programme was implemented on the 25 March last year and three poultry pens were constructed; one at the St Clair Dacon Secondary School, the Union Island Secondary and the Calder Government School. Poultry production will commence in early February 2011 and there are also plans, Mr. Speaker, to continue this programme in other secondary schools throughout St Vincent and the Grenadines. The Cooperative Division will continue to provide technical guidance and support for the co-operative development during 2011, and this year the Division will continue the supervision of schools cooperatives by the staff of the Cooperative Division. The school cooperative programme is a collaborative effort by teacher guides, parents the Ministry of Education, the

Ministry of Agriculture and Credit Union stakeholders. They would also promote and facilitate cooperative development as mechanism for poverty reduction, food security and job creation, employment creation and money management.

The Pineapple Growers Cooperative of Wallilabou Mr. Speaker and the Hibiscus Garment Construction Cooperative of Mesopotamia were beneficiaries of such technical support in 2010. The Cooperative Division will continue to promote safety and soundness in the Cooperative Societies, enhance the regulatory, supervisory and development capabilities of the Cooperative Department through staff training to facilitate greater service delivery and finally to facilitate the expansion of the School Cooperative, Agri Business and Thrift Programme in at least 12 more schools by December 2011.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS DIVISION

I want to, Mr. Speaker, begin this segment by extending condolences to the family of the late Earlene DeGrads of Petit Bordel who passed away yesterday. Ms. DeGrads was a former National Cricketer may her soul rest in peace. The Division of Physical Education and Sports is a state with a mandate to lead the physical activity facet of the National Wellness Revolution. This programme was launched in September 2008 at the Arnos Vale Sporting Complex. The Division executed 11 monthly walks in 2010; these walks were held around Kingstown and in other communities such as Campden Park, Choppins, Dauphine and Argyle mainly on the last Wednesday of every month. Mr. Speaker, presently the Division is staging its first 12 walks for the year this afternoon from Fort Charlotte and back. An average of 80 persons participated in the walks last year.

Mr. Speaker, another component of the Division of Physical Activity agenda was its sub-programmes for senior citizens, communities, residents, public servants, teachers and inmates of the female correctional facility. Physical activities are conducted at four senior citizens home and in seven communities where 158 persons benefit. Mr. Speaker, around 48 teachers and public servants participated in two programmes in Kingstown.

SCHOOL SPORTS

In 2010, Mr. Speaker, personnel from the Division executed the National Primary School Sports Development Programme in all Primary Schools in St Vincent and the Grenadines and in all Secondary Schools. This programme will continue in term three of the School year and continue in term one of this 2011/2012 academic year. They are taking a break Mr. Speaker, due to the bus school athletic season in this term. And Mr. Speaker, last Sunday afternoon was the closing of the Coco Cola Secondary School Football Competition, and I want to publicly congratulate the Dr. J.P. Eustace Secondary School who were the under 21 champions and the Central Leeward Secondary School the under 16 champs [Knocking on the desk]. Mr. Speaker, I believe it was for the first time that the school's football finals were broadcast live on National Television, SVG TV carried the matches live.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Fifteen minutes remaining.

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. In 2011 the Ministry of Sports will continue with the PA facet of the National Wellness Revolution, collaborate with all Ministries and stakeholders executing sporting activities; document the memoirs of at least 12 former sporting icons; continue sport enhancement programme in primary schools; continue the drug anti-doping in sports awareness agenda; recognise excellence in all areas of sport; extend solidarity to all stakeholders hosting sporting events; maintain, upkeep and develop sporting facilities throughout St Vincent and the Grenadines. And Mr. Speaker, if I say for athletics this year, this year a team from the Thomas Saunders Secondary School will be taking part in the Penn Relay in the United States this year [Knocking on the desk] the first time, Mr. Speaker, in the history of St Vincent and the Grenadines that we have such a relay team. The Penn Relays also called the Penn Relays Carnival, Mr. Speaker, is the oldest, largest track and field competition in the United States of America. It was started in 1895 and more than 15,000 athletes around the world take part in this tournament. I saw earlier on that Jamaica is one of the Caribbean countries who have been taking part in Penn Relay for a long time.

Mr. Speaker, upgrading of community playing fields. We have a number of playing fields that would be upgraded over the period during the year. The North Windward Hard Court was constructed in Sandy Bay, in North Central Windward the Chili playing field was upgraded, South Central Windward the Greggs hard Court was constructed, in Marriaqua the Richland Park Hard Court was constructed and lighted, East St George the Calliaqua playing field was lighted, West Kingstown the upgrading of the Hard Court in Rose Place and a new playing field is being constructed in Edinboro, South Leeward they will be upgrading work was done on the Penniston playing field and a new Hard court was constructed, Central Leeward a new pavilion with change room and wash room was constructed, North Leeward work is to be done, the playing field at Cumberland, Cane Grove Fitz Hughes and Troumaca and in the Grenadines state of the art multipurpose sporting facility was constructed on Canouan.

Mr. Speaker, the National Stadium Committee has been reactivated and the government will continue its development work there and in this year's Budget the sum of \$100,000.00 was allocated for that.

DIVISION OF CULTURE

And now I turn to the Division of Culture. Mr. Speaker, the Division of Culture is now with my Ministry and I am happy to have them and every effort will be made to ensure that there is full inclusion and participation in the programmes and operation mesh of the Ministry. During 2010, the Division successfully executed its cultural calendar in areas of Drama, Dance, Fine Art, Film, Fashion, Coordination of various events such as Heritage month, Emancipation month, Independence programme, Christmas Nine Mornings, Union Island Festival and the Bequia and Canouan Whitsun Regattas those programmes will continue repeat themselves over year with some improvements Mr. Speaker. Also in 2010 the Department hosted the launching of the Breadfruit Cook Book for Heritage Month, Gospel Fest and Emancipation month. Additionally, Mr. Speaker, we had some training for staff.

Mr. Speaker, my Ministry and the Division of Culture is very pleased to say that we have within our shores a team of Egyptian archaeologists who arrived here in January to do some work on the removing of the art works

at the Petroglyphs at Argyle; I believe that they are leaving tomorrow, much more work is to be done and they should be back in the State all being well within the month to complete these works.

CARNIVAL DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

The CDC Mr. Speaker, Carnival will be again this year and I am sure that the patrons will love to see some improvements in Carnival and will continue to work with the Carnival Development Corporation in this area.

ALBA PROJECT

The Alba Project, Mr. Speaker, is a cultural project which has opened its doors for additional cooperation with Latin America; the project can be a source of funding and support if investment is made by St Vincent and the Grenadines and Alba. To show Alba's priority, funding is made from Alba for the year 2011 to support activities in the following areas.

- Creation of an Alba House.
- Participation of St Vincent and the Grenadines in the International Book Fair in Havana in February.
- Participation of St Vincent and the Grenadines in the Virtual Museum of Latin America and the Caribbean among other activities, Mr. Speaker.

I now use the next ten minutes of my time, Mr. Speaker, to speak to the constituency of South windward. Ten minutes, Mr. Speaker?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You almost up [Laughter]

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: Mr. Speaker, the electorate of South Windward gave to me and the Unity Labour Party an overwhelming mandate to serve them during the next five years [Knocking on the desk] and by the grace of Almighty God, Mr. Speaker, I do so in humility and with a sense of integrated discussions throughout the constituency in order to fulfil the diverse needs of the people.

HONOURABLE DOUGLAS SLATER: You got the highest votes.

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: Yes! After the Prime Minister on this side, Mr. Speaker, I got the most runs against an old opponent who did not know how to bat, [Laughter] the bouncers were too severe, Mr. Speaker. And so this year we continue the rebuilding of the homes and livelihood of our people in the constituency in the aftermath of Hurricane Tomas and this will be done in conjunction with Housing and Land Development Corporation. We continue with BRAGSA and the Ministry of Works to develop the road network throughout the constituency, and so the Bunham, Calder, Akers, Bottom and Upper Stubbs Road, the

Carapan roads, the Simon to Biabou roads and Reeves Level roads are on the list of works. There will also be some self help works on several pieces of road in the Diamond area. The Top Hill road in the Biabou area will commence very soon, this project is funded by the CDB and the Basic Need Trust Fund and I know that the people in Top Hill are looking forward with great anticipation for this major project. Mr. Speaker it is long overdue and I am happy that I will be the Representative who will be delivering this road project to the people of Top Hill.

The Stubbs and Biabou playing fields, Mr. Speaker, there are some upgraded work to be done there and I hope that pretty soon we will see those fields lit. Also there is some work to be done on the Calder Hard Court and we will continue to work with the Calder Hard Court to complement that one at the Carapan Secondary School, Mr. Speaker. We will continue the placing of street lights in several areas of the constituency to make living and movement of our people easier. Mr. Speaker, the people of Peruvian Vale will be happy to hear that we continue to do some work at the Peruvian Vale Argyle Primary School hard court facility there for the playing of netball, basketball and tennis. We will seek to upgrade the Community Centers, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, for years the farmers in the area of Massey in the Bridge Town area have been complaining of the Feeder Roads to open up several acres of virgin agriculture lands for the many farmers in that area and recently, Mr. Speaker, I got a petition from about 40 or so farmers saying that we could grade this area for them to get easier access to the farm lands. I am eagerly anticipating, Mr. Speaker, to the Minister of Health so we can have the Stubbs Polyclinic actually open and also the Tourism facility at Rawacou being lighted. Mr. Speaker, this facility is dear to my heart and I want us to use this facility, Mr. Speaker, in the area for promoting the local music: the local singing industry, not the DJ Band – DJ kind of stuff, but the real band and so I am hoping that very soon we will be able to have the electricity at Rawacou. And Mr. Speaker, I wait in great anticipation Mr. Speaker, at the end of 2012 to see the opening of the International Airport at Argyle. [Knocking of desk] By God's grace I am sure that I would be at the forefront of those openings [Interjection] Well, I want to be on the first plane landing down on the Argyle International Airport.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for your patience and your guidance and I want to wish this Bill a safe passage through this Honourable House. [Applause] Much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Oh! Honourable Prime ... Honourable Member for North Leeward, I recognise you I think, at this time we ...

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, the last occasion for the Estimates my Honourable friend from North Leeward had to be fortified with vittle before he spoke, I think it is the same thing again this evening. [Laughs] I want to make sure that you are well taken care of. Mr. Speaker, this is a convenient time for us to take the break for Members convenience, it is now 6:45 until say 7:30 and then perhaps we will have my Honourable friend from North Leeward and we could call that an evening.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes, I think so.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: So, I beg to move that this Honourable House do stand suspended for thirty minutes for Members convenience.

**Question put and agreed to
House suspended at 6:45 p.m.
House resumed at 7:33 p.m.**

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Pray be seated. Honourable Members, when we took the break earlier, I recognised the Honourable Member for North Leeward, I do not know if the Honourable Member for Central Kingstown wants to ask him to give way, is that ...

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: I will give way for the Honourable Member for North Leeward.

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: Mr. Speaker, on a small [inaudible] matter I think I should let you know I was absent earlier because I went to take my colleague on an important mission for my [inaudible]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay, all right. Thank you. Honourable Member, you know you have forty five minutes to debate, when you are ready.

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if I should crave your indulgence in expressing my sympathy to the family of Ms. Earlene DeGrads of Petit Bordel, one of my good friends, schoolmate who passed away yesterday. As was stated by the Minister of Sports she was a National Cricketer who represented not only St Vincent so to speak but the North Leeward area as she was a pioneer in the reviving of women cricket in St Vincent and the Grenadines. I wish to say on behalf of myself, my family and Honourable Members my deepest condolences to the family of Ms. DeGrads, may her soul rest in peace. Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I did not charge you for that.

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: Thank you very much and seeing that I am the last speaker, I will not be further charged. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to give my contribution to this Budget Debate of the 2011 Appropriation Bill. As I sat on this side of the House I listened to the Honourable Members on the other side and what is interesting, Mr. Speaker, almost everyone basically saying we know things hard, we could have done better but because we cannot do better we have to satisfy with what we have, that is the impression I get, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker and my reason for coming to a conclusion it is interesting, Mr. Speaker that after ten years in office, I listened with interest the Members on the other side at the end of their speeches they commented on little things that are necessary in the constituency. A little village road here, a gutter here a drain there and so on that tells me, Mr. Speaker, that for a very long time things gone bad when it comes to the economy of this country.

I am quite aware, Mr. Speaker, that there are external forces that affect the way things happen in St Vincent and the Grenadines but let us be reminded last year before budget, we were told that things were very good in St Vincent and the Grenadines. At one point when the Honourable Arnhim Eustace was pointing to the fact that the global economy is changing and we have to control our spending, I remember the Honourable Prime Minister laughed and remarked that “What happening in 9/11 would not be able to impact on St Vincent and the Grenadines”. And here we are today. And we have certain Honourable Members of the House using 9/11 as their benchmark in terms of stating how troubled the economy was for a very long time. Mr. Speaker, you understand sometimes when we are in the game of politics we say things when they suit us and when they do not suit us we tend to move far away. [Interjection]

Mr. Speaker, I have been given the task of shadowing the Ministry of Agriculture and I want to start off by dealing specifically with bananas and as you would know the Banana Industry, I should say the banana as a product continues its downward spiral in 2010. And what is interesting, Mr. Speaker, you know, in the past because of the contribution to banana to GDP we never used to have to audit the other products in agriculture to come up with the contribution of banana to GDP. We were so proud of how much banana is bringing to this country, now to make the contribution to GDP look good we have to put everything under one heading and call it agriculture. We are separating now to make numbers look good.

Mr. Speaker, the Banana Industry encountered some low production levels and this was because of a number of factors, quality was poor, low production levels, disease and the drought condition last year. However, Mr. Speaker, when I listen to the Honourable Minister of Agriculture the point he was making to some extent is that some of the reason why even though he recognised that in agriculture, let me restate that (sorry) the importance of the agriculture sector, it is because of the poor funding or the lack of funds in agriculture why in most cases a number of the projects, I should say, a number of things that are necessary to make agriculture viable could not be done because a lack of funding was the most important reason for that. And hence the reason, Mr. Speaker, when we on this side, when we say that more is required to make the sub-sector viable in way, we are given all kinds of reason why we cannot get more; hence the reason for my opening remark.

Interestingly Mr. Speaker, one of the factors as I said responsible for low production: the lack of aerial spraying which was due in part again because of lack of funding to continue aerial spraying of the bananas and as a result to counteract black Sigatoka was a problem, as you know this is a aggressive disease and continuous aerial spraying is recommended in order to combat this disease. Also, Mr. Speaker, as I continue lack of funding: the Ministry of Agriculture attempted to bring into this country a quota of banana cultivars from Israel, and because of lack of funding again only 50% of such cultivars could have been imported because the government could not meet its proportion in terms of money to give ... should I say money to spend on these specialized suckers.

The drought, Mr. Speaker, affected Banana Industry last year and I recall, Mr. Speaker, that the New Democratic Party while in government set up an irrigation system specially for this purpose but because of neglect and failure to maintain the Industry suffered during the period of drought, hence the reason I said, Mr. Speaker, that when you look at it all the reason for the poor performance in agriculture was mostly due to lack of funding for the Sector. Following Hurricane Tomas I wish to join with the Honourable Opposition Leader in saying that he compliments the Government for the quick response, you know, supporting cash and fertilizers to

assist banana farmers to get back on their feet. But you know, Mr. Speaker, up to this point there are some Banana Farmers still waiting on this assistance to help them to get their field back on track, however, listening to Minister, he says it is a six months arrangement so I am expecting that in the not too distance future some assistance could be given to those banana farmers who have not yet received any fertilizers or cash incentives to assist them in having their fields replanted.

Mr. Speaker, Hurricane Tomas devastated bananas, planting, tree crop and vegetables and other agricultural products even the forest suffered over \$30 million in damages, but you know I listened to the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and I believe he might clarify if I do not have it, if I did not get the point, I cannot recall hearing him mention anything about the vegetable farmers who were seriously affected as well by Hurricane Tomas they would have contributed significantly to this economy as well and they felt left out. I can speak for those in North Leeward who at this point no one has visited their farms to get an estimate of damages done and quite a number of them take matters in their own hands and have used up savings to get their field back on track, to them that is something good and I applaud them for taking that bold step because sometime if you wait on those who you supposed to get help from it will be long in coming.

Mr. Speaker, the assistance to vegetable farmers are, I said, is very important and I believe that at least some assistance in the form of seedlings and other help should be given to those farmers to get them to start those who have not started because you know most of the people who are involved in small farming are what we call at the lower echelons of the societal ladder and they would be very grateful for any assistance that can be given to them in getting them up and ready in these trying times. Mr. Speaker, one of the reasons as the Minister correctly stated was responsible for the improvement in the agriculture sector, in GDP 2009 to 9.6 from 9.0; it is because of the improvement in the non-banana crops. Mr. Speaker, having heard that I would have thought that the next thing would have been to put more emphasis on diversification because here you have an example that your non-banana crops are improving in terms of quantity and in terms of money and I was expecting to hear some measures in place where a more concerted effort in terms of diversification would have been undertaken by the Ministry [Knocking on the desk] but I am still listening.

Interestingly, according to the Prime Minister Budget Presentation the Honourable Prime Minister on page No. 9 , it is quoted that the reason for the improvement in non- banana areas is because of about five hundred or so banana farmers who moved over to other crops. That is interested, so that as I said is an indication that the farmers are willing and ready to adjust and we must assist them in that regard. Mr. Speaker, I continue looking at the Honourable Prime Minister's Budget Presentation; it was mentioned that the banana accompanying measure of the EU, that a project had been submitted that is the impression I get to the National Adaptation Strategy and some Grant funding is coming. When I question in the Estimates the meagre allocation to the Ministry of Agriculture I was told that some arrangements had been made and hopefully at the end of the year there about, we should get some Grant funding and hence the reason why it is not in the Budget and I heard the Honourable Minister of Agriculture reported that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, according to the history when it comes to Grant funding it is not a good sign and I want to know that if this Budget is saying to the people of St Vincent and the Grenadines that an important Ministry like Agriculture has to be taking a chance as if we are playing Lotto, Bingo or something. Because with the way

Grant Funding sometimes as I said, based on the history of Grant Funding sometimes ... over the past ten years or so hardly any money coming through in that regard but yet we are hoping that this measure does come through and our farmers could be assisted. For God sake I hope that we do get the necessary funding, so that our Forestry our agriculture in general will get a boost in that regard. As I said, I hope it is not wishful thinking.

Mr. Speaker, I also have responsibilities for Fisheries but before I go into that I want to comment a bit on the youth in agriculture, I heard the Minister mention it and it is important that we encourage our young people in agriculture. Very important, because when you look at the farmers today, the majority of them are the same persons who were in farming twenty/thirty years ago and you want to know if the Youth in Agriculture Programme if it is really working. It is something we must examine. A farmer in his 50's or 60's might not be encouraged to plant a tree for obvious reasons he might not benefit that is what he might think, but if we encourage young people from the school level, this is something that we should do so that we know that St Vincent and the Grenadines in the future when it comes to food security that we can sustain our self. I was surprised somewhat when I looked at the Estimates and saw the millions of dollars we spend on poultry, yet we had a hatchery here that produced quality chicks and we can use that and improve it and so provide for local consumption and hence cut back a great deal on the imported stuff, by doing so we are saving foreign exchange and creating much needed employment in our country. So as I said that programme Youth in Agriculture is something that is good in its outlook but I am more concerted effort should be put into it to make it viable.

Mr. Speaker, farmers must be given the incentive to farm to continue in agriculture. You notice sometimes because of lack of marketing farmers sometimes as if they do not want to go to the farm, they do not want to continue because sometimes they are encouraged to plant acres of dasheen, tannia, potatoes whatever and they themselves have to come to Kingstown sit down in front of the market, put them out in little heaps, and try to get them sold, because the market they were catering for things did not happen that way and they have to come and sell them themselves. All in the villages they are walking around in trays selling, using their children as well to sell. But the farmers are assured of a market in terms of ... and I remember sometime ago when there was a programme in place where the farmers were told well, you can plant [X] amount of dasheen; next farmer could plant tannia and so on. And as I said these ideas sound very good but we are not seeing the benefits of them and we need to look closer because, Mr. Speaker, when you look for example, when you look at the Result Indicator - let me give you an example eh.

HONOURABLE MR SPEAKER: Page.

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: Page 346. Dasheen 650 acres, when you look at the result 21.2% implementation; eddoes 620 acres, result 135.9; cassava 3,000 acres, result 15.42 acres; this is the kind of thing I am talking about. That is why I said in the beginning, here you have an ideal opportunity where if with these low implementation rates that there is improvement in terms of the money value in non- banana crop that should have been an incentive to allow or to place more resources in these kinds of crops so that more money could come into the country.

Mr. Speaker, during the campaign we in the New Democratic Party, we talked about cocoa and I noticed on page No. 363 at the bottom: "Promote the replanting and establishment of selected condiment and specimen"

and in the middle there cocoa 50 acres. That is very good, but I want to know how that was placed there and Mr. Astaphan from Dominica advised us otherwise [Laughter] [Interjections] in other words Mr. Speaker, we in the New Democratic Party we have done our homework in this regard and we realize that the new species of cocoa now available where they reach maturity in three years and in the meantime you can do intercropping dasheen, tannias, eddoes and so on. [Interjection] right now in Sierra Leone there is a civil unrest going on and the price of cocoa is almost US\$4,000 for metric ton. So here we are seeing something, Mr. Speaker, where we in St Vincent and the Grenadines could benefit from this so therefore ... even though the unrest goes on my brother the price for cocoa when things are calm is far more than that of banana [Interjections] my brothers I hope we do not have to live to regret that comment. [Interjections]

Mr. Speaker, [Interjections] [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, [Knocking on the desk] Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for giving me some silence [Interjections] [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, but you would have heard us on the campaign trail on a regular basis. Mr. Speaker, we in St Vincent and the Grenadines cocoa is a traditional crop to us somewhere along the line we did not continue it, but as an Honourable Member for Marriagua states that he still enjoys the cocoa, which is good and many other areas in St Vincent still does. [Interjection] And ... but now we have the expertise, now we have the technology to combat disease and other things we can look at cocoa again as a viable option in terms of this agriculture industry that is so much in need of a boost and I believe, Mr. Speaker, that we have the right temperature, the conditions exist here in fertile SVG for us to embark on this programme that will bring much needed revenue to St Vincent and the Grenadines. [Knocking on the desk] And if those Honourable Members on the other side fail to realise this well I cannot say much. Well 50 acres is a start and let us hope that it is done and when we come back to this Honourable House next year we will see another 200 acres.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say something on fisheries. Mr. Speaker, we in St Vincent and the Grenadines we have the potential to provide all our protein needs from fishing, we have that potential but we should go about this in a professional manner. And if some of us do not eat fish because we look at the prices we get for fish we could yield a lot of foreign exchange to this country from fishing. [Interjections] I had the privilege, Mr. Speaker, along with the Honourable Terrence Ollivierre to travel to Taiwan in 2002 and I have seen where they have invested a great deal in mariculture and where they do fish farm in the sea and the shape of our coastline little bays and so on is ideal for that kind of thing. Very ideal where you have fish at different stages so you always get fish year round and this is something we could look into seeking the assistance of the Taiwanese the expert in this area, they are our friends and let us do things, let us diversify so that benefits could come to St Vincent and the Grenadines. [Interjection]

Mr. Speaker, we are at a situation where we have failed to pass the Hazard Compliance Test and as a result we are not able to ship fish overseas as we would like to. What we need to do is do what is necessary so that we can gain access to the overseas market. It does not make much sense to me to be boasting of an expensive nice looking fishery complex in Owia but then it is not being fully utilized, Mr. Speaker, I know that we have good fisher folks in this country. I am positive that I am from a fishing community in North Leeward, however, our fisher folks need to be given the right incentives so that we as a people can benefit from what the sea can give to us. Mr. Speaker ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for North Leeward why are you standing?

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: The Honourable gentleman has given way. I am standing, Mr. Speaker, in terms of misrepresentation of the information that is being given at this time. Mr. Speaker, I have listened from the inception

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Wait just a minute, quote me the section.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: I think it is 36 the section that deals with misrepresentation.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Thirty five [inaudible]

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Mr. Speaker, the thing is that I have listened to the Honourable gentleman; I really did not want [Interjection] to obstruct his presentation.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members [Knocking the Gavel on the desk] just a minute, the Member is on the floor. Yes what are you directing me to now?
Okay, go ahead make your reference. [Interjection] Yes it is all right I found it.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Mr. Speaker, what I am referring to is that even in the beginning of the presentation is that the Honourable Member from North Leeward would have indicated that first and foremost that ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Let me ask you a question because you do not seem to be coming to the point. He misrepresented something that is part of your speech?

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Is that what you are moving and you want to ...

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Yes Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay fine, all right.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: He made reference in terms of the contribution that was being made from-non banana which he went on to indicate the way the Ministry should have been going. Of course, non-banana would have added significantly to ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just a minute you are saying that he misrepresented part of your speech?

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Yes! Yes!

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Tell me the part of the speech that he misrepresented.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Where he would have indicated that when bananas were good the contributions that you made from banana was not placed to the rest of the sector, it has always been so Mr. Speaker. The overall contribution to the sector is with bananas, non-bananas and all of the other areas contribution and therefore to say that it has not been added is not a fact.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No! No! You cannot move under 33:4, I mean if you are moving to elucidate something ...

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Thirty five (b) I think.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Elucidate something is a different story.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Thirty five (b)

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Right, 35: (a) or (b) whichever.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: It is (b) really Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Right let me hear you.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Yes Mr. Speaker, it was in relation to the contribution from both banana and from non-banana where all of the contributions come together to give you an overall picture of the growth of the sector. So, that even when bananas was at its best giving 12% to the total GDP contribution when agriculture would have been giving up to 21% all that was being added together. Whether it was non-banana, banana, fisheries and forestry all of that would have been added together.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: To give you the total contribution.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: All right.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: So that I recognised from there that the Member would have been giving information that is not totally factual in that regard.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: All right Minister, I cannot be on the floor for the whole night, so just make your point.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Thank you very much.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay fine. Honourable Member, I hope you took note of what was said. Let us continue.

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: Mr. Speaker, it is good to see that the Honourable Minister of Agriculture has awoken from his slumber because that was something said very early and if that is the case Honourable Minister of Agriculture then you are the person in charge and I take what you say.

Mr. Speaker, it is a fact that the Fish Market in Kingstown, the main Fish Market; the conditions of the main Fish Market I believe is what led to us not being able to pass the Hazard Compliance, which is the Hazard Analysis point in terms of the way these countries set out the standards in terms of the facility that is available locally for storing, packing, freezing whatever you want to call it of the fish product. Mr. Speaker, I believe that it is time that we modernise our fishing sector and by doing so, fish is a delicacy especially in hotels and restaurants throughout. I saw sometime on the Television where fishermen were out at sea and before they get to shore to show their catch it was already sold because they have technology at their fingertips. And when you have the different entities in terms of hotels and restaurants bidding for fish based on the kind of fish that is caught snapper and so on and before they get to shore the fish is already sold. So this is something we could think of, I mean we are a small country yes, but we have to think big, because we want to make sure that we cannot be sitting idly and when opportunities come for us [Interjection] to make money we sit idly and say: we cannot do it because we small, but we can do better than. But the reason that I pointed out, the poor funding in this sector is contributing more to its demise than anything else.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Look at the other fishermen, big fisherman [Laughs] little fisherman.

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: Mr. Speaker, [Interjection] I have been also entrusted with the Environment as well and [Knocking on the desk with the Gavel] I want to say a bit on the environment. In St Vincent and the Grenadines we are in contact with a lot of chemicals, I ask in this modern time do we have an agrochemical registry where you could track the chemical from the time it leaves the store because it is important where we have chemical like gramozone being left idly for people to go and drink for wine. Whether they do it deliberately or not, I do not know, but it is something we need to do so that we could be able to give account of chemical use.

RECYCLING

Recycling of plastic; I must applaud the no bottle policy, very important but one of the foresights that should have been put in place when we introduced the no bottle policy was that it generates more plastic. And plastic takes sometimes over hundred years in the environment, and it is something that we must look at. We must make sure we have recycling programmes in place so that our plastic waste could be controlled. And it is important for the fishing sector that is why I put them together when sometimes we go to the sea and we just ... if we have a beach that is close to a river and you dive when you look down you want to know if you are under water in terms of the number of plastic bottles, plastic cups and other things that are there polluting the environment and also the hazard to the fish.

SCRAP METAL

We are importing hundreds of cars per a year into this country but we do not have a programme in place to take care of scrap metal. We have when you come to this country, the used vehicles come with batteries sometimes and the waste from batteries are very dangerous, toxic, Mr. Speaker, and programmes must be put in place to deal with this because if we in our life time are not affected then our children and grand children would have to pay, so we must put programmes in place to deal with waste.

OIL

Oil that we use from our vehicles: we throw them into the soil and just throw them in the backyard and it is there in the soil for years on ending causing problems to our health and those to follow.

MEDICAL WASTE

Mr. Speaker, medical waste is also something we must look into as well. I remember sometime about a year or two ago where we saw in the Newspaper; we hear medical waste was in close proximity to a school, and there you have children up and down and there were the syringes and other things exposed. We must look into these things because it is important for us in terms of our life sustenance and able to maintain our pristine environment. So, we have to take stock of our waste so that this country will always remain beautiful for us and for visitors, especially at a time like this when we are trying to get more visitors to our country we have to show that we are ready. And hence the reason why I emphasize so much, Mr. Speaker, in the controlling of these waste so that our country could be safe.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot to be done, a lot to be done if St Vincent and the Grenadines is to move forward.

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

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: Ten minutes.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Ten minutes.

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. During the debate of the Estimates, I mentioned in passing that the Projects in North Leeward that I think are deserving of the Government's attention. I acknowledge in the Budget, I saw provisions made for the playing field at Cumberland and even if it is ten years in the making, I believe this one goes to the Guinness Book of Records, I hope that this year it would be completed.

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: You had seventeen years [inaudible]. [Laughter]

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: So, am I my Honourable Minister Burgin are you telling me that we have to wait another seventeen years for that to happen. [Interjection] It is that kind of attitude, Mr. Speaker, why this country is the way it is! This is a time that you are in charge of the Government and the responsibility is on you to do better! I was not here seventeen years ago, Mr. Speaker! [Interjection] I was not here! And as a result, I am surprised you know, Mr. Speaker, that you have people on the other side rather than saying let us improve our country, let us do better and yet you are talking that you want to improve the lives of people! [Interjection] How could this be? [Interjection] If you want to improve people's lives

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member.

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: Mr. Speaker, you would not be speaking in that kind of language! [Interjections]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: [Knocking on the desk with Gavel] Honourable Member, please. [Interjections]

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: Mr. Speaker ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member.

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: I mentioned the situation and I hope that the people

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Just a minute. Just a minute, Honourable Members, look, we have just a few more minutes to go maybe you are getting a little bit ... it seems you are getting a little bit stronger but let us.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR: It is the food [inaudible].

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: It looks so; we have to examine that diet; maybe it has something in it.

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that the people in North Leeward and in particular the people in Cumberland and in Spring Village are listening to the kind of thing I am hearing here today! I hope they are listening you know, because when time come to be judged I know that the people in North Leeward when it comes to judging they are very good at that.

Mr. Speaker, Rose Bank Community in North Leeward a very cultural community, however, I realized that we have a [inaudible] at Rose Bank being used mostly at funerals and other little activities in the community. I want to suggest, Mr. Speaker, that Rose Bank Community and Rose Hall as well be made Cultural Villages in North Leeward. Because if we in North Leeward have so much to offer when it comes to the tourism on mainland St Vincent we could utilize the talent of young people and the community of Rose Hall and Rose Bank in this regard. When the Tour Bus going to Trinity Falls, they can make a stop in Rose Bank and enjoy some local culture and I believe it would bring into play craft and so, because the people of Rose Bank very

good boat builders and makers of jewellery, and they would get a little living from that: that is something we can explore, Mr. Minister of Tourism. [Interjection]

Mr. Speaker, the New Democratic Party left office in 2001, when the Party left office in the town of Chateaubelair was a beautifully constructed fisheries complex, sad to say Mr. Speaker, it is there still, I was hoping today, when the Minister respond about fisheries to address this house that something could have been said giving directions as to what the Ministry intends to do with that fishery complex. During the setting up of that complex in Chateaubelair a gas component was provided over 500 gallon of gas is still there, and it was intended to help the fishermen start them off , but up to now it is still there as I said. I wonder if it is good still. Mr. Speaker, in Richmond the Richmond Beach is fast becoming no more, it is a big problem down there with the mining of sand and gravel, especially with the use of excavators. Excavators doing excavating for government projects in North Leeward and destroying the beach in the process. Richmond Beach in the past used to be a place a lot of people go to on a holiday, the only reason you go there now is if you want to pick up big stone, because of the usage of heavy machinery to excavate the sand. A part of the road has to be redirected because the sea took it back. Mr. Speaker, it is important that we address these issues, very important.

Feeder roads in Rose Hall, a place like Rose Hall in North Leeward, a beacon of ULP in North Leeward, go and see the Feeder Roads in Rose Hall; it is a shame and embarrassment. Palmyra that was supposed to be the continuation of the Cross-Country Road and if something is not done, Palmyra which is a bypass road between Troumaca and Rose Hall, we will lose that road because of erosion and what is happening there now. We must take these things into consideration, Mr. Speaker, because as I said if we act too late, as they said, too late shall be your cry. Mr. Speaker, as I said ... How much time I have left Sir?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Four minutes.

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, when the then Minister of Tourism was a Senator, I believe he spearheaded or was involved in a programme to get the youngster to get the young men out of the hills [Interjection] yes, thank you very much. And I do not know how well that programme went, but; however, I want to make an appeal again that something must be done to prevent our young men from going into the hills, because Mr. Speaker, it will not end good as we have seen experience of that. Mr. Speaker, I was rather surprised and shocked Mr. Speaker, that during the election campaign I heard comments like “all you have to do keep the strangers out of the hills and things will be all right”. What kind of message is that sending to people? That was the message I heard in North Leeward and then after the election results came in you hear things like I win because of the influence of drugs. My campaign, Mr. Speaker, has always been one where I was hoping to put measures in place to prevent people from going into the hills. You think they love to go into the hills where they have to be just cover with a little piece of Tarpaulin experiencing all kinds of weather in your opinion just to let ends meet, they do not want that, they want something better. So when we go and tell them things like “just keep the foreigners out and everything will be all right” Sometimes, I ask what kind of message we are sending. And then

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Senator Browne.

HONOURABLE DAVID BROWNE: I stand on point of order 35 (b)

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thirty five (b)

HONOURABLE DAVID BROWNE: Because I find the point the Honourable Member is making about the alternative livelihood programme about the Alternative Livelihood Programme, the Programme is a continuing programme, if you check in your Estimates there is \$500,000 allocated for that particular programme. Some funds were spent last year on that particular programme and the Venezuelan Government is continuing the Programme with St Vincent and the Grenadines and I am asking the Honourable Member to look clearly in his Estimates under the Agricultural Section and he will find that information. [Knocking on the desk]

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: Well, well, thank you very much my Honourable colleague for that information; that is the point I was making, Mr. Speaker, and thank you very much for making the fact known. However, Mr. Speaker, therefore, when the comment was made at the public meeting, it was meant to deceive because if we have money set aside for that purpose then why are we telling young people, young men in Rose Bank that they must keep the foreigners out and things will be all right. Why are we doing that?

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Mr. Speaker, I rise on 35 (a).

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thirty five (a).

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Yes Mr. Speaker. [Interjections] Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for North Leeward is continuously saying in this House that we said so in our political campaign. I deny that statement, Mr. Speaker, that we never made that statement in our political campaign in North Leeward. Not in the words used by the Honourable Member for North Leeward, we never said anything along those lines, so I am denying it and he is stating it so let him

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: So, let him bring the proof that we made such a statement. We never made that statement in North Leeward, Mr. Speaker, not in our political campaign; no where have we ever done it.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: That was not what was said.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Not under Vincy Pac, nothing, so get your facts right and quote properly and say what we are saying. Do not use this House to peddle a certain type of message. We have to have facts in this House when we are presenting our cases.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Well, I did indicate earlier because we have to be careful with what we say because you will be asked maybe, I can very ask you to prove it, I am not going to do that now. I can very well ask you to prove the statement if you are making these wide sweeping statements I may very well ask you to

prove it now or sometime in the future but I would not bother with that because you have forty five seconds to finish your address. [Interjections]

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: Thank you very much and Mr. Speaker, I will save you the trouble, I will volunteer the tape to you tomorrow.

HONBOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. [Interjection]

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: Once I get it organized, I will volunteer that tape. Mr. Speaker

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Just a minute. Just a minute please. (Sorry) Member for Central Kingstown, you very often make some statements in this House that could be very much annoying and sometimes could be out of order. What do you mean, I have just made a ruling on a matter, and what do you mean about nonsense or taking this House for a joke or something like that? What do you mean by that? What do you mean by that?

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: I do not know what statement you are accusing me of.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You just made a statement when I told the gentleman when I told the gentleman he has 45 seconds.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: I did not address you.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No, but you were looking in my direction and you made the statement.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Whole morning you say I am looking at you.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: [Laughs]

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Whole morning you say I am looking at you.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, conclude.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Why you are watching me?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I do not know.

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: Mr. Speaker, the point I was making Mr. Speaker is that we need to put ... if a programme is in place to get our young people out of the hills, I applaud it and that programme must be seriously implemented at the quickest time possible because, Mr. Speaker, if that is not done we will continue ...

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: I am seeking your permission to go Mr. Speaker. [Laughter] May I?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You can leave your seat but with decorum.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Right.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Have a good night, Mr. Speaker. [Laughter]

HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR: Safe journey home. [Interjection]

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: You hear that, Mr. Speaker, safe riddance? [Laughter] You heard that?

HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR: One of your books falling.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: [Laughingly] oh you only hear some things, Mr. Speaker, I gone home. [Laughter] [Interjection] No! No! Don't!

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: All right let us continue.

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: Mr. Speaker, this part of my presentation is [inaudible] a lot of interest.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Is what?

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: Arousing a lot of interest.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay! Okay!

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: Mr. Speaker

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Conclude for me please.

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: Yes. I am very serious about this matter, Mr. Speaker, because we heard that when the Vincy Pac operation was in progress, the reason why I am making this statement, I heard

statement to the effect and I want to quote the Prime Minister and I could get the evidence for you tomorrow, Mr. Speaker, if you so desire. He said and I quote:-

“For all their bravado when they heard that Vincy Pac was on the ground, when you were rolling why didn’t they stay up there in the ... if they think they bad? They left and they run for cover.”

This was said at the conclusion of Vincy Pac.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: All right.

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: Mr. Speaker. I am saying to prevent these kinds of statements making reference to our young men who end up in the hills regardless of whatever reason. The programme that Senator Browne spoke about let us hope that this programme goes a long way in dealing with this issue, Mr. Speaker. [Interjection] Mr. Speaker, [Knocking of the desk with the Gavel] I want to say to you, please give me a few seconds to thank the people of North Leeward for having me here and in spite of all the talk of all what was said my victory at the poll was even belittled by one hundred votes, but Patel Mathews, I am here today representing the people of North Leeward. I come from a very poor family and I am proud to make it this far. I am proud of that and I guess other Members here are proud too but we as a people if we want to make a positive contribution to help this country then according to the Minister of National Reconciliation we have to do it together, we have to accept ideas from each side. We must do it because in order for St Vincent and the Grenadines to be a better place we have to start and we have to do so at the Parliament. Thank you very much Mr. Speaker, much obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member for West St George, I recognised you, but I will take you tomorrow. [Laughs] Honourable Deputy Prime Minister

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: I move that this Honourable House stands suspended until 9:00 o’clock tomorrow.

**Question put and agreed to
House suspended at 8:32 p.m.
Until January 27: at 9:00 a.m.**