

No. 6

Thursday

First Session

29th September, 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 SIXTH 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.

TWELFTH SITTING

29TH SEPTEMBER 2011

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

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

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER IN THE CHAIR

Honourable Hendrick Alexander

Present

MEMBERS OF CABINET

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

Member for North Central Windward

Attorney General
Honourable Judith Jones-Morgan

Minister of Education/ Deputy
Prime Minister
Honourable Girlyn Miguel

Member for Marriaqua

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

Member for East St. George

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

Member for North Windward

Minister of Tourism and Industry
Honourable Saboto Caesar

Member for South Central Windward

Minister of Health, Wellness and
The Environment
Honourable Cecil McKie

Member for West St. George

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

Member for Central Leeward

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

Member for South Windward

Minister of 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 St. Claire Leacock

Member for Central Kingstown

Honourable Daniel Cummings

Member for West Kingstown

Honourable Roland Matthews

Member for North Leeward

Honourable Nigel Stephenson

Member for South Leeward

Honourable Vynnette Frederick

Opposition Senator

Honourable Anesia Baptiste

Opposition Senator

ABSENT

Honourable Terrance Ollivierre

Member for Southern Grenadines

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 29 SEPTEMBER, 2011

PRAYERS

Honourable Speaker of the House, Mr. Hendrick Alexander reads the prayer of the House.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I wish before we embark fully on our proceeding today to welcome to this Honourable House in the Gallery students from the Intermediate High School, and they are being accompanied by their teachers Mr. Romano Richards I think, and Nicole Sandy. I want to welcome you to the House this morning [applause] and I hope that you enjoy and I think I have seen some other distinguished person sitting in the Gallery there and we want to welcome you also to the House this morning.

OBITUARIES

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: While we proceed with our obituaries and congratulatory remarks although some persons or person may have asked to give a little leeway we want us to hold this part of these obituaries and congratulatory remarks rather tight because from our agenda before us we have a very long programme and we would want to see how far we can get into it. So, let us keep it a little bit tight as we proceed. Okay, and thank you, Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I shall try to be an example following your injunction. Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the passing of Martin De Freitas an exceptional father and husband, a farmer who came out of Park Hill and was living at Belle Vue in his last years. I simply want to acknowledge the immense contribution of this very quiet man and to say that he has left a lasting impression on all of us who have known him, certainly myself. Fortunately, I did not get to go to his funeral because as I was going an important matter arose so the government was represented by the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister Stephenson, and of course they are friends of the family. He has an extensive family; all the De Freitases are really related and are related to the Gonsalves. At this time of the family's bereavement I want to wish them well and remember him. He was a good man a noble human being; I am obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member for Central Kingstown.

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

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Check the microphone, I do not think we are getting much sound.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: It is okay now. Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I just join with the Honourable Prime Minister in his condolences to his family member Martin De Freitas. I had the privilege to have attended that funeral because one of his nephews Dougie De Freitas is my neighbour and I journeyed all the way out there to identify. In the interest of brevity, I just want to make an observation.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just a minute, just a minute. [Addressing the technician]; is there a sort of re-echo on the system? It is not? It sounds so to me. Check it for me please it sounds as if there is some re-echoing going on the system. Okay? Alright, Honourable Member.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: I was just making the , Honourable Speaker, that there was a declaration that was made in the course of the funeral proceeding that I took note of and I say so respectfully is that Martin De Freitas represented the end ... he was the last of the fourth generation for that family. It is just so interesting that some of our people are able to follow their generation as tightly as they are, and I think it is to the advantage of family unity that is so strong among many members of that Portuguese community and I salute them.

Mr. Speaker, I want to just comment briefly on the passing of one Eddy Medford who passed on a few weeks ago, Medford the young cyclist, former volleyballer and Evangelist with the Seventh Day Adventist Church who had this massive turnout; his wife works at NIS it is one of the bigger funerals you would have seen at Kingstown and the tributes expressed there are a testimony to the life and quality of service that he gave to St Vincent and the Grenadines.

I spend a little more time, Mr. Speaker, on the passing of one Brassy Nero of Sharpes and you would permit me to say, Mr. Speaker, it has been about six or seven weeks between the last parliament and this one and in fact it is almost historic that at least three, four or five of our constituencies have been affected by deaths related to violence; perhaps in some cases criminality in this country and it brings home to us the urgency to stem that tide and that flow, and return to the good spiritual redemption values that we have espoused on this side. Mr. Speaker, I have in St Vincent and the Grenadines experienced a lot of tragedies, misfortunes, accidents, incidents, violence, children roasting up in fire, electrocution of young ones in Union Island, shootings and other bizarre experiences, Mr. Speaker, but none ever tore me up like the passing of that gentleman Brassy Nero. It is a sight and a picture when you saw him in that cesspit that no one would want to remember ever. And as I said at the funeral ceremony he certainly did not deserve that kind of death. Clearly, I know at the end of the day Mr. Speaker, terrible as that may have been the family might have felt some sort of reprieve that at least they had some sort of closure, in that there was a body to identify with. But Mr. Speaker, it really is another clarion call for us in the constituency that are represented to begin with, Mr. Speaker, and the wider St Vincent and the Grenadines for us to work much harder on being our brother's keeper to be able to count ten and to really stem this general wave of violence that is taking over our society.

And I just want today, Mr. Speaker, in extending my own condolence to that family that his passing may have some benefits in continuing to bring the society together. Indeed while it was a tragic occasion, it was also one of the finer moments for many of residents of the Sharpe's community; those who were able to come with their implements and to lend assistance to the police. And may I be permitted to say while I am on that, Mr. Speaker,

Sergeant Valentine, and Corporal James very fine police constables; and I think that they did very great justice to the police force on that occasion.

Later today, Mr. Speaker, in my question period I will return to an aspect of that funeral and that is why I asked for your forbearance with this presentation, Mr. Speaker, because there is an aspect of the incident that there is ... I am very concerned about it. It could easily have been a rescue exercise and the difficulties experienced in retrieving the body of a deceased, had it been a rescue exercise we perhaps could have had a worse loss of lives and it tells us we have to do something more with respect to our search and rescue abilities. But obituary is not quite the time for that and I thank you and crave your indulgence. Much obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Senator Charles.

HONOURABLE ELVIS CHARLES: Mr. Speaker, I also want to acknowledge the passing of one Miss Marie Gordon of Trigger Ridge Redemption Sharpes.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Miss?

HONOURABLE ELVIS CHARLES: Marie Gordon.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Marie Gordon, okay, go ahead.

HONOURABLE ELVIS CHARLES: Miss Marie as she was fondly called was a warm individual who always seemed to light you up with her smile. I got to know her better in 2010 during the campaign when she took me as her son and gave me much advice. I can still hear her voice saying “I love you but regardless of who the Party brings I would have voted for that person anyway. I know her sisters very well and I remember when I was called and told that she had passed I really expressed surprise because I saw her in her vibrant mood bouncing and bubbly just a few weeks before and I really could not come to grips that she had passed. Miss Marie a wonderful woman and may her soul rest in peace.

I also want to acknowledge the passing of one of my neighbours and stalwart Mr. Carlton Edwards fondly called Bo-Bo or Uncle Bo-Bo; he always boasted of being friends with the Prime Minister. Bo-Bo also took me in as one of his own when I constructed my home about 50 meters from his dwelling house. I really want to wish the family well during this time and I know there are younger ones who will miss their grandfather and I just want to say to them that God is in control. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of the Opposition; I will take you after Honourable Senator Francis.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I just want to recognize as did Senator Leacock, I am sorry it is not Senator, Representative Leacock [Laughter] [Interjection] [Laughter]. Mr. Speaker, I am dealing with obituaries.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: [Laughingly] yes, go ahead, please.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: I want to recognize the passing of Mr. Medford who was very well known in St Vincent and sporting circles and perhaps less well known as a, I do not know the correct terminology but a lay preacher in the Seventh Day Adventist Church; who was married to Betty who is the Secretary to the Chairman of NIS. From the attendance of his funeral and the numerous tributes that were paid to him it is clear that he has made and left his mark on St Vincent and the Grenadines. I just want to say to his family especially his wife our sincerest condolences.

I also want to recognize the passing of Marva better known as Hazel Ann of the Postal Services. She is one of those persons who was murdered in Campden Park a couple of weeks ago. She too had a very large turnout at Sion Hill last Sunday evening again with very numerous tributes. For a lady who displayed to my mind for sure, the greatest concern for her children and grandchildren despite her relatively [inaudible] status in the Postal Services. I spoke to her about three days before she died and she had intimated to me that she had finally been able to purchase a small property in Town Hill and she was thinking about moving in and fix it up as she went along but that was not to be, her life was cut short. I simply want to say to her family that we indeed offer our deepest condolences. Much obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Senator Francis, Minister of Transport and Works.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Mr. Speaker, I want to acknowledge the passing of Mr. Claude Theobalds, Claude Theobalds a very tall man in height was also very tall in his profession. One of the leading radio personalities of yesteryear; he came from St Lucia, he and his wife and made St Vincent their home. He started in the days of WIBS (Windward Islands Broadcasting Services) and made a significant contribution to the development of Radio 705; NBC as we know it today; retired there as General Manager and was responsible for a lot of the today top professionals in the field of journalism. I think they all regard him as their father in journalism, particularly radio. Radio 705; NBC honoured him and his wife some time ago and he lived a very long and healthy life and I really want to extend condolences to their children Ricky, Tony and Charmaine. Charmaine my sister-in-law: my brother was married to her; Tony Theobalds who is our Cultural Officer, Ministry of Culture; and Ricardo who is a dive specialist and he resides in St Lucia. So, from my family, the Party: the Unity Labour Party and the Government of St Vincent and the Grenadines we extend condolences to the children of Claude Theobalds and we cherish would continue long to remember his contribution to radio development in St Vincent and the Grenadines. Thank you.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Mr. Speaker ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just sit for a minute. I remember at the last meeting of the House I asked if anybody wants to speak on the Obituaries or congratulatory remarks please notify me early. This was done by couple of the Members of this Honourable House and I am saying to you now, again I am saying that if you want to speak on this part of the agenda please notify me so, that at least I can have it recorded; okay, thank you very much.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: May I?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Go ahead.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker and I apologise indeed for not notifying you that I would have liked to. But I want to take the opportunity though, Mr. Speaker, to just express my sincerest condolences to the Jack family of Campden Park and James. I say that Mr. Speaker, because of the brutal slaying of an individual a young lady that I knew from my childhood Ingrid Jack and Marva James, one of her neighbours one that I actually came to know when I taught her son in school. I would just say Mr. Speaker that Ingrid Jack was one of the more exemplary persons in Campden Park and I know her passing would leave a gaping hole in the heart and the lives of the people of Campden Park, particularly the area that we call Bolome. So, too Mr. Speaker, I want to express my condolences to Sharon and the rest of the James family on the passing of their mother Marva.

You know Mr. Speaker, I recognized Marva some years ago when I taught at the school Bethel High School and when you are a teacher you recognize two categories of people, those who are prone to make trouble and those who are on the quiet side. And I recognized that there was a young man there called Romano and I wanted to know why the guy was so quiet and I enquired of the parents and so on because I expected that the parent would have had something to do with his upbringing. I subsequently recognized that his mother name was Marva whom I have grown to have a very good relationship with and her passing at the hands of allegedly of someone that we affectionately call chocolate has really left a bitter taste in the mouth of all the people of Campden Park.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I am going to leave on this note, I just want to take the opportunity to express condolences on behalf of the NDP family to former parliamentarian Allan Cruickshank and his family on the passing of his mother. At the moment, I do not have all the details or the names and so on, but I just want to express our deepest sympathy to you Allan and your family, I know you are listening. These are trying times but I just want to leave you by saying that there is a God who is acquainted with our sorrow, and a God who is acquainted with grief, so whatever you are going through place everything in the hands of the man who holds tomorrow. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: Mr. Speaker, if I might ask for your indulgence, the fact I came a bit late, and it is important for me with your permission, Sir, to pay respect to the late Marion John of Fitz Hughes an elderly woman who passed away in tragic circumstances on Saturday, in fact Sunday morning. I want to say that this woman Miss. John, in Fitz Hughes she was a very quiet old lady going around. She was very friendly to the children and everyone in Fitz Hughes was in shock on Sunday morning when her nude body was discovered. From the bottom of my heart I want to say to the family of Miss John, hearty condolences. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

CONGRATULATORY REMARKS

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for South Windward.

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to congratulate the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Football team in defeating Grenada two goals to one on Sunday 18 September, 2011 a match played at the Arnos Vale playing field. [Applause] Mr. Speaker, despite that win, I felt that we could have won by a larger margin having listened to the match because I did not get to go myself; I had a funeral to attend to and listening to the first ten minutes of the game we thrown away about four goals and Mr. Speaker, if we had only converted those chances into goals the results would have been overwhelming. Anyway, I want to congratulate the team and encourage them to continue to do their best. The next match is on Friday 7 October. [Interjection]

I also want to congratulate the new executives of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Football Federation. I want to congratulate Mr. Venold Coombs, the new President; the first Vice President, Mr. Lloyd Small; second Vice President, Marvin Fraser; and the third Vice President, Paul Boucher; and the two community members Dominic Stowe and Guy Lowe. Mr. Speaker, I want to as the Minister of Sports to wish the new executives all the very best, as they seek to take football in St Vincent and the Grenadines to a higher level. Much obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for West St George.

HONOURABLE CECIL MC KIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to offer congratulations to Christina Emeline Jack of Belmont in the constituency of West St George. Christina was born on the 29 September, 1911 and that makes her 100 years old today [applause] indeed the family they put on a very important celebration for her today, and that activity will be attended by two of her brothers and her sister. In fact, they have also attained the ages of 92, 90 and 87. So, it means that there is longevity in that family.

It has been reported that Christina worked very hard in her years as a road worker and also as a farmer and she has attributed her long years on earth to her physical activity, healthy diet and trust in God. And in fact that is a good platform on which I can build the Wellness Revolution here in St Vincent and the Grenadines. To the family and to mommy Christina Emeline, I offer her congratulations and may she live many, many more years of healthy living on earth. Thank you.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, Honourable Member for Central Kingstown.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, there is probably something in that water in the St Georges; East and West and you smile on that Mr. Speaker [interjections] [laughs] you smile on that. But I want to join with the Honourable Minister to congratulate our most recent centenarian. Of course, Dorsetshire Hill is just the close neighbour of the St Georges and he might have been in St Georges before but we never know; we could negotiate that.

Mr. Speaker, I also join with the Honourable Minister of Sports in congratulating Vincy Heat in the Football Federation; the recent win St Vincent versus Grenada and hope that they can continue this winning streak when they come up against the other teams in this round of competition. As you know, Mr. Speaker, we are some 158

in the world, a significant decline from 73 where I left it; and it is going to be something like a \$5 million climb to get back to where I left it a mere four years ago. Be that as it may, Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate the current executives Venold Coombs, Small, Boucher and company and I wish them well. Football obviously is the hottest thing in elections after the national elections and sometimes probably the more heated. [Interjections] But it is important Mr. Speaker, [interjections] [striking of gavel] [interjections] that the sports that are down, you know they are going through some trying times now but I think there is enough experience there; I have worked with all those gentlemen before: Mr. Small in the 70's and 80's and Mr. Coombs in the same period as well. In fact, he succeeded me in the 80's to be President, so there is a little bit of history there and Mr. Boucher in the most recent executive.

I think we have to take very seriously, Mr. Speaker, the sport and I am inviting the Honourable Minister of Sports to show a very deep interest because they still have some work to do. That last \$40,000 issue which impact not just the Federation but the name of St Vincent and the Grenadines is one in which we have to meticulously cut through and I hope that in the shortest and quickest possible time we can take our name out of nigger mouth as we say in St Vincent and the Grenadines, and be able to concentrate on the development of sports.

I am very hearty to hear the Prime Minister himself indicate in his Press Conference this week that he has an open door policy to the sport; and that he would welcome them with open arms to give them the assistance. This quite clearly is consistent with the position of we here in the New Democratic Party; steeped in sports and development of culture. I close in saying, Mr. Speaker, what we really have in football in St Vincent and the Grenadines is a sport that can become a veritable industry for us not far from what is happening in the African community and with the appropriate investment and management I believe many of our young talented footballers may be able to eat a bread; as the young men on the blocks will say, if this book sports is properly managed.

Much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Northern Grenadines.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Thank you, Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer my congratulations to several organisations, first the Bequia Cricket Association for the successful conclusion of the Bequia Cricket Association 20/20 tournament earlier in August: on August 7, I was not here for the tournament otherwise I would have congratulated them then. It was a well-organized tournament and I want to congratulate the winners, the Knights Trading Aussies who played against Admiralty Transport Youth Combine in the final and prevailed. I wish also to congratulate the executives of that committee of the Association for a well-run competition and for taking the mantle this year to take the organizational cricket in Bequia to a higher level. I wish them all the best in the upcoming season.

Mr. Speaker, I also wish to congratulate the Bequia Basketball Association who also concluded a successful and well run competition this year the thirteenth year of the Bequia Basketball Association Annual Tournament. And this was completed about a month ago and I just wish to acknowledge the eventual winners of the competition. In the under sixteen division to congratulate Titans who defeated the Rockets in the finals, this is

in the under sixteen division and wish them well next year and in the second division, the Young Blazers defeated the Wizards and I wish to congratulate them as well for their effort and for all those who supported them, their coaches and their fans.

In the first division in a very keenly contested three match finals between Bequia Tech, Rising Stars and Duke; Duke were the champions last year, the Bequia Tech Rising Stars came from behind to win that competition and I wish to congratulate them their coaches and their supporters and also Duke for having a very successful and exciting and competition this year. Bequia Basketball Association is a model for organisation and progress in sport and I wish to encourage them and the community to continue to support them. Mr. Speaker, the community in Bequia they support sports and I want to encourage them to continue to do so but a little help would also be a good thing from those who are able to help to improve the facilities to sponsor teams, to sponsor players to ensure that they are able to take to the field and to do their best for themselves, for their teams and for their communities.

And finally, Mr. Speaker, I wish also to congratulate the new executives of the SVG Football Federation, Mr. Coombs and his executives. I know they will have a tough job ahead of them but I wish them all the best and hopefully will have continued growth and progress or I should say renewed growth and progress in the St Vincent Football. Finally, Mr. Speaker, I want to also congratulate the Bequia Football Association for the launching of their new tournament this year and the executives did a wonderful job last year in putting on the tournament and ensuring that it was completed, in enforcing the rules and getting the respect of the players, the teams and the fans. I am hoping Mr. Speaker that this year they will have even greater success in that regard and that the competition will be a tribute to true sportsmanship in the community, for the organizers, the fans and the supporters who go out and watch the games every day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: That brings us to the end of congratulatory remarks.

MINUTES

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move the confirmation of the Minutes of the Sitting of this Honourable House held on Thursday August 11, 2011.

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Mr. Speaker, I have a correction.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: At the top of page 4, second line, they have the Prime Minister as 'Minister of Information and Lands'.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Just a minute.

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Sorry.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Before you do the amendments the Minutes could we have a second to the Motion.

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Oh before we ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: For the confirmation: a second.

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: I second the Motion.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay, thank you; go ahead now.

CORRECTIONS OF MINUTES

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Yes, on page 4 at the top where the first question reads: Honourable Prime Minister, they have the Honourable Prime Minister as responsible for “Information and Lands” and those are with two other Ministries and Ministers. And also on the following page, page 5 in the second question there from the Honourable Arnhim Eustace the same thing.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay, all right. Honourable Member for West Kingstown.

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, on page 9 towards the bottom of that page it says “Honourable Daniel Cummings”, and then it says “Inaudible”. Mr. Speaker, I really do not find this to be logical, if what I have purported to have said was not heard, how was it known that I said anything. Under the circumstances I would humbly request that that section be deleted.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: The question is that you might have spoken on that ...

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: Mr. Speaker...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Just a minute.

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: Yes.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: The question is you might have spoken and probably what you said was not very well heard. So, what the Minutes are just saying is that you probably spoke then, but they did not get what you were saying. It is not the first time this is being recorded in the Minutes, so it is not a question of deleting it, I mean, what you can correct it by saying maybe is if you can remember what you said.

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: Well, Mr. Speaker, I really do not understand what the note in the Minutes is purporting to do. If the Minutes are to reflect that I said something it ought to be so. I cannot remember commenting to begin with but I am saying that for proper minuting if you do not have a record of what was said why make notes that something was said? And I am saying for clarity and for proper minuting

that section should be deleted. And it occurs on other occasions in the Minutes and it is proper that it should not be there. I simply request it.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay, further amendments, Honourable Member for Central Kingstown. Even before you speak, let me, from time to time the Stenographers they complain that they very often do not hear what the speaker is saying; they probably do not speak plainly or for some reason or the other and; therefore, maybe, I am appealing to Honourable Members that maybe you can make as clearly and audibly your statements, so that we can have them properly recorded. Because there are times when they do call me to ask me, you know, what do I understand is being said here? Sometimes I am able to assist them sometimes I cannot because I myself have difficulty in understanding what was said. So, maybe if we could be as clearly and audibly as we can then that would help the situation.

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: Mr. Speaker, that is the very point I wanted to make it is not being frivolous and perhaps the staff could even call the Members to find out if they could explain; but the point is the Minutes ought to reflect what is going on.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay, we have taken that point quite clearly. Honourable Member for Central Kingstown

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, thank you; and let me also acknowledge your indulgence as I spoke to you ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Prior to the session. Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to raise with respect to our Minutes the need if I may argue it for us to see how in future we can improve the quality of work we do here in the parliament and this may have to come by way of us meeting as a body to see how we can revise our rules and regulations that guide our proceedings in the House which we have been addressing in the past, unfortunately. And I raise this in the sense that when one goes through the Minutes in the normal course of other business organisations there is a standard matters arising of minutes which attempts to link one session of discussion to another, we do not have that in our parliament and realistically, Mr. Speaker, outside of the budgetary exercise and perhaps the question time in the parliament it is the only opportunity that those of us in the Opposition have a peep into executive functions so that we may have a question answered in the parliament and there is no provision for a follow through of the proposed action.

And I have that experience here where some actions have been proposed in the question I have asked and unless it can come through some subsequent budget one never knows what is the state of affairs, and I wonder whether we would not want to put that on a discussion paper in a subsequent session of our parliament for improving parliamentary procedures. I simply raise that in that context, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, if I may indicate; if I may be permitted by you in respect of what my Honourable friend just said, Mr. Speaker, in my years here in this parliament over seventeen years we have had several attempts of having the local Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, the local branch meet to discuss matters. I know that since we have been speaking in 2001 you have tried on several occasions and we have not had the cooperation by way of attendance as I recalled it of Honourable Members on the other side. When we were in opposition we attended two meetings called by a former Speaker local parliamentary branch or the branch of the Parliamentary Association and the then government did not attend; that was when Mr. Monty Maule was Speaker.

If we are having a Pauline conversion, I am very grateful, because there are many things for us if the other side is having a Pauline conversion I am very, very grateful for that. But I would say that I do not agree about ... but that is for further discussion; as to a section to be written in for matters arising from the minutes; because you would not get the work of parliament done. Parliament is a different institution and we look at it comparatively from a board meeting or that of a football association. For example a NGO Organisation; on all matters however, I never closed my mind, but I make that statement with regards my initial impression knowing the history of parliaments comparatively and how they operate in the contemporary sense.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Prime Minister, Honourable Member for Central Kingstown for that sort of welcome intervention in our confirmation of the minute's agenda. I was about to say just before the Prime Minister spoke that I mean what the Honourable Member for Central Kingstown says is something for which I have been advocating since I became Speaker for this Honourable House and at least what he has done here today it least shows a little bit of light at the end of the tunnel and I hope that we are going to get this committee meet and we can discuss these various issues that confront us from time to time. Of course, we would look at the merits and demerits of these issues and we can see how well they can fit in with our parliamentary agenda. But we have to look at it; we have to see how it works and how it would not hinder the programme of our parliament as the Honourable Prime Minister says: "getting work done". But I welcome the thought that at least we can meet and have these matters discussed. Thank you very much.

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

**Question put and agreed to
Minutes confirmed with amendments**

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members at the last meeting of this Honourable House on the 11 August, I indicated to this Honourable House that I would have had a legal opinion or the executive summary on the election of the Speaker of the House of Assembly of St Vincent and the Grenadines, and re: the voting by the Attorney General. I said that although I had that summary, I was awaiting the full text of the matter and therefore I would deal with it at this meeting as promised. I have received that full opinion but in the

interest of time I am going to read the executive summary, and I have here copy of the full summary, full opinion which I would give to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition so you can see what it is all about.

I know that this is a matter that has been asked for, and sometimes it created a little bit of hiccup in our parliament but I remember one President of the Jaycees albeit a Barbadian St Vincent Jaycees always said that he would not be rushed into doing the business of that organisation and therefore I thought that this was a very important enough matter for me to seek what I may consider the best opinion on it. And therefore, I am in possession of that legal opinion and I am going to read as I said the executive summary of that opinion.

“On December 29, 2010 at a meeting of the House of Assembly of the parliament of St Vincent and the Grenadines, there was an election of the Speaker, of the House. The Honourable Attorney General a public officer an Attorney General and as such a Member of that House voted at that election. The question has arisen whether the Attorney General being a public officer was entitled to vote in that election, Executive Summary 4. Any litigation to question the voting by the Attorney in the election of the Speaker, on 29 December, 2010 has steep hurdles to surmount four in particular, one is this: the Attorney General is a Member of the House by the Constitution of St Vincent and the Grenadines Schedule (1) of the St Vincent Constitutional Order 1979, section 24 (3).

You would notice when you get the full summary there are some paragraphs listed there which are really paragraphs in the executive summary which I would not read at this point.

Clear and explicit provision is needed to derogate from the right of the Attorney General as a Member of the House to vote in the House. There is no such provision neither in section 41:3 but 41:13 nor otherwise, none to compare with section 36:3 of the Constitution of Antigua and Barbuda. Another is that even the participation in proceedings of the House by persons who is not at all a member of the House a non-member does not invalidate those proceedings. Section 45:2 of the Constitution is straight forward on this and the Attorney General is unquestionably a member on section 24:3. So even if the Attorney General were not entitled to vote an assumption not accepted here her voting would not have invalidated the election.

Another is this: even leaving aside the vote of the Attorney General Mr. Hendrick Alexander was elected Speaker on a clear and comfortable majority of members of the House present and voting. Of the twenty one members who were present and voting not counting the Attorney General, twelve Members voted in favour of Mr. Alexander being Speaker. This is an impregnable vote for Mr. Alexander. Further, the only proposal for election of a person as Speaker, which was validly before the House for voting on was that Mr. Hendrick Alexander be elected this was proposed and seconded as required by Standing Order No. 4:2 of the Standing Orders of the House; the nominations that Mr. Macauley Peters be elected Speaker, was proposed but not seconded and so was not

properly before the House for voting on. This means that in law Mr. Alexander was elected unopposed.

Finally the Attorney General is not caught by section 42 of the Constitution, she was entitled to vote. There was therefore, no question of knowing or having reasonable grounds for knowing that she was not entitled to vote”.

And this is the executive summary that I am giving you and as I said I am going to ask the Sergeant at Arms if he would take this to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition at this time which he could read and share the full summary. [Interjection] Oh! The opinion was done by ... [sorry I should have given that before] Dr. Francis Alexis Q.C. of Grenada, [thank you] known to be a constitutional expert. Thank you very much Madam. Yes.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: We will take a look at the document and we will comment in due course.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay, thank you. That is it.

STATEMENT BY MINISTERS

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to condemn the level of violence and crime meted out to the women of our state. Mr. Speaker, as a woman whose life is guided by Christian principles, I am rankled by reports on the heinous crimes committed here in St Vincent and the Grenadines, I shudder at the callous manner in which individuals inflict fatal wounds on their fellow men. I am particularly distressed when I read about the brutal crimes committed against females. Quite apart from rape because of the number of women who suffer crimes of violence including murder and there frequency one cannot but think without being sexist that women are being singled out. From the number of reported cases of violence against women one must conclude that they are at an unacceptable level. This government condemns all violent behaviour and stands with the police with their fight against violence and crime.

In May 1995, St Vincent and the Grenadines ratified the Convention of Belém Do Pará the Inter American Convention for Prevention Punishment and Eradication of Violence against Women. This Convention recognizes that the elimination of violence against women is essential to their overall development and seeks deliberately to address violence against women in all its manifestations. While I was the Minister responsible for Gender Affairs, I took this issue seriously and was St Vincent and the Grenadines champion for violence against women during my short stint as second Vice President to the Inter American Commission on women, as well as, at many legal and local fora. I am troubled by the lawlessness that pervades every society. Today I rise as a champion to help build the fight against all forms of violence against women and specifically the violent killing of women.

I bring to attention the violent death of Stephanie Daniels of Greiggs in the month of August, 2011 Ingrid Jack and Marva James of Campden Park in mid September and most recently, Miss Marion John of Fitz Hughes who

seemed to have been raped and murdered by some unknown person. I take this opportunity to convey publicly my sympathy to their respective families.

Mr. Speaker, it has to be accepted from the evidence that there is an ever present threat to physical harm especially to women which must be lessened. This issue can no longer be considered as a matter of growing concern. It is a concern that has reached to a point where the society as a whole should stand up in the fight against it. In this regard the religious, non-governmental bodies and the public at large must stand with the government to reject violence against women and recognize them as mothers and sisters who must receive special attention. Love shown to our women must not be misdirected or misapplied. Our society today tends to value things more than persons. I put a simple question to us how are we handling our love? Do we keep it locked up inside? Do we extend it only to friends and to others who can return the favour? The love we share must not be devoid of discipline, it must not be permissive love where we settle for anything. Mr. Speaker, I hasten to state that true love considers the well being of our fellow men to whom it is directed. As Vincentians, whose Constitution is built on belief and the supremacy of God, the freedom and the dignity of man, I remind us that God's divine love awakens the power of love in our hearts and with it the wisdom to use it rightly.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister responsible with responsibility for Education I continue to urge all of us as stakeholders in our various capacities, as parents, principals, teachers, students and others to continually teach and reinforce this message of love and mutual respect for our fellow men. We are our brothers' keeper, our responsibility is a great one and we believe that education lights life's way. Mr. Speaker, it is well known that competency in academic and of skilled areas alone does not qualify a person as a productive well-adjusted individual. Attitude and good interpersonal skills are of huge importance in being a well-adjusted individual. These are the traits which cost nothing to instil and buttressed in any person as he progresses from childhood to adulthood. We all must play our part in ensuring that all Vincentians are taught these basic concepts of love and respect for all, respect for God, respect for neighbour and respect for self. Our women are the first teachers in any human life that enters the world; surely Mr. Speaker, a grave injustice is being meted out to them. I am much obliged. [Applause]

HONOURABLE MR SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, there are two statements I would wish to make today, one in relation to the death penalty which is a matter which is being discussed very much up and down this country currently and secondly on the British American Insurance Company and CLICO issues.

Mr. Speaker, this government unequivocally supports the death penalty for murder. The law as I would point out and explain is formally on the books but the court of laws; the High Court and the Court of Appeal and the Privy Council, they interpret the constitution, they interpret the law they interpret the statutes and between 1993 and now it is our opinion that the law courts have driven a veritable horse and chariot through what we considered hitherto to be the established law of the land; that is to say death penalty for murder. The courts in two respects have undermined what was our view hitherto to 1993. The Pratt and Morgan case in Jamaica and I will give the formal references shortly stated that rule that if you do not hang someone within five years of the

date of sentence then that death penalty cannot be carried out. The Court of Appeal went further in St Vincent and the Grenadines in the OECS and then confirmed by the Privy Council that the death penalty in its mandatory aspect is unconstitutional; that it is unconstitutional to carry out the death penalty for murder in all cases of murder.

Indeed, Mr. Speaker, and I shall make reference to the case law in my statement today, the Privy Council has stated that the only way someone can be hanged is if it is the “worst of the worst” cases and it so ruled in the case of Daniel Dick Trimmingham alias Compay and you know that was a particularly brutal murder. And I shall read the relevant sections, the relevant paragraphs of the Privy Council’s decision in that regard. So, the death penalty in a nutshell is formally on the books but for it to apply practically it can only be applied as judges have interpreted the Constitution, not only the Constitution of St Vincent but the Constitution of St Lucia, St Kitts Nevis, Belize, Jamaica and Trinidad and Tobago, the same position has been held. You have the five year rule and then you have it even if you are within the five year rule you cannot carry out the death penalty if it is not the “worst of the worst” because it is unconstitutional in law that the death penalty is mandatory.

When I started to practice law thirty years ago we all understood that the death penalty was mandatory for murder, but the law courts have changed that by the interpretation of the Constitution, so that the only way really to address this matter is to address it by way of a constitutional change and we sought to do that in 2009 on November 25, and I shall make reference to that section in the proposed constitution or the sections in the proposed constitution, but as we know the people of St Vincent and the Grenadines rejected the constitutional change. It is true to say that there were a series of provisions, because we did a complete review. I want, Mr. Speaker, because it is a forum given the importance of this for us to have the factual and legal position clear.

The existing Constitution of St Vincent and the Grenadines in section 2 affirms and protects the right to life. Section 2:1:-

“No person shall be deprived of his life intentionally, save in execution of a sentence of a court in respect of a criminal offence under any law of which he had been convicted”.

Well, that hitherto had been taken to mean that if you have a statute law which say – that is to say a law passed in parliament which says; that for murder you have the death penalty well then you impose the death penalty. Well, this is one the judges the Court of Appeal and the Privy Council have interpreted and saying that it is not mandatory: the death penalty is not mandatory for murder the way this is written; and they have given their reasons why. Section 5 of the Constitution goes on to state very simply:-

“No person shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading punishment or other treatment”.

And the courts, the Court of Appeal and the Privy Council have held that unless it is the “worst of the worst” cases, the death penalty is subjected someone to inhuman or degrading punishment or treatment. That is what the law of the land is. The Criminal Code that is the constitutional position has stated and interprets it the Criminal Code in section 24 of cap.171, chapter 171 says, 24:1:

“When any person is sentenced to death the sentence shall direct that he is to suffer death in the manner authorized by law”.

And then in section 159:1, the sentence for murder is stated as the death penalty but this is what the Statute Law says: the judges in interpreting the Constitution, they say that these provisions which state that the murder carries the death penalty they are saying the way the Constitution is written both in respect of the protection of life provision and the protection from inhumane treatment that that death penalty cannot be applied mandatorily. That is to say it cannot be applied in every case of murder, and can only be applied in what is called the “worst of the worst” cases; that is what the law of the land is when you take the Constitution and the Statute Law and the judge’s interpretation.

Mr. Speaker, I should point out that since this government has been in office there has been no case which has been caught by the Pratt and Morgan provisions of a matter not being completed within the five year period, as it has been caught in Jamaica and some other jurisdictions. In other words our judicial system it works in a manner not to trigger the Pratt and Morgan limitation; what in our situation has been the problem in carrying out the death penalty is the question of the ruling in a series of cases and I make reference to them by the Privy Council and also by the Court of Appeal in our jurisdiction that the death penalty is not mandatory for murder. Now, the first case in which this was decided in respect of the death penalty not being mandatory for murder: the appeal cases for Peter Hughes of Saint Lucia and Newton Spence of St Vincent and the Grenadines; these cases can be found in ... they were heard together as No. 12; they were reported together as No. 12 of the United Kingdom Privy Council: No. 12 UKPC. Newton Spence: Hughes and Spence.

Mr. Speaker, the case of Daniel Trimmingham came to light and the court ... I want to just read this, the Privy Council says:-

“The law can be expressed in relation to the death penalty; the approach to impose the death penalty can be expressed in two basic principles.

And I am reading from paragraph No. 21 onward of that judgement:-

The first has been expressed in several different formulations, but they all carry the same message, that the death penalty should be imposed only in cases which on the facts of the offence are the most extreme and exceptional, “the worst of the worst or “the rarest of the rare”. In considering whether a particular case falls into that category, the judge should of course compare it with other murder cases and not with ordinary civilized behaviour. The second principle is that there must be no reasonable prospect of reform of the offender and that the object of punishment could not be achieved by any means other than the ultimate sentence of death. The character of the offender and any other relevant circumstances are to be taken into account in so far as they may operate in his favour by way of mitigation and are not to weigh in the scales against him. Before it imposes a sentence of death the court must be properly satisfied that these two criteria have been fulfilled”.

That is the “worst of the worst” or “rarest of the rare” and the person is incapable of reform, taking into account a set of circumstances. They go on to say and I am reading now paragraph No. 22:-

“Mr. Fitzgerald

That is to say the lawyer for Compay Trimmingham.

readily accepted that the appellant’s crime

That is Compay Trimmingham: Dick Trimmingham’s crime.

was a brutal and disgusting murder, involving the cold-blooded killing of an elderly man in the course of a robbery. He contended, however,

That is Compay’s lawyer.

that it fell short of being in the category of the rarest of the rare. He submitted that the killing did not appear to have been planned or premeditated; and although the manner of the killing was gruesome and violent, there was no torture of the deceased or prolonged trauma or humiliation of him prior to death”.

I am reading what the judges of the Privy Council said you know. As you may recall the facts that the prosecution proved that Daniel Dick Trimmingham had disemboweled Mr. Browne and had severed his neck. I notice that Minister Miguel is shaking because she knew Felix Browne also known as Ding; popularly known as Ding in Mespo. This is what they went on to in paragraph 23 and said, remember what I just said what the Lawyer for Daniel Dick Trimmingham said, paragraph 23 this is now what the Privy Council’s Lords said :-

Their Lordships accept the correctness of this contention.

They accept what Trimmingham’s Lawyer said and they go on to say:-

undeniably a bad case, even a very bad case, of murder committed for gain. But in their judgment it falls short of being among the worst of the worst, such as to call for the ultimate penalty of capital punishment. The appellant Dick Trimmingham behaved in a revolting fashion, but this case is not comparable with the worst cases of sadistic killings.

Apparently, this is a common ordinarily garden killing: bad, terrible, revolting but not comparable to the worst cases of sadistic killings.

Their Lordships would also point out that the object of keeping the appellant out of society entirely, which the judge considered necessary, can be achieved without executing him.

In other words keep him for life. They go on further, paragraph 24:-

This conclusion makes it unnecessary for the Board to consider the factors relating to the character and personality of the appellant, to which the content of the medical reports, if admitted, would be material. Nor do they propose to express an opinion on the other grounds of appeal against sentence advanced on behalf of the appellant, save that they feel obliged to draw to the attention of prosecutors once again the principles set out in paragraphs 10 and 11 of the judgment of the Privy Council in the case of *Randall v The Queen [2002] UKPC 19*, regarding the standard of conduct to be expected of them as ministers”.

I am sorry, I said that it was Ding, Ding gave the evidence. Felix Browne is Ding; Bertie Browne is the person who was beheaded and dismembered. Sorry; because Ding himself gave graphic testimony about what happened to Bertie Browne. They went on to say, the judges in the Privy Council:-

The death sentence accordingly cannot stand. Their Lordships consider that the only appropriate disposition of this case is that the appellant should be sentenced to life imprisonment and that should be substituted for the sentence of death pronounced by the judge and affirmed by the Court of Appeal.

Now, our local courts said the death penalty; but they said, “This is not the worst of the worst”. I must indicate that the Court of Appeal had proposed its view is that the death penalty is not mandatory, but it is the jury who should decide whether the death penalty is imposed or not. The Privy Council ruled, no, it shouldn’t be the jury, it must be the judge.

Now, there are several other cases which I would like to draw to the attention of this Honourable House in which this matters has been discussed, I made reference to Pratt and Morgan, Privy Council case No. 10 of 1993, I did the Daniel Trimmingham case at the Court of Appeal it was No. 32 of 2004 and UK Privy Council No. 25 of 2009. And then there are cases from St Kitts of Mitcham and Fahie is pronounced up their but we will called it F-a-h-i-e, No. 11 and No. 10 of the Court of Appeal of 2002. That also Patrice Matthew was involved in that matter and that matter went up as Privy Council case No. 5 of 2009. And then there is a case of Mervyn Moise out of St Lucia, No. 8 of 2003.

So, Mr. Speaker, when this government committed to carrying out the death penalty but have our hands completely tied in practical terms reflecting what we thought the country was saying we went to have the Constitution amended and this is what we had in the Constitution, the proposed Constitution which was voted down by the people of this country. Section No. 26 of this proposed Constitution which was voted down, amended the provision under the Protection of Right to Life by adding a third sub paragraph saying:-

“A person shall not be regarded as having being deprived of his life in contravention of this section if he is subjected to capital punishment in accordance with section 29 of the Constitution”.

In other words this proposed Constitution which was voted down says: never mind this issue of the right to life we are making it explicitly clear where it was not that clear that a person shall not be regarded as having been deprived of his life in contravention of this section; if he is subjected to capital punishment in accordance with section No. 29 of the Constitution. And then section No. 29: this is the section which deals with the protection of inhumane treatment. We repeated what the existing Constitution said:-

“That no person shall be subjected to torture or inhumane or degrading punishment or other treatment;

But we said many things else and added several subsections to make it judge proof that it was going to be impossible for judges to get around what we had put down here. First of all in subsection No. 3 we took on Pratt and Morgan with that limitation. Subsection No. 3 said:-

“No objection shall be taken in or by any court to a sentence of capital punishment being carried out within one year after the exhaustion of all proceedings embarked upon and diligently pursued by the persons thus sentence in any court or tribunal or anybody in the jurisdiction, of which is recognised by or under the laws of St Vincent and the Grenadines. Whether such court or tribunal or other bodies located inside or outside St Vincent and the Grenadines at which the imposition or passing of such sentence may lawfully be appealed reviewed, challenged and questioned by the person thus sentenced”.

In other words we are saying Pratt and Morgan says we cannot hang anybody after five years. This provision is saying you can hang them: such a person after five years, ten years, but you have to hang them within one year of him exhausting all his appeals. That provision has taken care of the Privy Council in Pratt and Morgan. Then we went on in paragraphs Nos. 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 to take care of cases like Hughes and Spence and Daniel Trimmingham. And this is how we decided we will take care of them; subsection No. 4 of the proposed provision which was put to the people:-

“Parliament may prescribe relevant criteria for determining whether murder is capital on conviction for which a person shall be subject to the death penalty or non-capital on conviction for such a person shall not be subject to the death penalty; provided that non-capital murder shall be confined to murder committed in sudden passion: provided further that high treason shall always be a capital offence”.

Let me pause here to say it began by saying: “Parliament may prescribe relevant criteria”. The reason why that was done in making the determination if a judge try to do something which establish a principle; will give an interpretation to try and drive any holes in this parliament could correct it. The way the current Constitution is written we come with things like this here the courts would declare them to be unconstitutional but if the people decided in the changing of the Constitution, they are locked tight. That is why we went, that is one of the reasons why we went in the Referendum. Went on in Sub. No. 5:-

“On a trial of a person indicted for murder, if the jury returns a verdict convicting that person of murder it shall be a matter for the judge presiding at the trial to determine whether the murder is capital as distinct as from non-capital”.

Sub. No. 6:-

“If on the trial a person convicted for murder the jury returns a verdict convicting him of murder, the judge shall hear evidence on the question whether the murder is capital as distinct as from non-capital. If having heard such evidence and on the relevant criteria referred to in sub paragraph No. 4 of this section, the judge determines that the murder is capital; the judge shall impose the sentence of the death penalty that is capital punishment on the person so convicted”.

Sub. No. 7:-

“If a person is convicted of murder whether capital or non- capital, then after that sentence has been imposed questions of mercy shall be decided by the mercy committee”.

Sub. No. 8, important:-

“The carrying out of capital punishment in accordance with this section shall not be held to be inconsistent with or in contravention with this section”.

That is the one dealing with inhumane treatment or punishment or section No. 26 of the Constitution protecting the right to life, or any other provision of the Constitution. In other words just in case there was any doubt we tied it up finally lock, stock and barrel, so that the judges could not interfere with us carrying out the death penalty. [Knocking on desk] So, when anybody gets on the radio and says that it is nonsense to say that you cannot impose the death penalty because it is on the books. It is on the books but as I have said the Court of Appeal and the Privy Council have driven horse and chariot through our pre 1993 understanding of what the Constitution and the law was about, thus making it practically impossible to hang anybody because unless of course it is the “worst of the worst” or the “rarest of the rarest”; and disemboweling Bertie Browne and cutting off his neck is not the “worst of the worst” according to the Privy Council. Disemboweling means you are cutting out their belly let the entrails roll out.

Mr. Speaker, I know persons would say these provisions which were in the draft constitution; these provisions couldn't you pass them in the parliament here and make them into an ordinary law? If you do that they will be struck down as unconstitutional that is the advice given to this government including advice by Distinguished Queens Council in St Vincent and the Grenadines. So, I thought that it was necessary and desirable to speak to these matters as the Minister of Legal Affairs. Mr. Speaker, I haven't practised the law for the last eleven years but in this matter it is like riding a bicycle, I do not forget it and I keep up with the reading because I am hoping to reach to the year 100 so that I could be celebrated like that and would have to do some work still to take care, because the pension which I am getting here it might not be able to hold me up to when I am a 100, so I will

still have to ... the pension which I will get, so ... Mr. Speaker, that is the straightforward position and anybody who says otherwise is engaging in demagoguery.

BRITISH AMERICAN AND CLICO

Mr. Speaker I want to turn to the issue of updating this Honourable House on matters of British American and CLICO. Mr. Speaker, may I begin by saying this that every time I come to this parliament I say what is happening in the insurance business, these problems, press conferences and public meetings I speak about them. We have stuff in the newspapers yet you have some persons who would say I am not saying anything about it. Apparently, some people if they ... however, much I talk about it and some people say you talking, talking, talking about it but some people still do not hear. But because they do not hear, they do not listen they say I am not talking about it; I do not know if I have to do a one and one with them. And if there are ten of them I have to spend ... go to their homes or call them to the office one by one and talk to them. I think we are doing a lot of communication on these matters and I think most people follow what I am saying and that is why we have had such patience and forbearance.

Mr. Speaker, on British American, I want to say that I received a document on the 12 September from the Judicial Manager which is being circulated or has been circulated by Brian Glasgow of KPMG, this is a letter to policyholders and creditors of British American Insurance Company (BIACO) in the Eastern Caribbean and I think that policyholders if they haven't received it and creditors, they should ask for copies from the Judicial Manager, Mr. Brian Glasgow of the firm of Auditors KPMG. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members would recall that we have taken a number of positive steps in this British American Insurance Company issue. We first of all sold the insurance portfolio; the property insurance portfolio in early 2010; then we launched the management of the Health Insurance Fund on the 18 May: the Health Insurance Support Fund to assist the Health Insurance policyholders in British American.

We are now just over four months into the policy operations and over 1,300 applicants for financial assistance have been received and over \$600,000 have been paid out to persons across the currency union in respect of Health Insurance. Our efforts are currently focused on insuring that as many persons as possible are able to take advantage of this fund prior to the closing date for applications on December 31, 2011. So, the closing of this year December 31, that is the last day to make applications to the Health Insurance Support Fund. As a consequence those responsible will soon commence the second round of communication across the region to raise awareness about the fund, and I am strongly encouraging all citizens to make the most of this opportunity.

I have been advised that the initial estimate suggested that many affected BAICO policyholders or Health Insurance have not yet taken advantage of the fund so I am really urging that this be done. Thirteen hundred have gone, but you had a problem a health problem and you had a Health Insurance Policy with BAICO make the application; you have until the end of December to make the application. As you know the eligibility for the claims are for those incurred up to June 18, 2011 and you can make your application by your local British American Branch. The applicants should allow up to 90 days for processing once they have submitted their completed application forms: their completed applications, of course they would have to have their application properly done in order for it to be processed.

Now, my government I in particular we have been very tireless with other governments in the region to engage other CAPE participants across this region including the governments of Trinidad and Tobago and Barbados, as well as the Judicial Manager of British American and CLICO. In fact, earlier this week our insurance regulator met they had a separate meeting with the Judicial Managers for CLICO International that is what people refer to [inaudible] for Barbados and I had a separate meeting with them because I am not the insurance regulator and I do not want to have a meeting with them with the insurance regulator; I had a separate meeting with them.

Mr. Speaker, our efforts have involved among other things our participation in a regional technical committee appointed by CARICOM to advise on available solutions for policyholders and a central person in that committee is the head of the technical committee in the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union which advises the Ministerial Committee on insurance which I head: Mr. Timothy Antoine of Grenada. A report regarding British American was submitted to the Caricom Heads and funding to assist our efforts now being considered by the government of Trinidad and Tobago. Our priority is to provide a solution that gives some financial relief to what you may call the Annuity holders: the EFPA policyholders whilst we make sure we are assisting the financial institutions who have had exposures to British American so as to prevent a systemic risk to the financial system.

We welcome the recent progress made by the government of Trinidad and Tobago on the resolution on the CLICO issue including payments to policyholders up to TT\$75,000 or EC\$32,500 or about US\$12,000, and parliamentary approvals to issue bonds to policyholders with more than TT\$75,000. This is important for us because the policyholders in the ECCU holding CLICO Trinidad policies will receive the same treatment: CLICO Trinidad but that is a base obviously for us to address BAICO because all the major functions of BAICO were conducted in Trinidad.

For CLICO which was placed in judicial management in April of this year that is CLICO International; CLICO Barbados, we have along with the government of Barbados participated in an advisory committee to support the Judicial Managers in identifying solutions to CLICO policyholders. The Judicial Managers have filed reports in the courts and I will speak a little more to that; and are currently engaged in communications on various possible options for solutions. One of the next steps is for the governments of the Currency Union along with Barbados to consider solutions in light of funding required and determine what is possible to resolve this matter in the interest of the policyholders. It is important to note Honourable Members that British American and CLICO are in a fundamentally different financial position and CLICO International policyholders based purely on the assets held by CLICO is in a stronger situation. Accordingly it is most likely the outcome for British American Insurance Company and CLICO policyholders will not be the same. When I refer to CLICO policyholders I am not talking about CLICO Trinidad which they have given the undertaking that those will be dealt with as the Trinidadians have been dealt with but CLICO Trinidad that is important as a benchmark for us in British American.

Mr. Speaker, I want to address the ongoing work on the capitalisations and sale of British American traditional business; the Life business. In February 2011, the governments of our Currency Union announced that with the New Company Solution: the NEWCO Solution is no longer possible after in May 2010 a new government was established in Trinidad and it took us the several months up to February 2011 to realise that that they are not

going with that solution; that we decided: the governments decided. We and the Judicial Managers of British American that we will pursue a recapitalisation and sale of BAICO's traditional business. This project is very complex and many technical issues still remain to be resolved; however, in the past two weeks' invitations for expression of interest in the sale process have been issued.

The Eastern Caribbean Currency Union Governments are committed to ensuring that the best possible buyers are identified for these assets and that the process not only assist the traditional policyholders but also strengthens the insurance industry in the Currency Union. Let me just back up a little and give the background here. Honourable Members will recall that on the 11 August, when I came here I said in about two weeks' time we should be putting out a notice in the newspaper to ask for preliminary expressions of interest and that was done throughout the Caribbean: our Currency Union; they came out in each of the three newspapers in St Vincent and the Grenadines over three weeks ago but I want to point out Honourable Members that I have been advised that it was also in the Wall Street Journal and in the Financial Times of London, clearly giving an indication that we are looking for interest not only from regional insurance companies but also from international insurance companies so that there will be a proper competition in relation to the bidding process.

Now, remember I said that we have to capitalize the traditional Life Insurance policies from British American to the tune of US\$37-\$38 million and that we getting that money from the \$50 million that I had persuaded the Manning administration to put in our Central Bank, which is used as part as the bases for a solution towards this insurance problem in British American. Now, following the receipt of formal interest from potential buyers of this traditional Life Insurance portfolio the governments and the Judicial Managers will consider initiatives in the indicative offers and allow a selected group of potential buyers to have the due diligence performed in relation to the BAICO traditional business. It is expected that we will enter into final negotiations with a preferred bidder prior to the end of the year. Once the formal documentation arising from those negotiations is finalised the process of quote and regulatory approvals is likely to follow to complete the transfer of these policies to the buyers. This will be quite involved and will take some months so the current timetable for finalising the sale indicates completion sometime before the end of the first half of 2012. We remain committed to seeing this project through within the resources which we have available, and this will provide a solution to two out of three BAICO policyholders; and by other policyholders I am talking Life policy plus the Annuities because it is about 20,000 persons throughout the Currency Union that have Life policies with British American.

Now, again Mr. Speaker, I want again to take the opportunity to thank the general public, those with policies for their forbearance and for their patience because believe me this matter is occupying a tremendous amount of my personal time. I believe when I began to speak about this earlier and about the possible threat to the financial system of our country some persons would take it lightly until they realise what is happening in the United States, what is happening in Europe with Portugal, Ireland, Italy, Greece and Spain. When your insurance companies, your banks and other financial institutions have problems very shortly the financial issues evolved into economy ones very swiftly. The metamorphosis, they change and economic, depression/recession or sharp downturn takes place. So, I think it is important for us to appreciate ... [Intermediate High School students departed from the House] I wanted to thank the students for having attended, I know they have to go to lunch. Thank you.

I want Mr. Speaker, because the Judicial Managers have reported in relation to Barbados: the CLICO International, I must speak to it; and I know the Honourable Leader of the Opposition has a question on the order paper in relation to some numbers and when I come to that I will give numbers not only in relation to the Annuities but other policyholders for the purpose of completeness.

Mr. Speaker, on the 28 July, CLICO International Life Insurance Limited which is under judicial management a report was made to the High Court of Barbados on the 28 July. And on the 28 July, I want to just give summaries as to what they said:

“In terms of the impact on policyholders if they have a forced liquidation of CLICO International; the estimated returns to policyholders under a forced liquidation would be around \$0.49 for every dollar of liability”.

Now, as you know in relation to British American if you are to have a forced liquidation, if you had that it would have been something more below \$0.10 in the dollar, this one Deloitte were the Judicial Managers for CLICO International and they said \$0.49 for every dollar if you have a forced liquidation. Now, if you have it as a growing concern it is estimated that the return to the policyholders would be \$0.60 for every dollar. Now, the reason for this everybody knows that if you have a forced liquidation let us say the building which we have here CLICO their headquarters here in St Vincent, if you are to have that as a growing concern the value remains at whatever the market value is but if you are valuing it on a forced liquidation more than likely you are getting less for it. I gave that as an example of asset, anybody who is associated with these things would know that to be the case.

Now, on July 28, 2011 what they recommended was this but - I want to say the July 28 recommendation in the submission is not the current situation today; but to understand where we are today you have to understand the July 28 submission.

“Restructure of the traditional business and the EFPA portfolio

That is the Annuities.

by transferring 60% of the current policy value to a new company. The 60% of the EFPA policy transferred would be converted in Annuities. All policyholders receive shares in the new company for the other 40% of their policies. The shares would have a nominal value initially but have the opportunity clearly to increase over time. And this assumes no external funding from Barbados or the Currency Union governments”.

Now, when those ideas were proposed in July clearly they do not present the total range of possibilities, so we had a CLICO International Limited Advisory Committee set up and this included persons from Barbados and from our Currency Union. And this was created to advise the Judicial Managers on options and possible resolution strategies given the systemic risk posed to the financial systems in Barbados and the Currency Union by the financial difficulties of CLICO International. Through consultation with this advisory committee, a

number of other restructuring options have been developed primarily based on the possibilities of capital injections from the Barbados and the ECCU governments. So, we now have what was submitted. You have been hearing in the news that last week something was submitted to the court in Barbados this is really an addendum to the July 28 Report.

I want to provide the summary:-

“A restructuring plan including the addendum filed on September 14 has been presented given consideration to a number of factors including the following.

- *Transfer of the traditional business portfolio at its full value into the new company.*
- *Transfer of the policies held by all individual EFPA policyholders into Annuities.*
- *Transfer of all EC governments and quasi governments EFPA policies into either Annuities or equity.*

You notice the option for the policyholders to go into Annuities but for the government instruments and those for quasi governments the idea is to have them go either as Annuities or equity in the company, like for instance that would be the case let us say the NIS.

- *And the transfer of all EFPA policies held by private corporations into equity.*

Four restructuring approaches have been identified and are presented”.

Now, there are variations of the options as to what you give at face value, what you give at Annuities and what you put at equity for each of the four options, but the first option would require an investment of Bds\$152 million. The second option would require an investment of a Bds\$103 million. The third option would require an investment of Bds\$94 million and the fourth option would require an investment of Bds\$56 million so you would see that we have to meet the governments of Barbados, St Vincent and the Grenadines and the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union we have to meet with the Judicial Managers, with his Advisory Committee Honourable Members, before Deloitte can now go back to the court and say – of course we have to meet policyholders too – go back to the court and say: “This is what we are finally submitting to you for acceptance”.

Now, what are the central things to success of any of these four options?

- *Support from the courts in all countries for the restructuring plan.*

And we expect that once the governments agree with the Judicial Managers and it would reflect policyholders' agreement, and obviously anything which is going to lift you from \$0.49 or lift you from \$0.60 to pretty much take you to your full value you are going to be interested in having.

- *Special dispensation from the Insurance Regulators to allow CLICO to pledge certain real estate assets to meet its statutory insurance fund obligations.*
- *Regulatory approval to write new business in the jurisdictions in which CIL currently operates.*
- *And confirmation from regional governments on the level of funding available to execute the restructuring plans put forward here by Deloitte, by the Judicial Manager.*

The next steps the proposed restructuring options for CLICO will require extensive consultations with various stakeholders to achieve support for its execution across the region. Therefore, Deloitte is affirming that they would pursue the following courses of actions.

1. *Continued consultation with the Governments and the Insurance Regulators on the establishment of a new company.*
2. *Extensive consultations with policyholders in all jurisdictions.*
3. *Confirm available funding from Barbados and the Currency Union governments.*
4. *Obtain final court approval in all jurisdictions for selected options.*

And then of course something which is vital;

5. **Based on the court approval of what comes at the end of all of this including what monies are available from all the governments the Judicial Manager will commission a forensic audit to investigate intercompany amounts on the balance sheet of CIL.**

We are trying to solve this problem but as we all know from the Trinidad situation with CLICO and British American you have a lot of intercompany transactions and when we get the matter more or less resolved we have to know how the intercompany transactions – what took place there and to follow them where they lead us. And this forensic audit would be conducted by the forensic and dispute services team of Deloitte of Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I have taken a little while on this matter of the insurance issue to provide for Honourable Members a broad framework and with a sufficiency of details. A broad framework as to how we are proceeding, and a sufficiency of details for them to have an appreciation as to what are the issues at hand. I am obliged.
[Applause]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of the Opposition may want to make a ...

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: I just want to seek clarification on two matters, the first one relates to policyholders of BAICO where those policies are in Trinidad and Tobago, who will get payments from Trinidad and Tobago.

DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: CLICO: CLICO Trinidad not BAICO.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: CLICO not BAICO.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: CLICO Trinidad yes. What had happened remember that the Governor of the Central Bank had written to us asking that point and they are the regulator and then subsequently at a meeting in Trinidad with the Advisory Committee to the Prime Minister of St Vincent and Grenadines as Chairman of the insurance subcommittee of the Monetary Council and in the presence of other officials from Trinidad, the Caribbean Development Bank, the Minister of Finance of Trinidad and Tobago gave the insurance that policies with CLICO Trinidad even though they are policies held by persons outside of Trinidad and Tobago they will honour them even though under their law you can only come to their statutory fund if you are an ordinary resident in Trinidad and Tobago but as a matter of policy they took it because you have persons who not only in the rest of the Caribbean but there will be Trinidadians living England and America who are not ordinarily residents in Trinidad and Tobago but who got CLICO Trinidad policies. So, in relation to that window we have been given the assurances on that, so we are left now to have that fully implemented and then to deal with the issues as I outlined in BAICO and CLICO International out of Barbados.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I assume this refers only to persons who kept their policies active.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Clearly, clearly otherwise you would have breached your own policy.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Exactly, the other area relates to the ... you mentioned the four options ranging for \$150 million investment down to \$56 million which I presumed had to be paid by the government.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: The governments of the Eastern Caribbean

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Eastern Caribbean and

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: and Barbados.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: and Barbados.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: If I may say this; Honourable Members would recall this, the former Prime Minister of Barbados our deceased friend David Thompson had earlier given the assurance both in writing and verbally and subsequently Prime Minister Stewart about whatever the liabilities which exist they will honour them. Now that is not an undertaking on which I can sue, I suspect and I am being a practical man here that when that assurance was originally given by Mr. Thompson I do not think that he really fully understood the depth and the width of the whole, he probably thought that it was this big but it turned out to be this big. So, that it is important for us to work together to try and solve it but to solve it with the assistance of the Caribbean Development Bank as we are trying to do in British American with Trinidad and the CDB.

You know, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition I can take the position listen you give me an undertaking, I am cashing in that undertaking but I am a practical man of affairs, I have to talk with you to see how much of that burden you are carrying in the light of your undertaking any portion of my burden and see what I can carry in all the circumstances. But remember this, I have to be very and all of us in the Currency Union and I urge all my colleagues we must be very balanced and clear in our minds, we have to ensure that our financial system is not in any way destabilized, subverted or challenged irreparably. Because anybody who thinks that this is a theoretical postulate should watch what is happening in the world; indeed what is happening in our region.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: With respect to the new entities and those four different levels of investments, a choice has to be made by the countries. In the new entity with respect to the special executive Annuities, including payments made like say the NIS here I assumed that there are going to be different conditions applicable to those Annuities. They will not be the same as was when you took them up otherwise people would just draw them down?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Yes, I would expect that and this is why the option would be depending on which option and the extent of the financing whether some of that will go into straight Annuities with particular conditions or whether you are going to put some of it into equity in the new company. Because let us say for the NIS if it is a company which you see is sustainable the important thing for the NIS is to have an investment and it is on the books as an investment; it is not something which you will be able to write down to say zero or write it down to ten percent but whatever the investment is. If it is a 100% you can put it inside of the balance sheet so that you maintain the stability of your investment within this new company.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay, if it is important you know.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much and the Honourable Prime Minister. The Leader of the Opposition raised a question a while ago and he got an answer from the Prime Minister and that is with respect to ... and I am raising all of this Mr. Prime Minister in the context afore so express a balanced view, an optimistic position and I am introducing this avoiding being reckless in the circumstances. There is the situation where some people held BAICO policies and they had to make a decision as to whether they should continue the policies or discontinue. Those sets of people have been in a veritable trap that is if they continued

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: They trying to put money on [inaudible]

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: a court of have said, “Look you are reckless; you saw a ship that was sinking”. So, some of those people understandably stopped their policy to avoid what may have been a court judgement that against the tide: why did you continue to pay, you are reckless? Now, what we are saying is that it seems in all probability that those people would have lost the battle and they are not being considered in the resolution that may come through by mid 2012, indeed that may well be a sizeable number of individuals who thought that they would err on the side of prudence. Practical, manner of affairs, all these nice expressions, balanced view and so forth, but you are saying the enormity of the problem is big enough already that you cannot afford to try to throw the life line over there because that might pull you over. Is that what we are saying, Mr. Prime Minister?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, when this issue had arisen earlier and I think I was asked the question in the House or if not at a press conference or somewhere what advice I would give to a holder of a policy and they have to make payments, let us say it is a Life Policy; I say if you just started to pay, you may say that what you put there is gone already but I will urge in all the circumstances that if you had made substantial payments what is to be made over the next year or two by the time we come to a solution, I would advise that you continue to pay. The courts in my view would not go the way you are saying, if somebody go to pay they would be seemed as reckless: nah! Nah! Nah! In fact, they would be seen as prudent in the circumstances because they are making a judgement where there is a Judicial Manager and there is some prospect of something happening, governments are engaged and so on. Now, when we have sorted this matter out and that there would be some residual issues of what you are talking about we clearly would have to come to address those residual issues themselves. I am hopeful that those residual issues may not be so costly, to make the problem an insoluble one. I do not know yet what that might be, I do not think any of us knows fully but from the information it seems as though most people had stayed the course that is my impression but we will know fully.

You see, Mr. Speaker, this is not an easy matter, I mean consider this, consider the position of insurance regulators in April 2008 the Balance Sheet for CL Financial which is the parent of these companies is a beautiful document, it is in healthy condition, it is audited by a reputable firm: international firm but by December of the same year the thing collapse like a pack of cards. Now, it raises the issues of the role of auditors, all those bundles of issues will have to come out in this watch and many of those would have to be dealt with but as I have said in the House before, in this business you have to keep your focus and what is your focus: the focus is to try to resolve the matter in the best interest of the policyholders and to avert a severe systemic risk, systemic problem to your financial system. So that is where we are. I know the Honourable Leader of the Opposition is probably saying to himself better you than me over there [Laughs] know in his heart of hearts [interjection] [laughter]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: All right, all right let us move on to Papers.

REPORT FROM SELECT COMMITTEES

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Honourable Members, in relation to the Select Committee for Trafficking in persons I beg to lay on the table the minutes and also the report itself, I have signed both of them.

Mr. Speaker, may I just say in relation to one other Select Committee, in relation to the Representation of the People Amendment Bill it is at the same status as I reported at the last occasion and I think that there is a third Select Committee Report which has been laid already and that is in relation to the Architects Bill and that is on the Order Paper for consideration.

HONOURABLE MAXWELL CHARLES: Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes Honourable Member for Central Leeward.

HONOURABLE MAXWELL CHARLES: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, as Chairman of the Select Committee appointed by this Honourable House to examine in detail the Ecclesiastical Bills 2011, I now lay before this Honourable House the report from the Select Committee.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

HONOURABLE MAXWELL CHARLES: Thank you much obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

PAPERS

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour and privilege to lay on the table the report of the Supervisor of Elections on the general elections held in St Vincent and the Grenadines on Monday 31 December, 2010.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR: Mr. Speaker, I rise to lay on the table the Financial Statements for the year ended December 31 2010; the Financial Statements for the National Parks, Rivers and Beaches Authority.

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWERS

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

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

- a. *What arrangements have been put in place to repay the private sector for goods and services supplied to Government, which was at the level of \$30 million as at September 30th, 2010 and*
- b. *what is the current level of arrears to the sector as at 31st August, 2011?*

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the Director General of Finance and Planning and the staff have been working closely with the Accounting General and her staff to maintain at minimum arrears to the private sector. Daily the cash position of the Government is examined to determine how much cash is available to reduce the stock of payables and to meet our other commitments. Expenditure control measures also have been tightened and they have been approved by the Minister of Finance to ensure that spending is contained within available resources.

Mr. Speaker, may I just say that there is one error in the question in terms of the level of the expenditure at \$30 million at the 30th September, 2010 to repay private sector for goods and services. That figure would include money owed to statutory bodies like for instance sums due to BRAGSA, to the Community College and so on. The Tourism Authority and some comparatively small sums to regional institutions and bodies but to the private sector itself defined outside of that the figure at August 31st, 2011 is \$8.82 million. I should point out as I have indicated we have been making great efforts to contain indebtedness to the private sector.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary question, Honourable leader of the opposition.

Supplementary Question

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: The amounts going to the public sector as I understand would have been finance and transfers in the current budget and to the extent that there was a payment to entities via the \$100 million loan; are we saying that only those that you mentioned there now are the ones to which, the public sector ones, are they the only ones owed?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: No, I am saying the private sector sums is just over \$8 million. I am saying that the figure of \$30 million which was mentioned included monies which would have been owed to them: to statutory bodies. But the private sector figure is actually lower than the \$30 million which was quoted. The \$30 million last year has private sector monies in it.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Private and public sector?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: And public sector; that is the point I was making.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Private sector and public sector as at 2011?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I only asked for the private sector in relation to the question. [Interjections] [Laughter] [Striking the desk with gavel]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 2, Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: You know there are leg break bowlers and you have to bowl googly. [Laughter]

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

In recent times holders of special executive Annuities of CLICO insurance have had their payments stopped while CLICO restructures.

Can the Honourable Minister indicate the number of Vincentians who are now exposed and the total value of their exposure?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, there are two categories of the Annuities: a Flexible Premium Annuity just for individuals and an Executive Flexible Premium Annuity for both individuals and institutions: that is to say corporate entities and quasi Government. I think the difference in the name is how they were marketed, one is I repeat Flexible Premium Annuity for individuals and Executive Premium Annuity for both individuals and institutions. For the first category, Flexible Premium Annuity individuals the exposure is \$14,060,281.00 and there are 2,108 of those. The next number I think is of great interest we are going to address now the Executive Flexible Premium Annuity for individuals \$46,143,259.00 but the number which will surprise persons I believe is the number of policyholders of that \$46.1 million: 156 persons. So, I am very happy for the question so that we can see [Interjection] 156 [interjection] No! No! No! I am just dealing with individuals. I suspect that might have taken you by surprise to \$46 million for 156 persons [Interjection]. And then for institutions which include cooperative entities and quasi government bodies \$32,720,309.00 39 such policyholders those as I say are institutions.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to give the other data since I have it at hand: Life \$2,333,244.00 and the policyholders are 2,356. As you notice [interjection] I am talking EC dollars. Now, if I may just say parenthetically, remember for the life business for British American across the sub-region is nineteen thousand and something and it is several thousand here in St Vincent at BAICO, because there is a lot more BIACO Life than you have CLICO. Health \$846,939.00: 752 policyholders; Deposit administration this is a category which includes the Pension Funds, there are nine of those but it is a significant sum of money workers money, like

VINLEC, the Brewery and other places, the Flour Mill that is \$36,474,619.00 that is really workers money. And then investment contracts which are called the Life Advantage Investment Contracts \$2,720,973.00 and there 716 of those policyholders. So, if I give the total exposure in St Vincent and the Grenadines in respect of CLICO is \$135,299,625.00 and the policyholders totally 6,136. I must say that this is the exposure but you must remember that I had said in this company there are significantly more assets so that the actual liabilities and threat to the financial system is far less than in the case of British American. I just want to make that point.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary question.

Supplementary Question

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: And the new entity, Mr. Speaker, that you discussed under the four options earlier they are going to cover all these areas?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: It would cover all of them and we will then decide how we fashion it. And of course, I mean I expect the policyholders would say, "We want the solution where you putting an hundred fifty odd million dollars because they feel more secure there but the point is that we are getting somewhere, I would have liked very much if we had gotten here earlier with CLICO but as you know it is only recently the Judicial Manager was appointed, they had other formulae and so on and I am not commenting on that.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 3 Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

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

The Government has taken over the liabilities and assets of the now defunct Banana Growers Association.

Could the Honourable Minister state the value of the assets and liabilities taken over from the BGA and give the basis of the valuation utilized?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I have been advised by my officials in the Ministry of Finance that the auditors who are dealing with this matter have not concluded their work. As soon as I get those numbers, as soon as they have finished their work I will indicate to this Honourable House. Because one must remember that with the Banana Industry Act which was passed in this Honourable House both the assets and liabilities of the BGA had been transferred to the Government. Thank you.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 4 to the Honourable Member from the Northern Grenadines.

4. *Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday, Northern Grenadines asked the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs:*

Given that the United Nations General Assembly has in an overwhelmingly majority vote, recognised the National Transitional Council as the sole representative of Libya at the UN:

Will the Minister please state what is his Government's position with respect to the interim government in Libya led by the National Transitional Council and how he intends to proceed in respect of this country's relations with Libya?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister Foreign Affairs question No. 4

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, Mr. Speaker, we are all aware or should be aware of the deliberations regarding the National Transitional Council of Libya over the past several weeks and it came to a decision at the sixty-six sitting of the United Nations General Assembly recently in New York. Mr. Speaker, basically we know that the United Nations decided to after a debate, decided to seat the National Transitional Council. It is interesting, Mr. Speaker, the question states "It was done by an overwhelming majority of the United Nations". I think it is important to note that the United Nations consist of 193 members and in that vote 114 voted to seat them, 59%; everything is relative is that overwhelming? I just like to quote from the official document of the General Assembly its headline: United Nations seats Libya's National Transitional Council the General Assembly, Document 11137 and the headline it is from the department of Public Information, News and Media Division of the United Nations: the sixty-six General Assembly. The headline is ... and I am quoting this to compare the "overwhelming vote".

"After much wrangling General Assembly seats National Transitional Council of Libya as country's representative for sixty-six session"

Just an interesting note I would say. Mr. Speaker, St. Vincent's position is well known, it has been made public and I assume the Honourable Member knows that. In the vote St Vincent took the principled position because you know, Mr. Speaker, in deciding to seat a member of the United Nations it is a very detailed, it is a very complex issue at times because that is why the United Nations states after much wrangling, it was not so straightforward. In revising the answer to this question, Mr. Speaker, the whole question of seating a member is guided by a lot of documents but one of interest I would say that we should refer to is what is known as the Montevideo Convention. And that Convention the Article (1) indicates four criteria qualifications to seat a member and I note:

1. Must have a permanent population.
2. A defined territory.
3. A government.
4. The capacity to enter relations with other states.

Mr. Speaker, I want us to note two of these conditions:

1. That they must be an existing government; and
2. A capacity to enter relations with other states

Mr. Speaker, we have been following very closely the situation in Libya and to today, I do not think it is proper to say that there exists a proper government. If you do not have a proper government I do not know that there is a Minister of Foreign Affairs for example; and; therefore, we have not judged that the situation there is quite ready to qualify that Council as sufficient to acknowledge. Others have but we argue it from the position that we take is of principle. Mr. Speaker, I would like to read again from the United Nations document:

The position of the representative of the Southern African Development Community the SADC, Angola that presented their argument and he said:

“My delegation had questions of process, legality and principle, which it would raise in connection with the report of the Credentials Committee. The delegation firmly believed that the United Nations should remain an Organization of principles governed by rule of law. As such, rules and procedures adopted by the General Assembly should not be disregarded merely because it was expedient”.

He went on to say amount other things:

“Let me be clear: a unity Government has not been formed, and the National Transitional Council had committed itself to doing so and crafting a new constitution and a free Libya,” he continued. Notwithstanding the fact that it was in control, the National Transitional Council was not the Government in Libya, interim or otherwise.

Well, now I think it is accepted it is interim. But Mr. Speaker, all of us watch the news and we read online, I recall when the “rebels” reach to Tripoli, a virtual mission accomplished was announced. Most people expected that that was it but today as we speak, we are hearing report that there is fierce resistance still in cities. In other words, there are still a lot of uncertainties in this whole thing. But Mr. Speaker, St Vincent and the Grenadines has and continues to have diplomatic relations with the state of Libya we never broke them. Mr. Speaker, we are prepared to acknowledge a government when we think that government truly represents the full wishes of all the parties in Libya.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to note that you see when we make these decisions, it is important to see the position of our government. Caricom: we are taking a position which is not very different from the African Union the NTC has not yet been seated there and that is their region. It is like us in Caricom where Caricom has not accepted a member state but we are asking other people to accept them. Mr. Speaker, diplomacy is a serious business and it is a very involved issue and I do not think that we should always rush into decision. And I heard you quote something earlier about one of your colleagues. We have taken a principled position backed by I think not an insignificant amount of people of other countries.

Mr. Speaker, just for completion in the vote Caricom members there are two votes actually that went on:

1. *It was proposed by Angola, [I think it was Angola, yes] that we defer, the United Nations defer a decision on seating the National Transitional Council because of all I have just said and more.*

And that vote from Caricom was supported by that is for deferral interestingly by two Caricom countries St Vincent and the Grenadines and Jamaica. Two Caricom countries opposed that resolution it was Belize and St Lucia; Antigua, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago abstained and all the others were absent. It is interesting, they were absent, you see our country one of the things I am proud about St Vincent and the Grenadines we are not afraid to take a position when it is principled [applause]. Mr. Speaker, but more important is that for persons who have been following the news the real big ticket item at the United Nation was really the position on Palestine; if you listened to the news that was what was really going on. And Mr. Speaker it is interesting that I did not hear the other side make any statement about Palestine, Mr. Speaker, because they are afraid of what the Americans may say. Mr. Speaker, we were principled and forthright with our position on Palestine.

Mr. Speaker, the last time I checked St Vincent and the Grenadines, the authority to acknowledge any government is supposed to be rested in the executive which is this Government of St Vincent and the Grenadines, either the Prime Minister or the Minister of Foreign Affairs. But I noticed that some other people usurping that authority and making pronouncement about accepting NTC. Well, I am still by the Constitution of St Vincent and the Grenadines the Minister of Foreign Affairs despite what others may have wished. And as far as I know, the Leader of our government and our government has decided to go a particular path which I have just outlined and when we think it is appropriate as guided by the principles I have outlined we would do what we find most appropriate to do. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker. [Applause]

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary question.

Supplementary Question

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Minister indicated that this country continues to have diplomatic relations with Libya, would he please indicate with whom we are conducting those diplomatic relations currently, are we in contact with representatives of some other entity in Libya? And secondly, whether he considers that the votes ... well first of all, state what is the principled position that was adopted? You said several times we took a principled position state for the record what that principled position is and how is it principled and whether the 114 who voted to accept the National Transitional Council whether in your opinion those votes were unprincipled.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: I am having two supplementary questions, I do not know if that is allowed [Laughs] Mr. Speaker, I have stated that St Vincent did not break diplomatic relations with Libya; if you want to say it is there on hold until we are satisfied that there is a legitimate proper established government and we will continue from there. In response to the second I have outlined the principle, I thought that was clear. I do not see why I should repeat again, with respect I think I speak proper English and I think my explanation was fairly clear enough for the average speaking Vincentian to understand.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 5, Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines.

5. *Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday, Northern Grenadines asked the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:*

Considering the enormous difficulties being encountered by our fishermen in finding reliable markets for their fish and in light of the assurances given by this government that export of fish to European Union markets, principally Martinique, would have resumed after EU inspectors had reviewed the fisheries centres in the country, will the Minister state;

- a. What is the status of the EU inspections of the fisheries centres in the country, including the new one at Owia;*
- b. What still needs to be done to meet the requirements of the inspectors;*
- c. When will our fishermen be able to export fish directly to EU markets, especially Martinique and;*
- d. What assistance if any in that regard can they expect to get from your government?*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries in this case.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIELS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, in relation to the question before this Honourable House considering the enormous difficulty being encountered by our fishermen in finding reliable markets, Mr. Speaker, there is existing in St Vincent and the Grenadines already reliable markets for fishermen which includes the Kingstown Fish Market, the Owia Fish Market, the Bequia Fish Market, the Vendors throughout St Vincent and the Grenadines, there is a reliable market in the US particularly in Miami of which our fishermen are indeed having that opportunity where every week that market can absorb at least 2000 lbs of fish. There is also market in the Virgin Islands of which our fishermen benefit and so Mr. Speaker, in terms of the European Market of which the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines is so concerned, Mr. Speaker, the status is that the three fishery centres they were inspected during the last European Union Inspection Mission here in St Vincent and the Grenadines in 2008. Owia, Kingstown with National Fish Marketing Company and Bequia all of those were inspected.

Mr. Speaker, since then what has happened? Mr. Speaker, much progress has been made along the fish and fish production trade to address the recommendations in 2000 Food and Veterinary Office Report with in particular improvements in the legislation and the organisation of the competent agency. Overall the control system developed by the competent agency in respect of fishery products intended for export to the European Union when implemented properly would provide appropriate guarantees in accordance with community legislations. However, it was not possible to evaluate its effectiveness because at the time of the Mission that is the control system was not being implemented.

Mr. Speaker, the necessary administrative measures have been instituted and an expensive programme for training of the Kingstown Fish Market staff that of Bequia, that of Owia and other exporters have been conducted and is ongoing. Standard operating procedures at the Kingstown Fish Market have been developed and instituted. In March of 2010 an EU Consultant Miss Elsie Marie Anderson, of Cardno Agrisystems Consortium conducted a review of the competent agency here. Two other European Union Consultants visited

St Vincent and the Grenadines to review fish establishments and laboratories in August and September, 2010 respectively. Reports on the reviews and recommendations are available. I have a document of course, it is found in the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry, Fisheries and Rural Transformation and this document is online you can also go online and find the document.

Mr. Speaker, the review was done within the framework of the ACP, OCT that is the Overseas Countries and Territories of the ACP for the strengthening of the fisheries products, health conditions according to programme modules 1, 2 and 3. Programme module 1 deals with the requirement of the competent authority; module 2 deals with laboratory requirement; and module 3 deals with the fish establishments. Mr. Speaker, the Fisheries Division has been working in close collaboration with the Consultants over the past year to implement the aforementioned recommendations.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to question (b), the (b) part of the question “What still needs to be done”? The establishment will continue to implement the systems recommended by the Fisheries Division and to ensure that our records are maintained as required by the European Union. Additionally, a legal expert will be in St Vincent and the Grenadines on the 15th October to review the current Fisheries Legislation and recommend if any amendments as required to ensure that all new provisions implemented by the European Union, European Commission are considered and are incorporated in local legislation. The three Consultants will conduct a final review of our state of readiness by November, 2011.

In relation to part (c) of the question “When will our fishermen be able to export fish”?

Mr. Speaker, authorization to export fish to the EU and Martinique has been identified; of course, Martinique is part of the Caribbean, of course it is one of the areas outside of the EU itself in terms of the European Union countries. Martinique is part of France and so that is why I believed that the Honourable gentleman has indicated Martinique and so. The EU and Martinique will be ... The authorization to export the fish, Mr. Speaker, will be determined by the European Union Food and Veterinary Office Inspectors when they are satisfied that our inspection system can guarantee the expectation of safe and quality fish from St Vincent and the Grenadines.

A request has been made to the European Union for an inspection during February 2012, and the Ministry of Agriculture, we are waiting this response. In relation to question (d) Mr. Speaker, in terms of the assistance as asked the fishermen of this country continue to enjoy duty free concession on fishing equipment for upgrading their vessels to meet international standards for harvesting of fish and fish products. Equally loan facilities have been made available to fishers to facilitate the purchase of modern boats which would meet international standards. Also Mr. Speaker, training is also critical where fishermen have been trained in navigation and safety at sea. Training is also done in quality assurance and control; in small business management and fishing technology, equally Mr. Speaker, assistance is also being given in the area of laboratory testing of samples for export of fish.

Mr. Speaker, just Tuesday at a meeting of the fishermen and farmers with the Prime Minister that there is a gentleman who has Lulley’s Tackle Shop who has asked at that meeting with the Prime Minister for duty-free concessions on safety gear at sea. The Prime Minister has asked for more information so that the Minister of

Finance can determine whether or not the information submitted if such concession can be given to the fishermen. So, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture through the Fisheries Division has been consistently working to ensuring that fish to the European Union is being given to the fishermen of this country; I am much obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 6 Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines ... Supplementary.

Supplementary Question

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Mr. Speaker, it has been over ten years since the Honourable Minister his Ministry has been working on this problem; and that is why I asked No. (c), part (c) of the question.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Well the Supplementary comes, Mr. Speaker, but I have to tell you the context; the answer was very long. He has indicated Mr. Speaker that fishermen will be able to export to EU markets when the European Union is satisfied that we have met their conditions. Well, that is obvious; the point was when do you expect to meet those conditions? When can they really think well, there is some light at the end of the tunnel after ten years?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: But he said, "He awaits ... [just a minute]. I think he said that he ordered an inspection and by February 2012. You do not have to answer that question.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: February 2012 what Mr. Speaker?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Inspectors will come.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: But the inspectors have been here twice before [interjections] [laughter] [Striking of gavel]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 6 please. [Interjection] Honourable Member, question No. 6 please.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: I am not trying to score points you know, I am just trying to get answers for people whose lives depend on these things.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Let us move to question No. 6.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Happily, I will move to question No. 6 Mr. Speaker.

6. *Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday of the Northern Grenadines asked the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works: Will the Minister please state;*
- a. Why the work to repair the Friendship main road near Sugar Apple Inn has been stopped again;*
 - b. whether there is any intention to complete the repair soon and if so, state the new completion date;*
 - c. whether the road to the Fort Hamilton (Point Hill) tourism site will be fixed for the upcoming tourist season; and*
 - d. when will the main road to Mt. Pleasant and Bequia which is badly broken in places and is dangerous to the travelling public be repaired.*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 6.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but comment that the Honourable Member of the Northern Grenadines seems upset about long answers but if you go through these questions his questions are the longest. If you get long questions you have to give long answers. [Laughter] [Interjections] [Laughs] Mr. Speaker, the construction of the retaining wall in the vicinity of the Sugar Apple Inn has been completed, outstanding works relate to back filling and paving of the road surface. The works was suspended to allow the concrete to cure prior to back filling. There were also some difficulties in obtaining appropriate back fill material. Mr. Speaker, let me just pause here; this is one of the major causes of collapse of back walls. It is one of the major problems with the Jack's wall that collapsed and while we are reconstructing this Jack's wall it is the major bone of contention between the Jacks' their project manager and the Ministry of Transport and Works. If a back wall is not filled with the proper material it is going to collapse again ant that matter of Jack's wall you will see the wall is complete but I will say to you now that we have to excavate some of the fill material that is behind that wall right now and put in proper back filling according to the specification: they came all the way from the University of the West Indies.

So, there were some difficulties in obtaining appropriate back filling material, this matter is now being resolved; back filling should be completed in a relatively short period of time. The construction of the wall represents a vast majority of the proposed work. Once back filling is completed the concrete road surface would be reinstated and this would be implemented as part of the \$5 million Basic Needs Road Repair Programme to be completed in the coming months.

(c) Repairs to Fort Hamilton Point Hill Tourism Site are proposed under this same funding arrangement: the Basic Needs Road Repair Programme and that will be implemented over the coming month. That is far as I am prepared to go with regards to date. It is unlikely that the works will be completed before the upcoming tourist season which is only a month away: late October. Special attention would have to be paid for implementation during the tourist season to limit or minimize the inconveniencies. Mr. Speaker, the Mt. Pleasant Road is one that has been questioned for a while I believe at the end of that road lives the former Prime Minister Sir James Mitchell and I think he uses this road to get to his residence. It is unlikely that repairs to the main road to Mt. Pleasant Bequia would be undertaken during 2011 [interjection] [laughter]. Prime Minister you are the Minister

of Finance, you give me the money tomorrow but there are so many priorities that I would have to sift it. I understand what you are saying but there are many priorities, and this work will have to be considered for the 2012 programme. I doubt very much that Mt. Pleasant would be addressed during this period considering the resources we have available. Thank you very much.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 7 Honourable Member for Central Kingstown.

7. *The Honourable St Clair Leacock, Member for Central Kingstown to ask the Honourable Minister of Education:*

The presentation of the Annual CXC results at various secondary schools contributes to a false sense of assessment of the performance of a large number of these schools. Some schools which indicated e.g. a 56% pass rate on closer examination have only a 10% achievement measured from the point of intake;

- a. what comparative records are available of our schools;*
- b. what is the Ministry's revised assessment of the state of performance; and*
- c. is the Ministry generally satisfied with the intake output ratios of our schools.*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister with responsibility for Education.

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. At present we have records available for CSEC results for all secondary schools and for the Common Entrance results for primary school and the placement in secondary schools. We are hoping to establish a tracking system so that we can pay closer attention to the moving of students across the school system and this should give us a better look at migration patterns, transfers, reputation rates, and exams successes.

What is the Ministry's revised assessment of the state of performance? I would like the Honourable Member to remember that there are many different ways of assessing a school's performance: looking at CXC; CSEC pass rate is just one way. Analysis of each school's result can indicate the weak areas in terms of curriculum delivery; SBA project management and staffing problems. Comparison of CSEC pass rates is not helpful in evaluating the worth of a school. For example students entering the Girls High School are the top students at the Common Entrance Exam and are expected to sit the CSEC Exam at the end of Form 5 with almost 100% success. Many students at rural schools also take five years to reach CSEC level, others take longer than five. These students may not have been in the top echelons of students at the Common Entrance Exams but they achieve creditable results all the same.

Different schools have different students of differing abilities taking different subjects. Schools should not be ranked as good or bad on the basis of their CSEC passes. We in the Ministry of Education do not need to revise our assessments. Is the Ministry generally satisfied with the intake output ratios of our schools? Using the intake output ratios for any five year period for any one school is not necessarily a good indicator of the school's performance rather we need to look at the value added to each child's life during his or her school career. [Knocking on desk] and ensure that his or her attainments are significant and are appreciated.

The Ministry of Education can never be truly satisfied with results until every student completes at least five years of secondary education and attains a level of competence in all of the skills necessary for the development of well rounded, productive citizens. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker. [Applause]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. ...

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Supplementary please.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary Question.

Supplementary Question

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, I asked of the Honourable Minister that taking into account your value added approach as you stated in circumstances where a school admits 96 students and then obtains a 56% pass in the CXC but on examination of the 96 that entered only 28 remained to write that exam is that not a matter of concern that a 56% pass is misleading in terms of the performance of that school? Let me repeat what I am saying of the 96 that entered within five years 62 fell by the road and that is typical of several schools, in fact some are very much worse than that. The CXC result therefore is a long way from addressing the dropout rate and performance in the schools. That is the question that is before you; are we attending to that Madam Minister?

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: They are out of the system.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Just a minute [Striking the gavel] just a minute please.

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: I have ...

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

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Sorry! Sorry! Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Now, this thing about Supplementary questions you are to come directly with the question and this thing about preamble in asking supplementary questions is really not a part of the rule. Let us get the question coming out from what is in, let us get the supplementary question. Honourable Member, go ahead.

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Mr. Speaker, I have given a fulsome answer to the Honourable Member, I even drew an example. Mr. Speaker, if I may go on a little further, some children are bright but when they sit to write an examination they cannot write it how do we measure?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 8 Honourable Member for Central Kingstown.

8. *The Honourable St Clair Leacock Member for Central Kingstown asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development, Information, Land, Grenadines and Legal Affairs:*

For many years now the profit from the sale of imported sugar has been used either to settle state debt or as a subsidy;

- a. what percentage of current profit from sugar now gives to our farmers;*
- b. what is the total sum contributed since the subsidy was started; and*
- c. how was the funds allocated to the farmers and to what categories?*

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

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, before I answer my Honourable Friend's question I would just like to advert refer to Standing Order 21 (c):

“If a question contains a statement of fact the Member asking it shall make himself responsible for the accuracy of the statement and no question shall be based upon a newspaper report or upon an unofficial publication”.

I am addressing the first part of that. But Mr. Speaker, the question says, “For many years now the profit from the sale of imported sugar has been used either to settle state debt or as a subsidy”. I do not know where any profit from sugar has been used to settle any debt of the state, so that I mean that is false; completely false. In relation to

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to assert that it is a fact that the profit of sale of sugar from the state for years have been used to pay off the debt of the Sugar Factory.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker that is not under my administration that is a matter which has been dealt with – that is a historical issue.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: That is your argument.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: All right. [Striking of gavel on desk]

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: It is not my argument; it is a statement I am making [interjections].

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member [Striking of gavel on desk]

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: You are wrong.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I am not wrong

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, please, Honourable Prime Minister

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Yes.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Proceed with the answer

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I shall answer the question in an omnibus fashion and I will give you all the various explanations: the details. Now, we have been since 2004 we have taken a decision to provide a subsidy: \$20.00 a sack. From since 2004 to the end of 2008 we have been providing a subsidy to the extent of about \$1.2 million because we have been selling basically 60,000 sacks of the fertilizer in a region therefore of \$1.2 million in terms of the subsidy for the fertilizer. Now in 2009 into 2010 we have received assistance through ALBA. Where we had the input warehouse the fertilizer will be purchased there but will be distributed either free or in the case of the earlier part of 2010 and the latter part of 2009 half price. [Applause]

For Tomas, consequent upon Tomas the government itself spent about \$1.8 million to provide free fertilizer for the farmers after Tomas [applause] as part of the rehabilitation of the Banana Industry and the replanting in addition of course to providing substantial sums of money for income support which is the first time in the history of this country that a government has provided income support for the farmers in three separate tranches. Well, a Honourable Member from North Leeward may question that but the point is this he is not a banana farmer so he does not understand the tree how important it is for ... The thing is this, the farmers that I know you make about ... if you get about \$4.00 a mat for bananas you will be doing well; which would be ...

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: You remember the question?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I remember the question. You have to worry about the questions by the Member for the Northern Grenadines and the Chairman of your Party in respect to certain activities which is coming at the convention.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member [Striking gavel on desk]

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: That is what you should remember, my memory is quite clear.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Let us deal with the issue at hand.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Now, Mr. Speaker, I am dealing with the issue and I want to illustrate, Mr. Speaker, that a mat you would have about 800 mats to an acre of bananas and if you make \$4.00 a mat you get \$3,200 an acre; of course if you plant Marijuana you can get much more than that an

acre. But I have to take care of the banana farmers. So, Mr. we gave three tranches of income support the first time in the history of St Vincent and the Grenadines; and the fertilizer we gave separately was free after Tomas.

Mr. Speaker, for this year we have been continuing with the closes of either free fertilizer or subsided fertilizer but we are even giving subsided fertilizer in a context and it is the cheapest fertilizer in the Windward. And Mr. Speaker, we have been doing that do we have not been making profits from the sugar. Three months ago Guysuco wrote us, the supplier of sugar from Guyana, and said that they are increasing the price of sugar, the brown sugar, from US\$560 a ton to US\$660 a ton. If you calculate it you will see it is about 13.5 cents a pound. We are not dealing with the increased cost for transportation, we are not dealing with the increased administrative cost which we have had, but it was increased by only 14 cents a pound because the government has to balance between the price of sugar to people and subsidy for the banana farmers and we have to find the money. It is not something just easy which you talk about; you have to do these balances and brown sugar is important for persons; young people in particular because they need the energy. Though of course there has to be a balance between consuming brown sugar for the energy and not be attached to it so that you have a non-communicable disease like diabetes.

So, Mr. Speaker, this is how we had to deal with that

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Tight batting wicket boy.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I am not on a tight batting wicket I am just showing you

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, would you please allow the Honourable Member to answer the question.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: ...how policy is being made. I am showing you, I am giving you the facts on how policy is being made. Mr. Speaker and while I am on this, if I may just say this: as this government has been a banana farmer government the further assistance to banana farmers that we have been giving I have instructed the Minister to let the officials tell us how many acres have been affected by Black Sigatoka, so that we can address the question of further banana assistance; further banana assistance. [Applause]

To give a scale of this, Mr. Speaker, I am told currently that you have about 240,000 plants affected which we had to cut down that is about 300 acres. If you put 800 mats to the acre and if you give \$4 to a mat you are talking about 240,000 by \$4.00, you are talking about close to \$1 million there already which we have to find. It may well be more, but these are issues which we have to address and there are no sugar profits available to help with that; so I have to try and find it from elsewhere because we have kept the increase in relation to the sugar at a minimum level. I am not scoring any point I am just answering the question so that the public can understand what the people's [interjection] - the extent ... the white sugar has a little something on it now not the brown sugar. I can try and go and get Mr. Speaker, brown sugar from Guatemala or Brazil instead of Guyana; am I going to get it cheaper what about the boats: the transportation? I am a practical man of affairs you know. I am visionary but I am practical and any question you noticed you ask me about I can give you the balances and the network as to how we have to deal with this. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker. [Applause]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 9 Honourable ... I think all supplementary were answered answering that question. [Laughter] [Interjection] Let us move on. Question No. 9

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: That is what you call a batsman playing for life.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Nah! Nah! Nah! I am a man who was educated by banana; I was raised by banana not haberdashery you know.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: You do not even make a good night watchman.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Let us go, question No. 9.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Nine in my name, Mr. Speaker. [Interjections] [Laughter]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 9, Honourable Prime Minister.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, I am in your corner, we want to go to lunch?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes, let us go to lunch.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: I rise to ask question in my name.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: We can have banter please.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Give way.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I got an injury to my right foot and I walk with a cane: a stick; imagine in order to score a point in a defense of something because he said; you are trying to throw something about somebody's ailment when he had a stick. What about the hundreds of old people? I am a senior citizen, I am 65.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: I am to, you know.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: What about people all over walking is the same way you are disparaging them and you want their votes?

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: No, all I want [inaudible]

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: No wonder you want to replace what St James has said is a senior citizen the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: No!

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: No, but you can manage him.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: What are you worrying about? All of us are old people; all of us in our wisdom years; you know what I mean.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: You have to wait until I [inaudible]

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: No, do not worry [laughs]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Could we take the lunch adjournment this time?

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: No Mr. Speaker, not when I am on a good batting wicket. Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister knows no slight was meant to him and we understand why he will need that crutch a little while longer and that is all right. [Interjections]

9. *The Honourable St Clair Leacock, Member for Central Kingstown asked the Honourable Minister of National Security, Air and Seaport Development:*

There was a recent homicide in Redemption Sharpes notwithstanding their professionalism and acts of bravery, members of the local constabulary were too seriously limited in being able to retrieve a body from a toilet soak away on Tuesday 13th September. In the end it was the commendable intervention of the community itself that made the difference. It is conceivable that retrieval situations from pit latrines can be for the saving of lives.

- a. How soon can this country expect a proper First Respondent Unit to be put in place under the command of an Officer of the local Forces; and*
- b. when will the requisite equipment resources and proper authority be given for emergency situations when split decisions must be made.*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of National Security.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSLVES: I refer again to Standing Order 20 (1) (f):

“A question shall not contain arguments, inferences, opinions, imputations epithets, ironical expressions or hypothetical cases.

This question in its prefatory stage, the preface to this question not only offends the rule about the length but it contains all of these things or most to these things I am talking about, Mr. Speaker, so, I do not know why all this ...

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: You answering the question yes or no?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: This House has to be governed by rules.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Well, you need to know that. [Striking of the gavel]

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: This House has to be governed by rules. [Striking of the gavel]

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: You need to know that.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member [Striking of the gavel]

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: By rules.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: And you do not like rules.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member [Striking of gavel]

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Governed by rules.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, Honourable Member.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Prime Minister is on his feet,

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: No he is not, he is sitting.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: he is making a point and you continue to disrupt him all the time and I am warning you about that.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: You need to warn him too, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I know when I need to warn somebody, you do not tell me what I must do and when I must do it. I think that is out of order.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: I do not think so.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I am going to rule you out of order in that case.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Well.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You do not tell me what I must do, and when I must do it.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: It is your House, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Good [Striking of the gavel] The Prime Minister is making a point which is relevant to the rules of the House. I mean, I have gotten to the place now where I must say, and I say this loudly and clearly and I told Members that; that I stopped vetting questions in this House; because when I vet questions in this House and they are sent back for any reason, I read in the newspaper that people are scoring victory and all that kind of situation and I am saying let the questions come and let us deal with the questions on the floor. And that is my position on questions these days.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, if you may.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable ... yes.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: I am asking a simple question, let me simplify it we had a situation in Sharpes, there was a body

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No, we do not need to go over that.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: He is trying to throw out the question and it is a serious matter.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Well, I think [striking the gavel]

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Well simple, do we have the question for saving lives when we are in such a situation?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: What I am saying, the Prime Minister I am sure will answer the question, but of course he is

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: So, why is he going round the world?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Oh! No! No! It is a question of rules.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Who wrote them, Mr. Speaker?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Eh! What is that?

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Who wrote the rules, Mr. Speaker? [Interjections] [Laughter]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You are kicks-in (‘g) Let us go on.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: I am kicks-in (‘g)

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister let us go on. You are kicksin (g); you are kicksin (g); you are kicksin (g) [interjections] you are kicksin (g); you are kicksin (g) [interjections] [striking of gavel]

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker [striking of gavel] Mr. Speaker, I made the point about the preamble I am not going to correct any inaccurate statement, or any imputations or any opinions. I just raised it in respect of the rules.

On September 13th, 2011 a total of 20 police personnel were at the crime scene at Redemption Sharpes: Criminal Investigation Department Major Crime Units, seven police officers; Special Service Units six; Rapid Response Unit seven. Mr. Speaker, when the body was discovered immediate efforts were made to contact Mr. Wyllie: Ken Wyllie who has a business, owner operator for sewage disposal business (the government has not decided to get involved in the operation) [interjection] (Whyttle; sorry; has not decided to get involved in the operations of a sewage disposal business of this kind) and they were unsuccessful. Eveready Funeral Home which is contracted by the government for the removal of bodies was also contacted and their personnel came on the scene.

Now, while the efforts to contact Mr. Whyttle were unsuccessful two persons from Redemption Sharpes they were contracted at a cost of \$500.00 each to remove the body from the Septic Tank and the process was supervised by the police personnel. This procedure is normal when dead bodies are discovered, notably for example in the case of concealment of birth or abandonment of child where a child is disposed in a pit toilet and so forth, which we have dealt with in the past; the police has dealt with in the past. Or in the case where persons disposed of exhibits in toilet pits and the police have had to contract individuals who had to assist in the retrieval of those items under the supervision of the police.

Mr. Speaker, I may say this before this administration everybody knew how the dead was taken from places; they were transported in a trailer behind a police vehicle; a little pan a tin pan with absolutely no respect for the dead; none. When that matter was drawn to my attention I said Nah! Nah! Nah! We cannot treat the dead with that kind of disrespect; that is not our culture; that is not our tradition; that is not our Caribbean civilization, so we have contracted Eveready Funeral Home, it costs a lot of money and that is why we upgrade the system and that is why we had them on the scene.

Mr. Speaker, there is presently in the police force an urban search and rescue unit; the Honourable Representative for Central Kingstown may wish to call it a first respondent unit, whatever name he wishes to call it; there is a urban search and rescue unit in place. And Mr. Speaker, I want to point out when the information was received that Mr. Nero the deceased was not located a circular was sent out to mobilise and alert the entire police force, public announcements were aired on radio and television to inform the nation. As no specific location was identified as to where he was or may have been, however, on September 13th when these twenty one officers moved up there promptly, when the body started to decompose and therefore a particular odor was emitted the information was relayed to the major crime unit right away. The body was discovered at Redemption Sharpes. In the circumstances of this case there was no need actually to activate the search and rescue unit because of the way in which this particular matter was handled.

Mr. Speaker, other personnel from this search and rescue unit went but, Mr. Speaker, there was no need for it to be activated in the manner in which to suggest that you must have a first respond unit must go there because the matter was reported to the major crime unit they went they found and they had to move with expedition. Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of sophisticated equipment in the police force, I have a list here, I asked for it, of two pages to deal with matters of this kind. Of course, always we are in the business in trying to upgrade the extent of the equipment. Mr. Speaker, what happens in this situation; the police force they have their own internal hierarchal system and the officer in charge of the unit would normally contact the Assistant Commissioner of Police who is in charge of operations and the ball will get on the road.

I want to commend the people of Sharpes also and those two individuals who assisted and

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: [Inaudible] Prime Minister [inaudible] Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member no; if you have a supplementary question you would ask it at that time.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary question nothing beyond that.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, there is an obligation in the House for questions to be answered honestly and all of what has been reported to the Prime Minister are manifestly untrue and the records must so state. For example, it speaks about a \$1,000 being paid I was approached to contribute \$500.00 and Berisford Phillips to do the other \$500.00 for a person to dive into a latrine without even proper gears.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary question.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, we cannot just sit here and allow these things to become records of the House

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary questions.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: when the hilt had to be borrowed from the neighbours:

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: the chain saw, every piece of equipment,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: even the dust mask had to be borrowed to constitute;

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Would you please take your seat.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: and you have an inaccuracy of information.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Take your seat please. Honourable Member, before we embark on the next set of questions I am under the general authority of the Speaker, I am stating that when a question is put there shall be no counter question during the period the question is being answered. If that happens I will render the question null and void. The only time someone must ask a question when he rises to ask a supplementary question. If there is any cross questions the questions ... and I want the Honourable Member who answering the question to understand this, I will render the question null and void. Things too easily get out of hand in this Honourable House. [Striking the gavel]

Question No. 10 Honourable Member for West Kingstown.

10. *The Honourable Daniel Cummings Representative of West Kingstown asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development, National Security, Grenadines Legal Affairs:*

What is the total cost of the Ottley Hall Enquiry from its commencement to the present time, broken down under the following headings?

- a. Payment to Commissioner;*
- b. payments to lawyers to the Commission;*
- c. payments to other professionals; and*
- d. administrative and other costs.*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for West Kingstown.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I love questions on Ottley Hall especially from the Opposition. There is always for answers to be intelligible there has to be a context in addition to the text. Mr. Speaker, this government met a situation where the immediate past Minister of Finance before me this one is now holder of the office of the Leader of the Opposition. For two and a half years he spent in excess of \$19 million on the interest for the Ottley Hall debt alone that is on the restructured debt \$19 million by the end of 2003 the principal was to be repaid and the principal and the interest at the end of 2003 depending on the extent the rate of (LIBOR) the London Interbank Offered Rate because the interest was tied to a margin above LIBOR, he would have had to pay \$10, \$12, \$14 million a year beginning from December 13th, 2003. In 2001 June, I wrote on behalf of the government to SACHE in Italy: the Italian Export State Agency and to West LB indicating to them the Bank of Germany which had put together the consortium of banks. Mr. Speaker, we asked not for a deferment of the debt, sorry not for a cancellation of the debt. We did not ask then for a... we did not say that we were not going to pay the debt, we asked simply for its deferment so we can talk to deal with the issue of debt relief. We did that unilaterally and the Opposition came here to

the House and said that I am risking having all the debt to be paid one time because I am not servicing the debt. I said, "I am not servicing the debt, not in the way in which this matter has been dealt with.

And the government decided that they were going to set up a Commission of Enquiry, we amended the Commission of Enquiry Act of 1911 and put in provisions so that the Commissioner can act even if you have any legal challenges against him by having investigators on the Commission of Enquiry because this is an involved matter which had to be not just evidence before the Commission but independent investigation, and we hired Scotland Yard personnel, retired Scotland Yard personnel to help to assist us. Mr. Speaker, we also saw this Commission of Enquiry as instrumental in assisting with the debt relief because once we had a report and we presented it as we did; the interim report and they saw what had transpired it made life easier for us to get the debt relief. And it turned out that the debt was \$180 million when we had come to the point for the debt relief EC\$180 million and we paid US\$6 million for everything. We had debt relief in excess of \$164 million [applause]

In addition to that Mr. Speaker, we had to write off \$30 million. In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we had to write off \$30 million at the National Commercial Bank in relation to the Ottley Hall Project and its associated Union Island Project that is the problem. We concluded this arrangement in February 2007 and we did the paperwork in the first part of the year and we got the debt relief and it saved us immense problems. Now, Mr. Speaker, the Ottley Hall Commission has been on since 2003, it has been going now for eleven years, I mean eight years to 2011. Mr. Speaker, delays in this has not been caused by the government; delays have been caused by persons before the Commission of Enquiry. We had the case of two persons including one who died went to the Privy Council and they lost on that matter; and the length of time things go from the High Court to the Court of Appeal to the Privy Council. Then another person before the Commission of Enquiry legally tied up the Commission of Enquiry in excess of two years now going on to three years.

So, the establishment of the Commission of Enquiry to ferret out the truth in relation to Ottley Hall, and anything to happen afterwards is not my responsibility. And this Commission of Enquiry was also instrumental in having us to get the substantial debt relief. So, that taking into account for two and a half years you spend \$19 million on interest, what they paid for in interest for two and a half years is more than what I got the whole of Ottley Hall for: the whole property down there and nearly six times of what we have spent on the Enquiry.

Payment to Commissioners: \$407,571.00; payment to lawyers to the Commission, \$1.03 million; payment to other professionals, \$1.18 million; administrative and other costs \$1.16 million; giving you a total figure of \$3.79 million. I will say that that investment given the context that I have outlined is a magnificent investment and we are not finished yet because we have to know the full truth and there are certain other matters which will have to be tied up as a consequence when we know the full truth. That is the position, Mr. Speaker. [Applause]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary? Question No. 11.

11. *The Honourable Daniel Cummings Representative of West Kingstown asked the Honourable Minister of Education:*

The south eastern corner of the Kingstown Government School at Stoney Ground is regularly flooded and hence encourages the breeding of mosquitoes. It also often leads to the younger children falling in pools of mud and filthy water from the washrooms.

The solution lies in the blasting of some exposed boulders, filling and grading of the space with suitable material and grassing or concreting of the area as deemed suitable. Several of the parents are prepared to make a contribution to this needed improvement.

Would the Honourable Minister please state if her Ministry would sanction this work and assist by providing the materials needed to ensure the many students have an improved environment?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister.

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Representative has exaggerated the situation at the school. During the school vacation maintenance was done on the toilets and they are in good working condition. The impermeable nature of the soil at the school does not allow for quick absorption of the water and this therefore creates some small pools in the unpaved patch, the breeding of mosquitoes require stagnant water and there is absolutely no evidence of this at the Kingstown Government School. The blasting of the boulders that are in the unpaved patch of the yard is not the recommendation of the management of the school. Instead the recommendation is for the filling in of the areas with the soil and then grassing it; the boulders will then be put to better use by painting them so that jingles can be written on them to reinforce concepts taught at the school. In the short term spouting will be placed where needed to capture and channel the run off from the roof.

The south eastern corner of the Kingstown Government School is unpaved and when it rains heavily the volume of water running off the roof is too much for the narrow drains and this result in the water overflowing into the pavement. A long term solution will be to deepen the existing drains.

Mr. Speaker, this government has expended significance sums on training our Principals in Effective Leadership and Management and the Principal and Staff of the Kingstown Government School are committed to the holistic development of students as outlined in their school development plan and are working in collaboration with all stakeholders to improve the learning environment at the Kingstown Government School. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary question.

Supplementary Question

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Do I take it through you *Mr. Speaker, that the Honourable Minister is rejecting my proposal for solving the problem?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question Honourable.

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Mr. Speaker, there is a development plan given to us by the Principal and we will be working with the Principal she may co-op the students, but we are going to go along with the Principal and the rest of the staff. I am obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 12.

12. *The Honourable Daniel Cummings Representative of West Kingstown asked the Honourable Minister of Health and the Environment:*

The Unity Labour Party Administration has been making and continues to make claim that each year one hundred nurses are trained locally. Would the Honourable Minister please state:

- a. What was the inception year and how many have been trained to date;*
- b. of those trained, how many have been employed locally or elsewhere; and*
- c. how many were taken on for the batch due to be graduating this year; and how many of this batch will be sitting the regional examination?*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Health and the Environment.

HONOURABLE CECIL MCKIE: Mr. Speaker, when the Unity Labour Party Government came into governance in the year 2001, it was confronted by a ramshackle health system. In fact, there was a chronic shortage of nurses and I think the nation would recall that efforts had to be made to contact our dependable friend from Cuba to assist us with nurses. [Applause] And it is through this assistance with nurses that we were able to avoid a total collapse of the health system. So what we did as a government is to begin by bringing in several Cuban nurses to help us out with this crisis. Prior to 2001 then NDP government trained at an average 25-30 nurses annually and given the demand on the system, it was inevitable that there would be a chronic shortage of nurses. Mr. Speaker, it was then that the Unity Labour Party administration established a policy of self-sustainability in the field of nursing. As a consequence a special seven- year programme was implemented, which took us from the year 2003-2010 and it was agreed that we would train 100 nurses annually to allow us to become self-sufficient. That was the policy and that was the target.

What was the reality, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, with implementing this policy? Nurses were expected upon application to meet the academic requirements, to satisfy an interview process which looked at academics as well as attitude and that we maintain standards; high standards at all times.

So to answer part (a) of the question; of the four annual batches of nurses taken on between 2003 and 2007, 270 students have completed training and of these 270 students 250 have already graduated and twenty additional nurses have met the graduation requirements and will now write the regional examinations which they can do in October 2011. To answer part (b) and (c) of the question it is important that I provide a bit of data. Let me first establish that the registered nursing programme takes a total of three years to be completed. What does the data shows us: the batch that came on in 2003 that would take us up to 2006, 118 applications; 118 interviewed and number accepted 104; dropped out 40; number graduated 64. 2004-2007 batch, 126 applications; 16

interviewed; 100 accepted; 20 dropped out; 80 graduated. 2005-2008 batch, 101 applied; 101 interviewed; 86 accepted; 18 dropped out and 68 graduated.

In 2006, there was a deferral of the batch to 2007 because less than 50 nurses applied at that time. 2007-2010 batch, 104 applied; 104 interviewed; 44 accepted; 6 dropped out; 48 graduated; a total of 250 graduated between that period as stated. The batch 2008-2011, 110 applied; 80 interviewed; 60 accepted; 26 dropped out; graduation would be in 2012. 2009 batch, 108 applied; 63 interviewed; 49 accepted; 26 dropped out; graduation 2013. And in 2010 seventh batch 111 applied; 97 interviewed, 63 accepted; three dropped out; graduation in 2014. Total applicants 778, 687 interviewed, 520 accepted, 199 dropped out, 250 graduated.

To provide explanation to this data only persons who meet the academic requirements are interviewed. Those applications which are accepted to the programme would have to pass the interview programme. Let us look at the batch 2003-2006 the first batch the dropout rate was particularly high some students never returned after orientation, some found other employment, some were demoted due to pregnancy or failure. What are some of the other explanations for the dropouts? Resignations, abandonment, termination which in some cases failure on resit exams, students have fallen out due to pregnancy or ailment, resignations, migrations. To give a breakdown of the 250 graduates in response to part (b) of the question 162 students have been employed locally, 85 nurses have been employed overseas including about 60 in Barbados, a country where we previously sent cane cutters and we also have a number in Trinidad [applause] and there are three nurses remaining in St Vincent and the Grenadines who have not been employed and it is expected that they would be shortly employed as posts have been made available. So, 2005 twenty employed, 2008 fifty employed, 2009 thirty-three employed, 2010 twenty-eight employed, 2011 thirty-one employed.

Mr. Speaker, in response to part three of the question, let me just say that the Government of St Vincent and the Grenadines by necessity must and will continue the policy of training nurses here in St Vincent and the Grenadines. In fact, it is on roll that some 160 applicants have been received this year to enter batch No. 8. Nursing in fact continues to be one of the careers in greatest demand not only in St Vincent regionally and across the world and it is for this reason why the training aspect is going to be critical going forward. In fact during my discussions with the Minister of Health of Trinidad and Tobago and his team at the United Nations sessions held last week they indicated there that they have as much as 2000 vacancies for nurses in their system; they have in fact made a request for us to help them out to assist them in providing more nurses as we have already have done.

During our visit two weeks ago to Cuba we also held discussions with the 60 nurses that are pursuing the Bachelor of Nursing Programme in Cuba. I must say here that the results of these nurses so far are at an average in excess of 95%, they are doing extremely well [applause]. In our discussions with the Ministry of Health in Cuba and with the administrators of the nursing school they have agreed and we very soon will make an application to them to have some of these nurses enter into parallel training to be able to take up their positions locally in specialized fields. Some of these nurses of course would have the opportunity to go on to Trinidad to take up employment. What I am pointing out here, Mr. Speaker, is that there would be a lot of opportunities where our nurses are concerned.

So, to answer the third part of the question we certainly will have great use for the expertise of these nurses upon completion in St Vincent and the Grenadines. The Registered Nursing Programme for this year ended on September 1st, 2011 and thirty students will graduate in June 2012 as I outlined in the data. Sixty students were taken in at June 2008; four students dropped out by the end of 2009 of the remaining fifty-six, twenty students failed, two resigned and two dropped. Mr. Speaker, we had great difficulties with this batch of nurses and for reason that I would not state here, I think that we have to look at certain aspects of the administration of that programme as we go forward. Nursing is in great demand and we will continue to train our nurses and I dare say that we will continue to ensure that the standards are up kept by the quality of nurses entering the programme. Thank you. [Applause]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No ... Supplementary question?

Supplementary Question

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I crave your indulgence before I ask my supplementary question. The Honourable Minister gave a lot of statistics quickly; I am going to ask my Rotarian colleague if I could get a copy of the figures. Mr. Speaker, I want to ask the Honourable Minister if there were any issues associated with staffing or other related issues that are responsible for not achieving the targets.

HONOURABLE CECIL MCKIE: Any particular year?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister, will you please answer the question.

HONOURABLE CECIL MCKIE: Well, I am not sure if he was referring to the present batch if there was a problem with the ...

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: Mr. Speaker, throughout the process the targets have never been met, so I am asking whether there are issues.

HONOURABLE CECIL MCKIE: Right, as far as I am concerned there will always be challenges in the system but in the most recent batch the figures would not reflect any shortage of persons to administer the programme but of course you can get a copy of the response which would have all the details.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 13 Honourable Member for North ... yes Honourable Member.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I do not know whether I am mistaken or not, I have seen I believe ... I have not been able to see my colleagues here but I have seen one and two persons on the other side look at though they may be wilting. It is 2:30 p.m. almost I do not know whether they wish to have lunch or whether they wish to continue. If they wish to [interjection] Mr. Speaker, I made the observation, I do not know if the Honourable Speaker has made the observation, if I am wrong about that I will ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister I recognised what you have said but I am also suggesting that you know for a little bit of tidiness we probably can go to lunch at 3:00 o'clock and ...

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: We wouldn't finish the questions.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: by then we would not finish them either but ... so you want to go to lunch now? Well question, put the question.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I am concerned particularly about my two Honourable friends on the Leeward side of the island: in North Leeward and South Leeward. I noticed that they have not been able to withstand the rigours. I may well be mistaken and if I am mistaken, I apologise.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members ,should we continue at least until by three?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I think we could go to lunch and come back by 4:30 p.m.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay, all right Honourable Members.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: May I just move Standing Order 12(5) just in case. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move under Standing Order 12(5) that the proceedings of today's sitting be exempted from the provisions of the Standing Order hours of sitting.

Question put and agreed to

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I have been advised, Mr. Speaker, that at least one Member in this Honourable House in addition to the Honourable Speaker would have to leave at 5:00 for the ordination and certainly one Member on this side. I do not know if there is any other Honourable Member on the other side who would be going to the Anglican ordination, so I raise that before I make my motion.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes that is quite true. [Interjection] [Laughter]

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, the conundrum that we have is that the Honourable Minister of Social Development has five questions to answer, and he has to go off to ordination.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes he can probably ...

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: at 5:00 o'clock, maybe we can take them now. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, we can take them now and then go off to lunch.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: All right.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Maybe that is the ...

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: If we are taking five, well only three or so leave.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: No, we will take the five.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: So, we leave back the three till this evening you mean? We might as well go through and done. [Interjection]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: If he answers what?

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: If you cut back on your questions we get out faster still and the length of your questions.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: All right, we will then move to question No ... what is the first one: 16? Question No. 16 and that is coming from the Member of South Leeward.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that the Member for the Clergy is ready.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Just a minute, just a minute [Striking the gavel] let us settle down. Okay all right now.

16. *The Honourable Nigel Stephenson Representative for South Leeward asked the Honourable Minister of National Mobilisation, Social Development, the Family, Youth, Sports and Culture:*

- a. *please indicate if there is any plan to construct the Indoor Sports Complex at the Anglican School Annex which was a campaign issue; and*
- b. *if yes, when can we expect work to commence?*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of National Mobilisation, Social Development, the Family, Youth, Sports and Culture.

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, response to question No. 16. Yes there is an intention to construct the Indoor Sports Complex; (b) the National Lotteries Authority the state owned entity with the mandate to take the lead in the execution of this Indoor facility project in collaboration with other stakeholders has already obtained ownership of the present facility. The National Lottery Authority has been working closely with the Ministry of Sports; and the services of an architect have been retained to prepare the designs. The commitment of the ULP Government to construct this facility and once the designs are completely and approved work will commence. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Well, as we are jumping question No. 19 that is the next one.

HONOURABLE VYNNETTE FREDERICK: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

19. *The Honourable Vynnette Frederick Opposition Senator asked the Honourable Minister of National Mobilisation, Social Development, The Family, Persons with Disabilities, Youth, Sports and Culture:*

Given the fact that (ECCO) the Eastern Caribbean Collective Organisation for Music Rights in St. Vincent and the Grenadines how has the sole right to collect royalties on behalf of all member artistes of the organisation:

Will the Honourable Minister please indicate whether the Rome Convention and the WIPO Performance and Phonograms Treaty (WPPT) have been signed and ratified?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister for Culture.

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: Mr. Speaker, St Vincent and the Grenadines is not a signatory or a contracting party to the Rome Convention but we have signed the (WIPO) Performance and Phonograms Treaty. This was signed and ratified on November 12th, 2010 and the date of entry into force is February 12th 2011. Much obliged.

HONOURABLE VYNNETTE FREDERICK: Supplementary.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary question.

Supplementary Question

HONOURABLE VYNNETTE FREDERICK: In the light of what the Minister has just answered would he indicate any reasons for the delay in becoming a signatory to the Rome Convention? What the position is why are we delaying?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question Supplementary.

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: Mr. Speaker, you do not just rush into signing Conventions we have to study them and take our time and see how they fit into our local context before we do so. Much obliged.

HONOURABLE MR SPEAKER: We move to question No. 20 Honourable Member Opposition Senator.

20. *The Honourable Vynnette Frederick, Opposition Senator asked the Honourable Minister of National Mobilisation, Social Development, the Family, Persons with Disabilities, Youth, Sports and Culture.*

In November 2009 a policy framework and development strategy for cultural and creative industry development was tabled for the consideration of stakeholders. In light of the fact that we are approaching two years since this document was presented will the Honourable Minister please indicate the following?

Will the Honourable Minister please indicate whether this strategy has been implemented?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Social Development Sports et cetera.

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: Much obliged, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the policy framework and development strategy for cultural and creative industry develop document was finalized and distributed to stakeholders. This document has served to guide several interventions for the country including:

- a. training of some thirty-five cultural practitioners in various areas of the cultural and creative industries that include music, visual arts, craft and fashion.
- b. Expansion of cultural and creative industry export.

And we have participated in the Cuban Book Fair in 2011, signing of a Music Song Writing Contract for the nationals of St Vincent and the Grenadines, participation of a number of local designers in international fashion programmes. So, those are some of the work that was done since this document was developed.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary Question.

Supplementary Question

HONOURABLE VYNNETTE FREDERICK: Just to be clear so, certain parts of the strategy has been implemented but not the entire strategy; am I to take it that this is what your answer is?

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: Yes, we have implemented the strategy and we are working on the [inaudible]

HONOURABLE VYNNETTE FREDERICK: How much more?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member. Oh he answered the question.

HONOURABLE VYNNETTE FREDERICK: Yes, he said yes.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question then No. 21, Honourable Senator Baptiste.

21. *The Honourable Anesia Baptiste, Opposition Senator asked the Honourable Minister of National Mobilisation, Social Development, the Family, Persons with Disabilities, Youth and Culture:*

In light of the recent reports of sexual and other domestic violence and abuse of our women, some of which continue to result in female homicides, in light of the fact that the government has made provisions of about EC\$192.000 for the establishment of a Crisis Centre whose main objectives are to address the above issues: Would the Honourable Minister please indicate;

- a. If the long awaited Crisis Centre has been launched;*
- b. If this much needed institution is operational; and*
- c. If the answer to the above is 'no', how soon can Vincentians, especially our women and children who continue to be victims of domestic violence have access to the crisis centre and its services?*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Social Development.

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: Much obliged. Mr. Speaker, part (a) and (b) of the question the response no the centre has not been launched; I do not know if she wanted to say opened but she said launched. [Interjection] No. the centre has not been launched, nor is it operational. Protocols and operational manuals are completed and the Ministry is awaiting placement of staff by the Ministry of Finance and the Service Commission's Department. Once these things are put in place the centre would be operationalised. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE ANESIA BAPTISTE: Supplementary.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary Question.

Supplementary Question

HONOURABLE ANESIA BAPTISTE: Do you have any idea at all in terms of time when these things will be put in place by the Service Commission as you mention that is.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question Honourable Minister.

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: I cannot speak for the Commission; but we have asked for the release of post and so we are just awaiting that from the Service Commission Department and once that is done I am sure persons would hear of the operationalisation of the centre. Much obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 22, Honourable Anesia Baptiste, Senator.

22. *The Honourable Anesia Baptiste, Opposition Senator asked the Honourable Minister of National Mobilisation, Social Development, The Family, Persons with Disabilities, Youth, Sports and Culture.*

There are a large number of complaints of elderly and ailing constituents whose family members are unable to access public assistance for their loved ones. They say that when they address their requests to

the Social Welfare Department they are often instructed to see their area representatives and that they are subsequently unsuccessful because they are known to the area representatives as supporters of the Opposition New Democratic Party. In light of these complaints, would the Honourable Minister please state:

- a. If it is a policy of the Social Welfare Department to instruct Vincentians to see constituency representatives before they can be considered for public assistance.*
- b. If the answer is in the affirmative, please state why;*
- c. if the support of the Unity Labour Party is a condition for receiving public assistance; and*
- d. whether it is true that even citizens with letters of recommendation from Medical Doctors are turned down due to their political affiliation with the Opposition Party?*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Social Development.

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, it really pains my heart as Tajo sang in his calypso this year: “Susie Standing In the Rain” to answer this question, because this question, Mr. Speaker, is pregnant with falsehood. Mr. Speaker, my Ministry through the Family Affairs Division executes the public assistance programme guided by the Public Assistance Act Chapter 321 of the Revised Edition of the Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines [applause] 1990. According to the Act persons wishing to access public assistance have to forward their request to the Public Assistance Board via the Public Assistance Board members for their respective constituency. These requests are then processed by the Family Affairs Division, it is neither the policy nor practice of the Ministry, nor the Family Affairs Division to instruct anyone seeking public assistance to see their constituency representative before they can be considered.

And so being a supporter of the Unity Labour Party is not a condition for receiving public assistance. It would seem to me that the suggestion was intended for political mischief. [[Knocking on desk] the public assistance programme seeks to enhance the socioeconomic status for the needy and the indigent in our society. As at September 2011, the public assistance list shows a total number of 5,516 recipients costing the government EC\$1.2 million. All persons who are eligible to receive public assistance have access to the programme irrespective of their political affiliation. So to suggest that a person seeking public assistance must be a supporter of the Unity Labour Party is not reflective of the profound love and the unwavering compassion and support for the poor that this [applause] ULP government has exemplified since it broke the NDP yoke of bondage from off the poor in 2001. And since then this Unity Labour Party Government gave increases after increases in public assistance [knocking on desk]. To date, persons are receiving \$200 and some \$220. I guess probably that is why some persons want to get on. Because some people feel that the public assistance is a free for all and also an old age pension but it is not so, it is for the needy.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, in response to part (b) of the question as follows, I am not aware that citizens with letters of recommendations from Medical Doctors are turned down due to their political affiliation with the Opposition NDP. Further I have been advised by the Director of Family Affairs Division that due

diligence is given to every request made for public assistance according to the requirements and conditions of the Act and that there are no strings attached to this process.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, my government and the Ministry continues to serve the people of St Vincent and the Grenadines with dignity, pride, equity and fairness irrespective of their political affiliation [knocking of desk] Mr. Speaker, I have given several persons not only in the constituency of South Windward but throughout St Vincent and the Grenadines who would come to the Ministry from time to time book bags and books and so on: I have never put that on television, Mr. Speaker. [Laughter] but these are all part of what we do as public officials in assistance to help the poor and the needy of this country. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker. [Knocking of desk]

HONOURABLE ANESIA BAPTISTE: Supplementary.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary Question.

Supplementary Question

HONOURABLE ANESIA BAPTISTE: Notwithstanding the cheap shots, Mr. Speaker, in all seriousness though, I want to ask through you, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member if it is possible that while as the Minister responsible for the department he is saying that there is not such a policy, if it is possible that there are officers in the department who do in fact instruct Vincentians I am asking you to see their representatives whether you know, I am asking? Because I do not accept you implying that Vincentians are lying on the department. There are real stories like this.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question.

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of that and if that is brought to my attention those persons would be dealt with.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Members where we stand now we have about five questions remaining, should we proceed?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, it appeared as though North Leeward and South Leeward they have a new burst of energy so maybe [laughs] I think they went into their reserves so perhaps we could continue [laughs].

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: So, then we move to question No. 13 Honourable Member for North Leeward.

13. *The Honourable Roland Mathews Representative of North Leeward asked the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works:*

The advent of the rainy season has brought into focus the impending danger of the “German Gutter” and also the English Gutter in Troumaca. After years of unchecked erosion the banks of these gutters have worn away significantly and are posing an immediate threat to the homes of residents.

- a. Will the Minister please indicate what plans are in place with these two gutters; and*
- b. If in the affirmative, what urgent plans include relocation of the houses in close proximity to the affected area?*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Transport and Works.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Sheer names of these gutters would tell you how long these gutters have been here [Laughter]; since World War 1; German Gutter and English Gutter. There are about ten German Gutters in St Vincent and the Grenadines, Mr. Speaker. [Interjection] I know which one you are talking about, Honourable Parliamentary Rep. I am not running from the question but there have been many rainy seasons since World War 1 and that is the point I am trying to make. Let us not presume, let us not advance the argument that this rainy season is any different from the other rainy seasons with regards to solutions of German Gutter and English Gutter. Mr. Speaker, these are two famous and infamous gutters like the one in North Windward same thing; there is a German Gutter in North Windward. It is of loose material Mr. Speaker, many things have been tried with these German Gutters and English Gutters. The English Gutter is a baby compared to the German Gutter. I got the department to Google the map of Troumaca just to see the comparisons between the two. I mean one is like a baby whale and the other one is like a big hump back whale, you know what I mean. [Interjection] One is a jack fish and one is a whale [Laughs]. Mr. Speaker, extensive erosion has gone on in these areas ever since we have known ourselves, since my father was the Agricultural Officer around this area and many others. Mr. Speaker, in some sections the German Gutters are almost 100ft deep, you know; and it continues to erode every rainy season.

When we were digging out there and when we were cutting lands for the cross country road we even got some sand from that because so much was piling up at the side that we throw them in the German Gutter and persons objected because it is going to wash down and so on. Some experts of the Forestry department objected to this soil being thrown down there. The area is heavily forested, well not forested but is planted with trees mahogany and teak trees for the years but because of the lack of topsoil and the looseness of the soil in that area when the rains come these mahogany trees and teak trees are now heavily matured trees they loose their footing and they tumble over and then the erosion continues again. So, there has to be a harvesting of these trees and a replanting of these trees, and it takes more than one institution to get this under control. I really as a practical man of affairs, Mr. Speaker, I would prefer to take the people who live around there and relocate them than try to fix the German Gutters. That is basically my approach to it because, Mr. Speaker, walls have been constructed in this German Gutter over the years: gabion baskets and you would have to go 300ft across below the school; there are a couple right up to the school but if you go down into the ravine in the German Gutters it is going to cost you four times, five times the cost of relocating the few homes that are around there that are threatened. I would say we do whatever we can in the interim and as we progress and every rainy season we become aware of it and see what we can do to mitigate the excesses of the erosion.

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: I always thought Danny was the engineer.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: You thought so, well, I sent him to school because I thought he had a younger and brighter brain than me, so I asked him to go and do the engineering; but I briefed him on a lot of these subject matters. But I believe that this is a better approach, Mr. Speaker, and I do not want the Honourable Member for North Leeward; and I am not going to blame any administration for this, this is a natural phenomenon. And unfortunately the further North you go in St Vincent is the looser the soil. Grave diggers in Georgetown get the same price to dig a grave in Kingstown but it takes them three hours less to dig the grave in Georgetown because the soil is loose. So, as you go further you will find this looseness of the soil and creating extensive problems for you, this is why again our building code and guidelines Mr. Speaker, are fundamental in getting soil test and designs for houses that we are building. So, Honourable Member and Members I believe that we look at this and see if there are any houses being threatened let us see if we can move them as quickly as possible before they tumble down the bank side [interjection] No! No! Mr. Speaker, please let not the Parliamentary Representative for Central Kingstown bring back to us why he went into politics. [Striking gavel on desk] I told him that earlier you know, when he opposed me on the cross-country road, I said, “your next entry shall be politics because you are playing politics with the cross country road”. He said, “No! I will never get involved in politics”. Six months later he was in [Laughter]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 14 Honourable... No supplementary right?

HONOURABLE ROLAND MATHEWS: No! Once we get that there is a possibility of moving people, I am glad to hear that. I was going to ask how soon but I know I am going to get a long-winded answer so go on.

14. *The Honourable Roland Mathews Representative of North Leeward asked the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries:*

The failure of the Ministry of Agriculture to maintain its schedule of spraying bananas in a timely manner has resulted in the almost complete devastation of the Banana Industry by the outbreak of the Black Sigatoka disease throughout St Vincent. Will the Minister please state:

- a. what efforts are being made to assist affected banana and plantain farmers financially due to the devastation of the industry by the outbreak of the disease;*
- b. what plans are in place to revitalize the industry;*
- c. when can we expect the recommencement of exports; and*
- d. will the Minister give the assurance that systems will be put in place to ensure that future problems will be minimised and better managed?*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Agriculture.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank the Honourable Members for North Leeward for bringing this very important question to this House at this time. The Banana Industry has served this country well and will continue to serve banana farmers of this country. Of

course, many families indeed do have a livelihood from this very important industry and so Mr. Speaker, by way of background information I want to deal with the question in that regard. Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that in 2009 that the Black Sigatoka was found here in St Vincent in Prospect, in a backyard of an individual, where that individual had two plants in his backyard. And when the information came to the Ministry of Agriculture we immediately took samples, we sent it off to Martinique to have it confirmed while we destroyed the plant. One week later we got the confirmation that it was Black Sigatoka, by then the Ministry would have seen areas in Greiggs coming down with the disease. Mr. Speaker, that was very late in 2009; by 2010 we had an early drought condition and that drought really lasted for quite some time and when it is rather dry the spores are not being able to multiply as quickly as possible and so you have a certain level of control during the dry period but then later in 2010, it was the hurricane Tomas that devastated approximately 99% of the Banana Industry here in St Vincent. And so Mr. Speaker, the climatic condition together with the hurricane really did not cause much alarm and concern but I wish to also say, Mr. Speaker, that it was in 2009 when Act 3 of 2009, which dealt with the banana industry; which dealt with the folding up of the BGA that Disease Control went to the Ministry of Agriculture and therefore by that Act the Ministry is responsible for disease control which includes leaf spot spraying. Mr. Speaker, it is in that light that I wanted to let the House know in terms of that kind of background where we are and therefore what happened.

Mr. Speaker, in 2011 the Budget was in late January, and by March 2011: the end of March, the Ministry saw a release of \$1.5 million of an amount of \$3 million that was allocated for this very important control of the disease in leaf spot. Mr. Speaker, by the middle of April the Ministry of Agriculture made its application as I would have directed to the Ministry of Finance. By May, Mr. Speaker, at the normal meetings of the Ministry I enquired what was happening and the Permanent Secretary indicated to me that the application is done and we are awaiting Finance approval. By June, Mr. Speaker, I enquired and I got approximately the same answer. I went to the Ministry of Finance and Mr. Jackson who was the Budget Director at that time: who was in charge then indicated to me, "Minister, I will see what I could do for you". Mr. Speaker, it was early July, when I saw nothing would have come, I went back to Finance and particularly at the Cabinet and I asked the Director General of Finance and Planning what is really happening to the application that has been made by the Ministry of Agriculture in relation to the monies that we were seeking to have. Mr. Speaker, the Director General of Finance and Planning said to me "Minister your Ministry needs to do its work, it was just this very morning I was talking to your PS to ensure that the documents are placed in the Ministry of Finance".

Mr. Speaker, when I left the Cabinet meeting that very Wednesday evening about 4:30, I went back to the Ministry of Agriculture and I spoke to the Permanent Secretary Mr. Nathaniel Williams to ensure that the documentation reach the Ministry of Finance. Mr. Williams said, "Minister we have done that and we are waiting that of Finance". I said "No PS", I said, "I have spoken to the Director of Finance and planning, he has indicated that no documentation has reached the Ministry of Finance; and I am saying to you that you need to get the documents to the Ministry of Finance". He said, okay Minister, I will do that". The first day I had a very important activity in my constituency so I did not come to the office of the Minister of Agriculture, I came Friday, when I got in the Friday three minutes after the PS Mr. Williams came to my office, he said, "Minister I have to apologise to you". I said, "Apologise to me for what"? He said, "Minister that the documents that were supposed to have gone to the Ministry of Finance were still sitting in the Ministry of Agriculture". I said, "But how could this happen"? He said, "Minister I went in search of the documents myself only to find them on the

desk of the Senior Assistant Secretary”. At the time Mrs. George, Mr. Speaker, that is the report that he brought to me, I said, “What is important now is to ensure that the documents reach the Ministry of Finance so that we can have the required Spraytex that is needed for the spraying of bananas against Black Sigatoka”.

I should have indicated as well Mr. Speaker that of the \$1.5 million released and of the request that was made that the other documents went forward; we were able to have all of the chemicals. Both the Tilt and Banquet that is required those were bought but the Spraytex the document for the Spraytex did not go to the Ministry of Finance. He would have indicated that the document was sitting on that desk for well over four weeks. Now, Mr. Speaker having had the documents gone to the Ministry of Finance it was the end of July that we got the documents back to the Ministry to place the order. So, we placed the order and what has happened it would take approximately four to six weeks to have the Spraytex here in St Vincent. Now, having waited all of that time the document in the Ministry of Agriculture and then have to wait on the time of order of course it is going to prolong the application of spraying against leaf spot disease.

And so I myself on behalf of the Ministry I apologise to the farmers for what happened in the Ministry, but Mr. Speaker if you think that was bad that was not all. Mr. Speaker, after we awaited the delivery of the Spraytex I instructed the PS to ensure that everything is in place so that as soon as the Spraytex is here we can start the ball rolling the next day. Having instructed the PS to that extent one week later the PS came back to me and said, “Minister I have to report to you that the aircraft is not air worthy”. I said, “What”? He said, “Minister, November 2010 the last inspection of the aircraft to be certified was done but the aircraft is not certified to be sprayed or to carry out spraying operations”. So, he said that the aircraft cannot fly. So, I said, “you need to ensure that what we have to do we get it right”. He said, “Minister the bill that was sent to the Ministry of Agriculture to be paid to the service provider to ensure that the aircraft is certified has not been paid: the Bill is EC\$12,000”. He said, when he realised that as I had instructed him and he got the information that the aircraft could not fly and that the bill had come to the Ministry of Agriculture since November in 2010; that he himself went searching for that bill only to find that bill in one of the table drawers of the same Senior Assistant Officer.

Mr. Speaker, the question is and I have to ask myself is there an organised plot by an individual, or any organisation, or any political party to frustrate the efforts of the Ministry of Agriculture? [Interjections] Is it that there is an organised strategy by any individual, any organisation to frustrate the farmers of this country? Mr. Speaker, the results of the last general elections would have shown that the ULP Party is strongest in the farming communities. And that is why I ask the question: is it that what is done is to frustrate the farmers to indicate that this government does not care about farmers? Well, of course, Mr. Speaker, this government since we came to office has done tremendous things to the farming communities [applause].

Mr. Speaker, we have given tremendous subsidy on inputs to our farmers, we have made fertilizer from time to time free of cost to our farmers and even when hurricane Tomas struck this country this government has given income support to the farmers of this country [applause] no other government has ever given since I have been around. Mr. Speaker, this government has committed itself to leaf spot spraying of bananas in this country. Why? The cost of leaf spot is very expensive and no other organisation would take on such a challenge. All the same Mr. Speaker, the aircraft has been in the air since yesterday [applause] as of yesterday evening the aircraft would have sprayed up to 262 acres of bananas, the operations continue today. And so Mr. Speaker, there are

challenges in the banana industry; of course there are external challenges, we have lost the preferential market, farmers are now to ensure that they are certified and in so doing they have to conform to the global standards that are required. Farmers have to produce the quality that is required, since globalization has been at our doorsteps today.

Farmers have to compete and so Mr. Speaker, quite recently information came to me that of the quality of our bananas that 90% of the bananas out of St Vincent had to be rejected at the ripening rooms in England. Mr. Speaker, I called a stakeholders meeting when I got that information and we took the decision to cut back on fruits, there are plants that do have less than six weeks. Equally, Mr. Speaker, I had another stakeholders meeting in September to ensure that we can deal with the quality of bananas and so Mr. Speaker, having brought the stakeholders together we came up with a recommendation on the 20th September, it was appalling to see that the representatives who were at that meeting having agreed on the recommendations found themselves demonstrating against the recommendations they would have put forward. [Interjections]

Mr. Speaker, it is the policy of this government to support and to continue to support the banana industry. I want to remind the opposition in 1992 the banana industry had a surplus of \$20 million, in 2001 when this administration came to office the banana industry was in a debt of \$30 million. This administration paid immediately \$20 million to ensure that the banana industry survived, those are facts and further in 2009 a further \$17 million was paid to put the industry on a competitive basis [knocking on the desk] those are the facts [Knocking on the desk]. Mr. Speaker, I said all of that because this government has interests in the banana industry and the agriculture sector of this country and so Mr. Speaker, for those farmers who were affected the Ministry of Agriculture is now compiling the information so that a determination can be made as to what nature of compensation the farmers would have. That also was part of the decision of one of the stakeholders meeting.

Mr. Speaker, what plans are in place for the revitalization of the industry? Mr. Speaker, the Ministry will continue to embark on programmes of education, training farmers so that there can be global gap and to ensure certification. The Ministry is in the process of ensuring that there are 100,000 Joppa plants so that we can maintain the target of 3,000 acres of bananas by the end of this year. The Ministry of Agriculture will also destroy all the abandoned banana fields that exist now to ensure that we have that level of control of that disease against black Sigatoka.

Mr. Speaker, when can we expect the recommencement of exports? Mr. Speaker, even when 99% of the bananas were blown down, we never, ever stopped any exportation of bananas. Traffickers continue to export bananas so bananas continue to be exported out of this country. And Finally, Mr. Speaker, will the Minister give the assurance that systems would be put in place to ensure future problems be minimized? Mr. Speaker, I want to say to the Honourable Representative of North Leeward that the Ministry of Agriculture would have put certain systems in place to ensure that we do have on the ground at any point and time at least one application of fungicide and oil to ensure that when this cycle of spraying is to be done that we have the necessary input to do it.. Mr. Speaker, I am also saying to him that there is improved checks and balances to ensure there is a reduction on such reoccurrences. But I want to ask of him, Mr. Speaker, I want to solicit his support and that of the Opposition to join with me and to condemn the act of such civil servants and to ask of the Civil Service Commission to deal with such civil servants accordingly, since at the end of the day it is all of our farmers that

face the difficulty when such civil servant act in such a way. I am much obliged, thank you very much.
[Knocking on the desk]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 15 if no supplementary Sir.

15. *The Honourable Roland Mathews Representative of North Leeward asked the Honourable Minister of Physical Planning, Lands and Survey:*

The government had declared a freeze on the sale of crown lands in certain areas since about 2001, pending the outcome of an investigation:

- a. will the Minister please state what has been the findings of this investigation;*
- b. has the sale of crown lands recommenced in all areas of St Vincent and the Grenadines and*
- c. what has been the average annual income realized from the sale of crown lands since the recommencement of sale?*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Works, sorry Housing.

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, this is indeed a very interesting question from the Honourable Member of North Leeward. I however, have no difficulty offering the Honourable Member the information which he seeks. In 2001, Mr. Speaker, when the ULP administration assumed the reins of government a freeze was indeed declared on the sale of crown lands and this decision was taken by the new administration because it had been reported by officials in the Ministry under which the Lands and Survey Department then felt that great attention needed to be paid to the management of crown lands and that there were enormous amounts owed by citizens who had purchased from the state. And so, Mr. Speaker, this issue was the most in the first 100 days programme which was crafted by the ULP administration to plan the way forward for a blessed land.

Mr. Speaker, the Chief Surveyor and staff of the Lands and Survey Department which was then a part of the Ministry of Agriculture but now falls under the Ministry of Housing was given the mandate to carry out the required investigation and report accordingly, focusing particularly on our land resources with respect to availability, demand and sustainability of all land related activities as well as on the outstanding amounts payable by persons who had purchased crown lands. Mr. Speaker, I must dare say that this was indeed a necessary step for the new administration. On completion of the required investigation the then Chief Surveyor and staff of the Lands and Survey Department produced a report which revealed that:

- 1. A substantial number of persons were living on unsurveyed crown lands, island wide.**

2. **Major squatter [we now call them informal human settlements] existed at Chateaubelair, Fitz Hughes, Spring Village, Barrouallie, Dubois, Great House, Buddy Gutter, Trigger Ridge, Rosa, Glen and Diamond.**
3. **Many citizens in the aforementioned communities were living without basic amenities such as water, electricity, roads et cetera.**
4. **There was a high rate of defaulting payments in which parcels of land had been surveyed and for which ‘off letters’ had been issued.**
5. **There was a high demand for building plots and or houses but most of the useable government lands were rapidly depleting. The two southern parishes of St George and St Andrews were the ones most affected given that they were the popular destination for rural migration; and persons had already begun to settle on forest reserve.**
6. **The squatting was widespread in areas designated under the land reform project with subletting in Orange Hill and chronic default in payments on the other estates.**

Mr. Speaker, this unregulated situation could not be allowed to continue and so this administration set about to give greater focus to the management of state lands inclusive of the sale of state lands; but took the decision to resume the sale of state lands at the beginning of 2003 while at the same time also concentrating our efforts on crafting appropriate strategies for the management of all crown lands. Mr. Speaker there has since been a reasonable amount of revenue realised from the sale of crown lands following the freeze. And permit me, Mr. Speaker, to paint a picture of the revenue realised since the sales commenced in:

2003	\$1,075,497.78
2004	778,394.49
2005	678,269.85
2006	797,088.92
2007	658,738.96
2008	1,075,497.78
2009	1,015,486.21
2010	755,569.41

Up to the end of 2010 Mr. Speaker, a total of \$6,834,543.40 at an average of \$854,317.92 was realised. Mr. Speaker, it is important for me to inform this Honourable House that there is no fixed price placed on the sale of crown lands. What happens is that the office of the Chief Surveyor within the Ministry recommends a price to the Cabinet based on location and existing services: that is electricity, water and road. Mr. Speaker, I want to inform this Honourable House that the poor in this country who have been occupying crown lands for generations are now enjoying under this ULP administration the pleasure of purchasing parcels at \$0.10 per

square foot [Knocking on desk] the peppercorn rate, Mr. Speaker, because of the length of time they have lived on the lands. On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, the areas where services are provided crown lands are sold at approximately \$2.50 or \$3.50 for a square foot.

But permit me to inform this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, that this ULP administration also took the decision back then to give back to poor land owners who had purchased crown lands during the reign of the NDP administration monies which they really should not have paid. [Knocking on desk] In this case, Mr. Speaker, we had situation where persons had been overcharged and then we had some persons who could have gotten lands from private individuals for certain cost paying \$0.50 per square foot for lands. In addition, Mr. Speaker, the Cabinet took a decision to reduce the interest rate to 3% on outstanding amounts up to the first five years [Knocking on desk] and no interest charged on outstanding amounts in excess of five years. This measure, Mr. Speaker, really serve as an incentive for citizens to pay all outstanding balances. And so, Mr. Speaker, the temporary halt and the investigation of which the Honourable Member for North Leeward speaks happened because this ULP administration considered it appropriate to coordinate the development and efficient land administration system throughout St Vincent and the Grenadines giving that we recognised the importance of land as a scarce and valuable resource; and also as a wealth, social and economic development of each household and throughout the nation as a whole.

Mr. Speaker, it is still largely unspoiled our land St Vincent and the Grenadines and we have to make the optimum use of this resource which is a rich resource as I stated. In doing so, Mr. Speaker, we are aware that we cannot lose sight that land is limited in supply and this has resulted in competing demands and very often juxtaposing demands for development activities housing, agriculture, forestry and other areas of social and economic engagements. Mr. Speaker, the need for enhanced efficiency in land administration is further strengthened by the legacy of the plantation system which excluded the majority of the population from land ownership and therefore encouraged informal occupation. Moreover, Mr. Speaker, in many instances where ownership has been secured by a family member lands are informally distributed to other members of the family or successive generations, thereby denying individuals access to property rights and the security of those rights. A good land administration system is important for the development of an active land market and the productive use of land and so Mr. Speaker, land information is critical for enhancing land administration as well as for the development of an effective land market.

And it was with this in mind that the ULP administration was able to lay the foundation for the policy and institutional framework to enhance land administration in this regard we embarked on a programme to address the issue of improving land administration through projects funded by the European Union, National Land Information Management Project and the National Land Titling and Land Registration Projects. All of this, Mr. Speaker, from the halt and sale of Crown Lands and the corresponding investigation to the project about which I just spoke resulted...the project I spoke about resulted in the Possessory Title Act which was implemented in 2004 [Applause] and this Act permits persons in undisturbed occupation of Lands for over twelve years to be given opportunity to obtain legal titles to those lands, Mr. Speaker, that implementation of ULP policy of turning dead capital into live capital came into being in 2006 and this, Mr. Speaker, saw the creation of a new Ministry with responsibility for Informal Human Settlement and the emergence of the Land Unit to institutionalise the programme at the National Level. As a consequence, Mr. Speaker, hundreds of citizens have

been offered and continued to be offered the opportunity to purchase land from the state at highly subsidised rates. It is expected, Mr. Speaker, that through clear ownership and increase in number citizens will be better placed to utilise their title to property as security for loans for further investment and wealth creation. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: [Inaudible]

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: ...oh yes yes, Mr. Speaker, yesterday at Cabinet uhm... in the Lowmans Hill Buddy Gutter area we distributed one hundred and twenty parcels of land at \$1.00 per square foot [Applause] for the lands. So a hundred and twenty persons in Great House Lowmans Hill and Buddy Gutter you know this has been passed so they would receive their titles for the lands.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 17. Honourable Member for South Leeward, that's it.

17. the Honourable Nigel Stephenson asked the Honourable Minister of Transport, Works, Urban Development and Local Government:

In light of the fact that an entire portion of the old Butt Gut Road in the vicinity of Queensbury has collapsed, making it impassable to both pedestrians and vehicles.

- a. will the Honourable Minister please state whether that alternative road to Vermont will be restored; and*
- b. if so, how soon can we expect work to commence.*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Transport and Works, Urban Development and Local Government.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Mr. Speaker, this is a road that was abandoned by the NDP eh. Let me just establish that early. The Honourable Jeremiah Scott, the Parliamentary Representative for South Leeward, recommended based... to his Cabinet based on advice from the engineers that Buff Gut road is a spring and we need to build a new road. So Jeremiah Scott, the best Representative South Leeward has ever seen with due respect...with due respect with due respect to Dougie I will admit that went and bought lands, in fact, up today I believe, that he still owes some people in that area where the new roads is for some lands that he took from them, but Mr. Speaker, so this road is abandoned in fact residence of the area have used it now to put derelict vehicles and if we going clean that road we first have to move those derelict vehicles out of there before we could start to attack the road but Mr. Speaker, is no sense going back to this road because this administration has already built an alternative road, you see what I mean? You do not even know you need to establish this thing, let me explain to you where it is, when you leave...wait nah wait nah...when you leave...when you leave the bridge and you going into Vermont. You know where the Water Wheel is? Well let me explain it for everybody who do not know then... you know now...now that I start to explain it you know now... well wait nah let me do this nah. The Housing and Land Development Cooperation, Mr. Speaker, bought 10 acres of land up in Queensbury and we developed an alternative road to come back from Hope Bridge, the same Hope Bridge

that the Honourable Jeremiah Scott started the road from but Mr. Speaker, there was old estate road there, you would recall during the protest downstairs, Mr. Speaker, a gentleman tried to scale the fence and damage himself downstairs here. This same gentleman is a landowner in the same area and he “chuck off” the General Manager of the Housing and Land Development Cooperation while we were developing this alternative road he say that is his private land and we cannot run road through it and the Chief Surveyor went down there, the Commissioner of Police went down there, police went and locked him up, he has been charged in the Court of Law for obstructing the construction of the alternative road that the Honourable present parliamentary representative is asking me to redeem. Mr. Speaker, the only part of Old Buff Gut road that I would be interested in fixing would be from there back down to Hope Bridge. Buff Gut I said I did not say Butt Gut you know...you put Butt Gut, I am saying Buff Gut, I say Old Buff Gut...right, it do not matter what it is; I am telling you that the part that has collapsed done with, people would have to travel there by foot but we would fix and maintain the piece from down by Hope Bridge by Cable & Wireless by the gap down by the bakery there come up that road, because the Methodist Church still have to have access to that piece of road. So we will fix from there go up to the turning to go up by Mr. Charles, the landowner who “chucked off” the Land Manager of Housing and Land and make sure that that is the alternative road to Vermont. Nothing would happen to the big bridge that Jerry built because it is a fantastic bridge it just has a very high approach but it is a good bridge because real water does run under it and nothing is happening to it, it is well built whoever the contractor was. So do not waste your time to try and recommend the resurrection of that abandoned road. So wait nah you can have a chance for the thing you understand. So that the question of rehabilitating this road is out of the question, I will make sure that the area to give access to the road that goes through... Mr. Speaker, this road that we developed you know is a sixteen foot concrete road ULP style with fantastic concrete gutters and drains and runoff and all the lands in that area that are boundary to the bottom road that is not being abandoned since Jerry Scott days all those lands touch on the stop road because Housing develop the lots in that area which they bought from top road that we have built to the bottom road that is abandon. So if they cannot get access to the bottom they can go up Queensbury and go across on the concrete road. There are some thirty-eight building lots that we have developed up there, fantastic road, street lights are now being putting up there and everything. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary? Question No. 18, this is our final question.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Mr. Speaker thank you, I will not ask any Supplementary cause I know you are hungry so [Laughter] so I would ease you up...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Wait! Wait! Wait! what you saying that you know am hungry [Laughter]

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: [Laughter] the Honourable Prime Minister, not you, Mr. Speaker... [Laughter]

18. The Honourable Nigel Stephenson asked the Honourable Minister of Transport, Works, Urban Development and Local Government:

Will the Honourable Minister please state when work will begin on the construction of the Vermont/Francois Bridge.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Minister of Transport, Works, Urban Development and Local Government.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Mr. Speaker, I will ask the Parliamentary Representative to cooperate with the Ministry of Works in getting the person who has built the... whose house is built in the place where this bridge is supposed to go to cooperate with the Ministry and move out before we have to move him, that is going to hold up the start of this bridge. I believe that he should...as Parliamentary Representative he should assist the Ministry in getting this aspect of it done. The contract for the Vermont/Francois Bridge has been awarded by the Tenders Board to Sea Operations SVG limited in the amount of \$1.39 million, the contract document is complete and will be signed early in October Tenders Board just approved it. Following this signing the Contractors is expected to mobilise on to the site with actual construction starting by independence but Parliamentary Rep for South Leeward, I would ask you, to ask the gentleman who I think you know very well, who I think you know very well that is all I will say, alright? Speak to him, have him remove his house from where he has built it despite advice from the previous Minister and the Ministry, because sometimes these amenities that we are building are so important, I think this one Parliamentary Rep for South Leeward is more important than renovating and rehabilitating the old Buff Gut Road so cooperate with me and have that gentleman remove his house. Thank you very much.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable... Supplementary?

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Yea, I would not be long

Supplementary Question

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Mr. Speaker, I just want to say to the Honourable Minister that I am prepared to cooperate with him as soon as he is able to identify an alternative piece of land that individual can put his house, because these are not the days when you can tell somebody arbitrarily you have to re-locate from this area and there is not an alternative. As soon as that is done I am giving you my word I will cooperate with you.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Despite the policy of the Unity Labour Party, this Minister of Works, is not going to recommend this man be found a spot to re-locate, cause he was advised by persons close to the member of South Leeward and persons close to the New Democratic Party to put his there. I am not going remove and recommend...I say ask the Honourable Member for South Leeward, Mr. Speaker, so I am not in this project, in this project there is no allocation for the relocation for that gentleman. He will have remove his house or it will be removed and it is not anything to do with politics, that...this project you know, came about when the former...you asked a Supplementary Question I will answer you supplementarily...Mr. Speaker, the former Representative for Central Leeward, Sir Louis Straker, was very instrumental in getting this bridge in place and I want to congratulate him for that. In fact, he has been a thorn in my sight since I have took over the

Ministry last year December, the first question he asked me when I was put back as Minister of Works is to make sure I get this thing because he has made a commitment to the people of Vermont that this bridge be built. For years, the people of Vermont have been asking for this bridge since the Honourable Jeremiah Scott represented South Leeward, not now! This is not a job just come because they have broached the subject to Sir Louis and Sir Louis gave them a commitment and went and look for special sources of financing to get this bridge. So everybody in Vermont knew this bridge was coming. We went there during the campaign, we spoke about it before this gentleman put his house there, we tried to stop him, we went inside there and other persons there egging him on telling him man build your house man they cannot move it...well he built...if you want the bridge ask him to move his house. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable...Honourable

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSLAVES: Mr. Speaker, it is now twenty to four... uhm perhaps an appropriate time to return is half past 5? Accordingly I beg to move this Honourable House do stand suspended for the luncheon, well luncheon, tea period until 5:30.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members just to remind you that the Honourable Deputy Speaker would preside at the resumption since I would be away for a little while...uhm. The question is that the House stands suspended for the luncheon period. House stands suspended.

HONOURABLE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please be seated. I trust that everyone enjoyed there lunch and we have information. I was told that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition is not feeling well for this afternoon session and also this morning we had missed the Honourable Member for Northern Grenadines as well... Southern Grenadines as well; sorry.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

VALUE ADDED TAX (AMENDMENT) BILL 2011

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSLAVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move Bill for an Act to amend the Value Added Tax Act be read a first time. The object and the reasons of this Bill is to extend the categories of exempt supply specified in the fourth schedule to the Act.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSLAVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move on the Standing Order 48 (2) that this Bill be taken through all its stages at today's sitting.

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

Question put and agreed to.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSLAVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move Bill for an Act to amend the Value Added Tax Act be read a second time.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSLAVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, this is a straightforward piece of Legislation but with real beneficial effects for students who have received the Netbooks and who will receive the Netbooks and this Act will be deemed to have come into force on the first of September that is why I wanted it to move fairly promptly and as Honourable Members is aware the fourth schedule of the Value Added Tax Act deals with the exemptions for the supply of certain services and this one is the supply by licensed internet service provider of wireless equipment and installation for residential use of the netbooks provided by the Ministry of Education. So that we would not charge the students the VAT... the parents in the households where you have the students with the laptops, the primary school and secondary school students. Mr. Speaker we may well further this exemption, but we want to make sure that the connections are made for the students at their home. As I indicated on the 18th of August, we...by the 14th of October, we are going to provide for all the educational institutions in the country over one hundred and seven educational institutions plus twenty odd learning resource centers, some community centers and the like. We are going to provide them with internet wireless service, twenty mega bytes high speed. So while the students...currently that work has been done by LIME which won the contract through the...and being financed by the Universal Service Fund and being Superintended by the National Telecommunication Regulatory Commission. So the issue here, the students using the Laptops at the schools but when they go home we want them clearly to have the use of it and we want to facilitate that use by giving them a VAT free service in respect of the connections, the links and we would like to go further uhm...certain administrative measures would have to be put in place for us to go further in relation to other laptops because other students with laptop which are not uhm...provided by the state of course you just envisage certain revenue implications there so we have to study that part of it, but immediately what we have to do is to provide the connections VAT free for those immediately with the laptops, I have been advised that for about a hundred yards or so around the institutions that you can have in a sense a knock on use of the laptop but we are going to make sure that all the students who have these laptops to be able to have this service at their homes also. Mr. Speaker, we are a country with limited material resources but one of the things I want to make sure is that even with our limited resources we use our creativity to see how we can better advance the welfare of all our citizens and especially our students in this case, because the human resource that is what we have, that is what is carrying this country and that is what would carry it to the heights and lift the quality of life, level of our civilisation. The Minister of... the Honourable Minister of Education this morning addressed the mention made an appeal in respect of how people must behave and restraint and the element of love and caring. I mean we are only a hundred and ten thousand people and after have had all our political conflicts and controversies at the end of the day this is one very small

country and neither you nor I nor the next person can put gold and silver and minerals of one kind or another, oil well it may be out in the depths of the sea difficult to explore, at least commercially, so basically at the end of the day we have our land which is bountiful, we have our sea water for the fish but most of all, we have human beings and that is what we are simply about in terms of our focus and this Bill fits in with that particular framework and specifically with the matter of the internet connection for the laptops provided by the Ministry. Clearly, administratively what would happen each of these laptops they have numbers and once we get that sorted out with the installation and we will have the VAT exemptions, the question will arise if somebody has another computer inside of there what would happen, well it is life, there is a connection [laughter] and it is exempt for those purposes; and uhm...as you can see we have tried to think through the practical issues but that is where it is. I am obliged.

HONOURABLE DAVID BROWNE (Deputy Speaker): Yes Honourable Member

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I rise to give contribution to debate on the Value Added Tax Amendment Bill. It is uhm as the Prime Minister has said it is uh non-controversial as I understand it, although still looking at the language of it is not clear to me but I take the Prime Minister's word for it that in the end the understanding is that this Bill for the internet service that will be VAT free, there will be no VAT charged on the service provided to the homes of those persons who qualify essentially by having a netbook provided under the laptop program. It seems to me that it is a logical extension of the idea providing internet service to the schools and it just basically means that the Government would not be collecting any tax on it or making any money on it that seems right on the circumstances. The Prime Minister is sort of waxing philosophical somewhat in the introduction of the Bill talking about the development of human potential and you know the small nature of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and I will certainly endorse that but you know sometimes we say these things believing it in our hearts and then when confronted by the real test of it we do not do it. The real test of it is in the circumstances when it must be applied that we must live as one, it is a small country trying to help one another that is when it counts. We have no objection to the Bill, Mr. Speaker, it is...seems to me it is intended to provide and benefit to the students and to those household who have students in them well good for them. Thank you.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSLAVES: Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful for the contributions by my Honourable friend in the Opposition, I just want to say this to him on the general point he made about waxing philosophical and if you may permit me, Mr. Speaker, just to make a couple of points about some things which arose earlier today. You know I have been Prime Minister for eleven years and the number of persons I have actually gotten on, I myself, acting to get on the Public Assistance list maybe you can put them on, I was going to say one hand, let me say two hands no more than ten and am honest about this because, I really believe that the Public Assistance should deal with the purposes for it the needy, one of the reasons why we have so many additional persons is because we have a lot of students on it because they would not be able to go to secondary school for instance if they do not get the \$200. Of course, I am a practical man of affairs, I realise that some people who get the money, because I try to check in my own constituency and some children who get it, sometimes I am surprised at the number of times they are absent from school and I seek to enquire as to why, so those are some questions which comes to my mind. You take things like student grants and economically disadvantaged student loans and all those things, I...some of the...there are some students who go to university

and come back and some of them while they are at university they might be his critics but I am the person, I am responsible for them to go and when I say, I mean that, that I had to move the machinery to get them to go. Of course some of them are very supportive of me and grateful. Those things, they do not, they do not worry me and I make that statement in the context of my original statement and the older I get, the more I realise that some of these battles which we have are vanity battles, mock battles, uhm... and the more I read the Bible, you have to come to that realisation and I just want to say Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, that the ideal we set ourselves, sometimes we fall short because we are human beings but we have to try to keep the ideals and see to what extent we can work towards them and the greatest of all the gifts is that of love. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move, that this House resolve itself into a committee of the whole House to consider this Bill clause by clause.

Question put and agreed to.

House went into committee.

House resumed.

Bill read and reported without any amendments.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSLAVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to amend the Value Added Tax Act be read a third time by title and passed.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time by title and passed.

PREVENTIOIN OF TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS BILL 2011

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSLAVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, on the 18th of August, this Honourable House had the First Reading of this Bill, it was put into Select Committee and the Select Committee Report and Minutes were laid in this House this morning and what we have here is the Bill before us is what has come out of the Select Committee. Mr. Speaker, I do not want to speak a great deal on this, save to make a couple of broad points in relation to policy, Mr. Speaker, even before [Interruption] am sorry... am sorry, Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the...that the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Bill an Act to give effect to implement...and to implement the protocol to prevent the suppression and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children and to provide matters connected therewith and incidental thereto be read second time.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

DR. HONOURABLE RALPH GONSLAVES: Yes Mr. Speaker, as I was making the point having come out of the Select Committee, this Bill which is before us I do not want to say a great deal because we are all very familiar with its contents and we have had a lot of debates in several meetings of the Select Committee at which all members made valuable contributions. Mr. Speaker, but a few matters in relations to policy even though we are bringing a comprehensive Bill regarding the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons, the issues which have been addressed here are not issues on which the existing Law is silent. There are several provisions in the Criminal Code which touch and concern some of these matters but obviously it was necessary and desirable for us to put in place a comprehensive Law which follows the protocol to suppress and punish trafficking in persons especially in women and children and that particular protocol forms part of the Bill as the Schedule, so it is incorporated in the Bill. Mr. Speaker, there are several Governments in the world which have been pushing to address this issue of trafficking and to suppress trafficking, U.S.A, Canada, countries in Europe, other countries in other parts of the world including here in the Caribbean. Even though the Caribbean does not have extensive quote unquote trafficking, but one instance of trafficking is one instance too many, of course we have extensive trafficking in the United States, but they have had the laws to address it and the institutional supports and we passing the Law now have to put the institutional supports in place to make this particular Act effective and all of these carry a cost, but it is certainly a cost which a civilised society ought to bear and we are prepare to bear that cost in respect of the implementation of this Bill when it is passed into law. Mr. Speaker, we have been cooperating very much with a number of agencies in several countries in the world including the United States of America and it is a matter which obviously would required tremendous cooperation, not only intelligence between the intelligence services of the respective countries but also immigration which is very critical in this exercise and am hoping that these various institutions would work even closer so that those who are engaged in this criminal and various trade of trafficking in persons that it would come to an end. Trafficking in Persons takes all sorts of forms and some of it with persons who may come in illegally but trafficking takes place through on the face of its quite normal legal channels and the law which we have before us is very comprehensive and the criminal penalties, very severe, extremely long terms of imprisonment, some cases 15 years, 20 years, more. This law has six parts; the first part is the Preliminary part, the second part-Criminal offences and related provision, the third part-Assistance and protection of victims of trafficking, the fourth-Misuse of commercial transportation and the fifth- A national task force against trafficking in persons and there is a very strong institution which is being set up here across Ministries and with other non-governmental entities for a task force against trafficking in persons and then a general section with an important provision of the necessity of the Minister to lay an annual report in this Honourable House in relation to this subject.

Mr. Speaker, and it is important to note the important section of a consequential amendment to the Proceeds of Crime and Money Laundering Prevention Act where persons were involved in trafficking would be also coming under the provisions of the particular statue and to make the...the necessary submissions, so this is a...because people trafficking in persons for money and if we can address Proceeds of Crime and Money Laundering, certainly that particular dimension of it for instance, the FIU, the financial dimension would be addressed in that way institutionally in addition to all the other focal points which we would have in the implementation of this Bill. I think...I think I have said enough on the broad policy issues, I know that one or two other Honourable Members may wish to speak on this matter. If this Bill has come out of the Select Committee with unanimous support, so I do not expect any controversy on this matter on the floor of the House. Am obliged.

HONOURABLE DAVID BROWNE (Deputy Speaker): Honourable Senator.

HONOURABLE ELVIS CHARLES: Mr. Speaker, I rise to give support to the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Bill, 2011. Mr. Speaker, trafficking in persons is a crime against humanity, it is illegal, simply put it is the trading of persons to take part in many unsavory acts, very often against their will. It is true that trafficking in persons is not a new phenomenon, Mr. Speaker, one only has to remember the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, where many natives of Africa were abducted from their homes, there was clearly a use of force, tribes fought against each other and victims of wars was sent bound in chains across the Atlantic Ocean to the Caribbean and to many other parts of the Americas. Mr. Speaker, trafficking in persons is not unique to a particular country, ethnic group or race; it is a problem the world over. Another typical example, because they are so many, in ancient Roman Greece many of those empires were built by victims who were traded, especially in times of war, so today we can say that a significant part of the populations of some of these countries were built by trafficking persons. Mr. Speaker, trafficking in persons is a lucrative business the world over, hence the reason why it is given so much attention by so many countries, in fact, one report I read said that...stated that it is the second fastest criminal industry in the world after the trade in illegal drugs. It is a global problem and that is the reason why in 2000 the United Nations established a protocol in Paloma, Italy to deal with trafficking in persons and worthy of note is that even though it came into force in 2003 by 2010 it is said that about 117 countries and nearly 140 parties ratified this trafficking protocol, so we see here that is not something that is taken lightly by countries all over the world, it is a major problem.

Mr. Speaker, the victims or those persons who suffered the indignity of being trafficked are normally those who are vulnerable, those drug addicts, those who have financial problems, many who live in poverty, they are exploited by the traders whom I referred to as being heartless and we see here that there is no thought, there is no sympathy for such persons and that is the reason why when I rose to speak about this Bill I purpose in my heart to speak out about the evils of it because we see here the emotional problems, the social problems, the psychological problems that are experienced as a result of this Act. Some people became victims because they were promised lucrative jobs, or they lured on the pretense that life would be better, but when they reached their destinations, low and behold things turned sour and they realised that they had been tricked. The victims of human trafficking as I stated before are generally used to do demeaning work, work that is...would not be looked upon by someone in later years being good and I look...lets us look at debt bondage. Sometimes a man cannot pay his debt and in order to re-pay that loan he is used by the trafficker, there are no perimeters as to how much he should pay there is nothing to quantify that value, hence, he is being abused over and over and over again by force and he is always reminded that he has to pay his debt. Imagine someone or some Vincentian living in such condition sometimes I cannot help, but you know look back at my own situation or that of my children or my neighbours child and ask myself if that was my neighbours child or my own children, how would I feel? These things no doubt have psychological damage on the victims and that is the reason why I would really give support to the Prime Minister when he said if there is one victim it is one victim too many.

Mr. Speaker, very often children suffer the indignity of being trafficked, they work in mines, in fields, in agricultural plots all over the world, they work in the sex industry, sometimes when you look at the television and you look at the ages of children and you look at how they are so young and innocent and are being exploited in the sex industry, there is a feeling of sadness, there is often a feeling of sadness and I am not only

speaking here about the children but am speaking about adults who are being used to these tasks many of them end up in strip clubs, take part in pornographic movies and so forth and I say there is nothing dignify by being trafficked, by being used as objects. Some women are often promised marriages and as I said before they soon realise that it is not what they thought and am not only talking about women only, or young girl's only but young boys and men are being sold, bought and sold like objects. Mr. Speaker, the U.S. Department of Justice report that there were about 1300 suspected human trafficking incidents in the USA from January 2007 to September 2008 incidents, we are not talking about the numbers here, we are only talking about the particular incidents. Mr. Speaker, the International Labour Organisation estimates that there are about 246 million exploited children age between 5 and 17 who were victims of human trafficking. Note well, in 2010, just last year, it is documented that Thailand and Brazil have the highest...have the worse child sex trafficking record. Mr. Speaker, I am lamenting children here because they are the younger ones, it is not that I do not have sympathy for the older, for the older men and women but I tend to sympathise more with children. Mr. Speaker, there is a common effect on all victims and this Bill that is before us today, not only seek to prevent, it seeks to suppress and to punish the perpetrators of this wicked act, and I would just like to say that I gave support to this Bill and I think it is going to serve the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines well when it is passed through this Parliament, thank you very much.

HONOURABLE DAVID BROWNE (Deputy Speaker): Honourable Senator.

HONOURABLE ANESIA BAPTISTE: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to make my contribution to this debate, on the Preventing on Trafficking in Persons Bill, 2011. I want to thank the Honourable Opposition Leader for giving me the opportunity to lead on our side of the house on this debate because as he constantly reminds us, he is interested in ensuring that we each have an opportunity to do the work that he has encouraged us to do and to show that leadership is not always and only about having the leader of the Opposition or the party itself go forth first, but in my contribution to this debate I want to look a little closer home in terms of the implications of the Bill to Vincentians. When the Honourable Prime Minister spoke he said that there were several provisions in the Bill which touch and concern, sorry there are several provisions in our law already in our criminal code which touch and concern matters presented in the Bill and he is correct and so it would be important for us as we debate this Bill to try to give an understanding to the people listening to us, our people, of how really this applies to them and what really is this Bill, which we know soon would become law saying concerning the crime of human trafficking.

It is all good and well to talk about what is happening outside of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, in terms of actual transferring and transporting of individuals but we must understand that the definitions used in the Law, speaks too and applies also to situations that can be very domestic. Before, I go into some of that though; I just want to make certain facts clear in terms of the context, it is important for Vincentians to understand that bringing this Bill at this time in our Parliament, is a part of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines own commitment to the ratification of the United Nations Convention against Trans-National Organised Crime which was adopted by its general assembly in 2000 the year 2000 and a supplement to this convention is the protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons especially women and children and that was entered into force in December 25th, 2003. So here we are, about seven years later or eight, almost eight years later in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and we are saying that our ratification of that convention, we are now going to

show our commitment by bringing law into our local Parliament, into domestic law, to protect, to say that yes, we really mean it about preventing, suppressing and punishing trafficking in persons especially women and children, but if we look further at context, we cannot ignore the fact that, in this year's...in the 2011 Trafficking in Persons Report of the United States of America, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines was one of the countries who were described as being on what they called a "Tier 2" watch list with respect to human trafficking for according to their research, we still as a country, had not shown the capacity to address human trafficking in terms of...they were saying that our capacity was limited.

I just want quote something that they said in their 2011 Trafficking in Persons Report and I quote "the Government demonstrated hardly any evidence of efforts to investigate and prosecute trafficking crimes and to ensure that victims of trafficking receive access to protective services. Therefore, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is placed on Tier 2 watch list for a third consecutive year." The report did go on however, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, to say and to acknowledge that it had been announced by the Governor General in January 2011, I think that would have been his throne speech, that the Government had plans to draft legislation in line with the UN protocol. So here we are, this is the context and here we are. When you look at the Law, when you look at the Bill, when you think of the definition given for Human Trafficking, which I know my colleague would also deal with to some extent and when you look at scenarios that can come to life out of the definition, you would read about things like exploitation, you would read about exploitation, you would read for examples that exploitation includes, keeping a person in a state of servitude including domestic and sexual servitude. You will read about the issue of abuse of power which includes taking advantage of a position of authority or power, whether official or unofficial over a person or taking advantage holding an official title or public office. So, some of the things that come to mind are scenarios where you have a person in a vulnerable position and one of the areas of vulnerability identified in the law and which we agreed with in Select Committee was the issue of the socio-economic situation circumstances of the individual.

So think of a woman for example, socio-economic circumstances, she is poor, she wants a job badly and the public official knows it and so advantage maybe taken or effort may be made to take advantage of her vulnerability by indicating that look you can get the job but you have to give me this in return and it maybe in her position of vulnerability and in her ignorance and in her weakness she gives in to the arrangement because she really needs the job but she could end up in a situation of exploitation where she is involved in sexual servitude. These are some of the real practical situations that can occur and that some will tell you strongly occur right here in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, I want Vincentians to understand that human trafficking touches those things too, it is not just transporting a person across borders via the seas and again I know because my colleague have discussed at length, I know she will touch on some actual examples that she has faced in her own legal practise. But having said that Mr. Speaker, I want to just point out also at least two other areas of the Law, it has to do with the fact that, in addition to having a stiff penalty for the crime of human trafficking, the law also speaks to aggravated circumstances, it other words it says "already if you are convicted of this crime, Human Trafficking, you would have to pay a fine of \$250,000 or being in prison for 15 years or both, but if there are certain circumstances existing in the commission of the crime which make it worse, which aggravates the situation, you can spend an additional 20 years in prison the law says stiff penalties and in my mind very good. Some of those aggravated circumstances include: if she is in a position of vulnerability, particular vulnerable including a pregnant woman, when we talk about a victim being particular vulnerable I see

it as taking in persons who are differently abled, persons who are truly vulnerable and can be easily taken advantage of. So our communities of differently abled Vincentians are also further protected under this law and this is important, now the next part of the law I want to mention briefly is that which has to do with the actual assistance and protection of victims of trafficking and this you would find under part three Assistance and Protections of Victims of Trafficking and I want to touch it because I am concerned about the link to something... a growing concern I have about the implication rate of certain social services for victims of things like domestic violence and so on and I speak of particular reference of the crisis center that for some time now we have been trying to get operationalised.

The Estimates show that that centre should have been operationalised since September 2010, in the last Budget and Estimates debate we saw that it did not come operationalised as plans...new plans were that it would so become by May of 2011. In May when we had one of the sittings on this Honourable House, I posed the question to the Honourable Minister for Social Development, concerning the operationalisation of this crisis centre and he indicated to me in his answer which I quote briefly he said and I quote from Minutes from this House “the crisis centre is expected to be launched by the latest August 31st this year and one of the main prerequisites after the launch will be the training of the staff and then the centre will be ready for operation by September 2011.” This morning when I asked the Honourable Member or maybe it was already afternoon, if at this point the crisis center had been launched and when would it be operational? He said no it had not been launched and he said he could not say when it would become operational. Why do I speak about the crisis centre here, while debating this Bill, because under the section that deals, Mr. Speaker, with protection of victims, assistance and protection of victims of trafficking? It speaks about the importance of providing counseling and psychological assistance and also protection in terms of housing and when you look at the objective of the crisis center, they are similar, it speaks about providing short term assist...assistance pardon me...to victims of domestic violence and their children in a safe, comfortable and supportive environment. It speaks about utilising counseling, psychological and other forms of support services to victims and to eventually rehabilitate victims and it speaks about providing protection through secure temporary housing. If to this point we cannot operationalise...operationalise a crisis centre I am concerned as to our ability as to truly provide for all this law is saying and necessarily so we would need to be able to do for victims for human trafficking and this is the point I want to make, I give this Bill support, it is important, it is necessary but I have to lay that concern on the table, Mr. Speaker. Now as I wrap up, I want to emphasis the need for education, education on the law itself as it will be when we would have been finish here, education, more education to women about their rights, and the opportunities they have for redress, because if we do not do this as it should be done we run the risk of having another law on the books and not really having our people understanding there opportunities, there rights and taking advantage of them in terms of seeking redress.

When I speak about education I want it to be known that in the very protocol we are seeking to implement through this domestic legislation, the very protocol article 9...article 9 of the protocol says and I quote “state parties shall endeavor to undertake measures such as research, information and mass media campaigns and social economic initiatives to prevent and combat trafficking in persons.” In other words we must see to it that we do not just discuss this Bill in Select Committee, discuss and debate here in the House, pass it and say yes we have pass it, yes we have finally shown our commitment to the protocol we ratified and then it is over. I would like to see the relevant departments of Government in true harmony and commitment and spirit with this

protocol, launch and carry out the relevant mass media campaigns to ensure that victims and potential victims of this ill, this evil know their rights under the law, know the law very well, know who to go to for support, know who they can speak to because unless we do these things, I fear it would just become another talk shop as some people would say and perhaps a knee jerk reaction to the fact that the US had said we have been on Tier 3...Tier 2 watch list for the last three years. Even the US themselves would have made the recommendation to us in there what they called TIP Report of 2011, they said in their recommendation section for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines they said and I quote "...and educate the public about forced prostitution and forced labour by conducting a high profile public awareness campaign" end of quote, so this is very important, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, even as we go forward with this but also take note of the fact, the protocol speaks to, apart from education, it speaks to the need for states to have social and economic initiatives to prevent and combat trafficking in persons, it speaks for the need of states to strengthened measures to alleviate the factors to make persons, especially women and children vulnerable to trafficking, factors such as poverty, underdevelopment and lack of equal opportunity. So while we have the law for penalty and punishment where the crime have been committed, we must also look at preventative measures and the UN is recognising that preventative measures involve working to improve the socio-economic circumstances of those vulnerable groups so that they can be more enlightened, more powerful, more empowered to resist the circumstances that lead to human trafficking. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity, I do not have any objections to this Bill but I pray that the challenges and the concerns that I have expressed would seriously be taken on board in order to make implementations and the benefits truly effective to our Vincentian public especially our women and children, much obliged.

HONOURABLE DAVID BROWNE: Honourable Member for Foreign Affairs.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Thank you Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members. I rise to [laughter], I rise Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, to make a contribution to this debate in the Trafficking in Persons Bill. Mr. Speaker, as has been said earlier, it is a comprehensive piece of legislation, very detailed, it is lengthy and not only comprehensive, I will venture to say sometimes, probably...not confusing but you have to really read it in details to grasp it well and therefore I wish to recommend certainly all Members of Parliament, especially those of us who are not involved in the Select Committee to take some time out to familiarize themselves with it. But I also wish to support certainly Senator Baptiste has suggested that we...all...in fact I was showing my colleague when she made the statement I wrote here that there is a need... let me see exactly what I said...there is a need for educating our own population on trafficking, the need for all of us to familiarize ourselves with the various aspects of trafficking in persons.

So Speaker, Honourable Members, I would try to again go general in some things because there is a lot of ignorance in terms of...meaning lack of knowledge of what this thing is all about. For example the very name of the Bill, Trafficking in Persons can be confusing, because there are many of us who believe that it means movement of people, from place to place, it is actually different from human smuggling and it does not require the actual travel of persons, cause when you hear "trafficking" and the etymology of the word to traffic means to move, you do not have to have movement of people from one country to the next to have trafficking of persons let us get that clear, and my guess to some extent, that is what probably what the Honourable Senator was suggesting about "right home here" and we need to understand clearly the definition it is wide and as the

Honourable Prime Minister said in his opening statement we have a lot of our legislation that already covers some of the offences of this Bill and that is just an indications of how wide it spreads and it is for that reason I really urge us to familiarise ourselves. So I want to make a suggestion since we are working so closely together on this let us all use our radio stations, those...there are some programs which really sometimes you know it is very painful to listen to and let us use all the radio stations and also television programs to try and educate the people on this...on this issue.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, we are dealing with this Bill at this time for some of the reasons explained because we are a part of the World Community, it coming out from the convention mentioned since 2003, but also let us be frank and a lot has to do with the annual TIP-Trafficking in Persons Report made by the United States Department of Justice and it is one of those things where mighty and powerful nations wield the power on everybody including the weak and the poor because you would have heard from I think from Honourable Senator Charles some statistics and I think from Senator Baptiste too that right in the United States there are serious, serious cases of trafficking in persons probably per capita not...I believe I do not have the figures but I am certain I feel strongly that per capita in population it is a much bigger problem than Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and we must bear that in context, because if we were to be frank you know before we start discussing this, there are many of us who would say “what they talking bout? We have trafficking in persons in St. Vincent” and really we have to try and understand what is the burden of the problem because in understanding that, we will understand and question, because when we look at the implications of implementing this law it can be very costly adventure. The question is, do we in fact have such a significant problem with the trafficking in persons within Saint Vincent and the Grenadines? I really not too sure I have the answer but I doubt that the pressures that are brought on us by external forces really are justifiable relative to what happens in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Nevertheless prevention is better than cure, we are a part of the World Community and therefore it is proper as a matter of principle that we do what is right, but Mr. speaker, I just want to say that I heard some comments made by Senator Baptiste where she was talking about vulnerable...groups of vulnerable that comes through the definition who really might be subject to vulnerable trafficking and yes there are so many of them and we need to touch on as many as possible in understanding them. I would like to say though the question about implementation of measures to take care of and to prevent and to also to manage the victims of, already to some extent we have that in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, we for example there are persons who are subjected to cases of abuse which may even qualify according to how one interprets the definition of trafficking in persons and we the Ministry responsible do have affordable housing, short term and sometimes long term housing for them.

So we... let us not be tied down with the issue of the Crisis Centre, which we are in fact in the process of establishing, it is true we would like to speed up and let us understand that the fact that we say we like it too launched or begin its operations in January doesn't mean that...you know it can...we do not...for many reasons the timing does not work out, the important thing is that we are working on it and we are a poor country with many, many priorities and certainly in these days it is difficult to juggle your resources and if everybody had to prioritise the need unlimited resources it is even bigger challenge so let us work together and I...I think that the passing of this Bill we would have done a significant...we would have moved a significant way forward in identifying because if we...yes I agree that we need to have education so that people are more aware I think let us start there, let us build the awareness, after we have built the awareness let us let people know about the

prevention, because in building awareness that can let people, who themselves maybe potential victims to avoid being a victim and for example...I mean...I guess we do hear of situations locally of persons involving in alternative agriculture sometimes, sometimes forcibly I do not know if that is so that maybe qualified as trafficking in persons, people need to know, that if they are forcibly engaged in activities that they are victims and people who force them need to know that they are perpetrators and we need to talk a lot about the penalty, the penalties like the \$250,000 and the \$200,000 and the 15 years and the 20 years so that people know the risk they are taking, so people understand that we are serious about preventing and punishing trafficking in persons traffickers.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Justice Report, the US Report part was quoted by Senator Baptiste, there are many other aspects I can say clearly that I am not in full agreement with the assessment made by the Department of Justice of the United States of America, there are many other aspects of that report but most of us here if we throw off our political allegations and be national patriots we know that what they saying is not true just like the Wikileaks thing that happen, some of us when it is convenient say it is true, some when it is convenient say it is not true, yea! Because when they state that for example Government has not identified the problem with child sex tourists that is just one part of the report. Anyone of us here really...if somebody were to come and ask you do we have a problem in Saint Vincent with tourists involving in child sex? If any ask this before now what might be the most likely answer? I think the answer it is no. So, to say Government has not identified, I do not think that it is a major problem or certainly not a major one, that is one that most people know about. They said for example Government need no effort to reduce the demand for commercial sex acts, put yourself as a Vincentian do you know...let us look at the contrary do you know of the Government encouraging it? Smh! What do we know? You know very many times having been involved in the HIV regional and international program, that question is asked and I am...well maybe I am not on the ground enough but when they ask about formal or organised prostitution or commercial sex activity in Saint Vincent I tell them boy it is a difficult thing to come in Saint Vincent and go on the street and easily find that, I will not say that would not there is not but I am talking about where you have known places of refuge for that. Saint Vincent, I do not think that there is.

You know, these are some of the things that you know they said that Government did not conduct any anti-trafficking information and that is not true! I, as a parliamentarian participated in a debate earlier this year or last year on this, in fact...I mean it was a heated, heated debate and some issues that maybe regarded as trafficking in persons, I remember when a new word came in to the lexicon of Vincentians and people some people were afraid to hear the word pedophilia so that is not true. They say Government did not conduct any education campaign, again...so I am just reading parts of the report to see how prejudicial it can be when...basically you only have one side talking. Mr. Speaker, yes, we are responding to our responsibilities and we think it is important but we must always remember that sometimes there are certain external pressures that we are forced to respond too. Now, Mr. Speaker, among the recommendations suggested are some we have spoken about education, implement formal policies to guide officials in how to identify and assist suspected victims of forced prostitutions, forced labour or persons of that are trafficked, investigate and prosecute possible sex or labour trafficking cases under existing relevant legislation.

Mr. Speaker, you know I was speaking with some persons from other countries and they said you know, one of the reasons why Saint Vincent was left on Tier 2 watch list because we never prosecuted any official that was involved in trafficking in persons. How we going prosecute if we ain't have a case, you cannot just pick up somebody and jump say we going prosecute them. What I am saying is we have not been able...if we do not have a problem that is easily tangible how do we prosecute, but now I know there is a committee, I know that the...certain parts of the law enforcement officers are being trained and we expect that they will be now better aware and know what to look for, prevention is better than cure, as a public health physician I strongly believe in that and for that reason I believe that all what we are doing to prevent it is desirable and we will benefit in the long run. Mr. Speaker, I want too...one aspect of trafficking in persons that I think people must be...should know about is the old question of the tiers, the tiers and the report from the Department of Justice say they have three tiers, Tier 1- where nations comply with the laws, Tier 2- they say you are making efforts at combating traffic and they have Tier 2 watch list, we are somewhere there and they have Tier 3- people who are ignoring or promoting trafficking.

Well we...the problem is they were actually faced with a dilemma where to put us, because what you should know is that they came to us when we were in Tear 2 watch list last year and we implemented a lot of the recommendations, we were therefore disappointingly surprised when we were placed there, because they were saying that you moved...you are only supposed to move from Tier 2 watch list either up to Tier 2 plain or Tier 3, we probably were the first country they ever leave there for a third year after two years, because we argued strongly with them, but we have done this, we have done that. You have heard that Senator Baptiste read that we promised that we would be working on this legislation. I mean these things...you see the length of it you cannot just come in take it up and then next week passed the law, you need time. We set up some of the institutions they suggested and that I am saying, it is sometimes the...it is not fair after a poor country with limited resources because they themselves accepted in their own report, they said "they recognised and acknowledge that we have a small population and limited resources..." or as they put it "resources constraints and capacity and these are obstacles for implementations" now and we all recognise that.

So, Mr. Speaker, having said that I just want to reiterate my support for us eventually reaching to this point and would reiterate that all of us and for those persons listening, there is a lot that can be read and now that we have implemented one laptop per child and we going to have hotspots free, many persons can get access to information online, you just Google it or put it in any search engine and bulks of reports come up and really I think it is desirable that we familiarise ourselves, so I want to give it full support, but I also want to support some of the suggestions that we really step up on the campaign and it is not Government alone we are all in this together. NGO's, it is amazing you know we hear about Human Rights Associations and so on, but I do not hear them talk about this much you know, they need to do that too and other NGO's. So please let us move forward, let us hope that the next assessment on us will be...see us being promoted a step higher. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker. [Applause]

HONOURABLE DAVID BROWNE: Senator Frederick.

HONOURABLE VYNETTE FREDERICK: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to lend my voice to this most important debate. What a fantastic opportunity we, the Parliament of Saint Vincent and the

Grenadines are being provided by the tabling of this legislation to really act to put into sharp focus the situation that faces our women and our children in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. You might listen to the title, hear it “Prevention in Trafficking in Persons Bill” and say well this really is not relevant to Saint Vincent, we not trafficking no people and I have had the opportunity to converse with many people who when we started to talk about this among our peers, my colleagues, Senator Baptiste and I, just felt that we were being academic in talking about human trafficking, say does this really happen in Saint Vincent? But if you look at the Bill that is being proposed the definition of trafficking is wide enough to cover situations and offences that take place in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines domestically, that have nothing to do with getting people together and shipping them out in exchange for money; and that is what is so important about this piece of legislation because the Prime Minister has stood in this House this evening and said that the issues that are dealt with in this particular Bill are not issues on which existing law are not silent and that is half legal way of saying yes there is legislation out there. We do have legislation, we have domestic violence legislation, you know, we have legislation to protect children. Any individual can approach any court and say to any official there something that they know that is happening to endanger a child or a woman in a vulnerable position and the court is mandated to hear them and to empower the state to respond, but the reality is that implementations hamper sensible legislation, enforcement hampers progressive legislation and part of the reaction to being Tier 2 on this watch list, part of having to react to that has provided with a great opportunity to...and let me borrow the word from the Honourable Prime Minister “in an omnibus fashion” tackle what the situation is facing the women and the girls in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, I am passionate about this, I am a woman, I am an attorney and I have sat down in my office and cry tears with women who have had to make decisions to do sex acts for groceries because they see no way out and that is not something to smile about. It is not a joke, it is the reality that some women face and I am saying that I look forward when this legislation would be tested in the court to hold to account people who abuse their position of authority and hold women in situations of subjugation. The mother who organizes for her underage or her of age daughter to have sex with landlord in place of them having to pay rent that is not fiction, that is something that takes place in this country. I want to test this legislation and test it in tandem with existing legislation to make the state react positively to enforce against mothers who make the decision to put their daughters in that position on the basis of having the position of trust as parent. This legislation to my mind will hold such parents to account. Gone are the days when you hold somebody’s salary over their heads in exchange for a little something on the side, so the boss who says that the job is open if certain things happen and the woman who makes the assumption that...what to do I need a job. You see I believe that what the United States and the other countries in the world who have projected human trafficking to fore to this extent what they have provided us with in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is an opportunity to really tackle these social issues that we could never really pigeonhole under existing legislation and what is important is enforcement and that to my mind that is the greatest challenge. What did the Honourable Prime Minister just say the absence of...well he said that institutional supports are necessary and I wrote that the absence of institutional supports cease the Acts and the existing laws not being utilised here in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. And so that is the greatest pain, we support this legislation, but will it just end up being in the books? Mr. Speaker, there was a woman living in the hills somewhere in this country, I do not want to be so...too specific, she is blind and she had a boyfriend who the neighbour said beat her, I was unclear as to whether they tried to report or intervene to break up one fracas after the next. She was living in total squalor, you would not put your animals where she was living, no water, no toilet, no floor, no real roof, sleeping on a piece of board. When I saw her she had not had a bath for maybe a week, she was hungry and I

gave her what I had. You know if I had really thought about it I would have taken more substantial...I did not know what I was going to see when I got there. The attitude of the man, who claimed to be her boyfriend, was one of total aggression, until he understood that the Welfare Department was there with ambulance and a lawyer, so the cutlass that he was brandishing disappeared fast, fast, fast. This woman could not even string two sentences together, she was in a panic about that, the fact that she was being moved out of this situation for fear, she was malnourished, she was scared and she was blind and it was a permanent blindness that if you listen to the neighbours had something to do with being beaten. Now the state intervened and they moved her to a clinic and the nurses in the clinic did their best but do you know what happened, four to five days after she has nourished and ok, back to the house, she could not open her mouth to say no, she was not going, she did not feel empowered to get herself out of that situation and guess what, the state felt un-empowered as well, because legislatively they could not intervene to save a victim who was so cowed by her situation that she could not call for the legislation to help her. She could not be a typical virtual complainant giving a statement. She is a victim in need of serious psychological intervention, but here we have an impotent state system trying its best, but there comes a time when you must recognise that you have to up your game and this legislation must empower the citizens of this country to ensure that the state ups its game and prioritizes our human resource mental, spiritual, social, health ahead of some of the other concerns that we put higher on the pecking order. And that is not a piece of literature that is a fact that I witnessed myself that is what some people have to live in this country. So human trafficking is not only about securing your borders to ensure that they are not grabbing people and putting them on plane. Sure, but it is about ensuring that you protect the vulnerable women living in situations of servitude. So I do not see this as a piece of legislation that is going to be applied without having regard for Domestic Violence Legislation or other pieces of legislation that are there. But my great fear is that the incapacity of the state to give this legislation teeth will make it surely and solely only declaration on our law books.

Mr. Speaker, this piece of legislation must be enforced after it is passed. We cannot wait 1, 2, 3, 5, 7 years before we do what is required to give it the teeth necessary and so I am inviting the citizenry and this is not politics now, every woman who is living in a situation where you in servitude, where you are being exploited, and I know that this male dominated House is saying men too, men too, I am listening on both sides, I am getting the talk on both sides, but I am standing up here as one of three women and I am advocating for women now. Beg you pardon, four women madam AG. I am advocating for women now because you see too often in our parliament, Mr. Speaker, we come and we say the academically correct sounding nice things to say and we make our position known in the most flowery language, but the problems facing women and girls in St. Vincent and the Grenadines which this piece of legislation can address are problems that women are facing every day. So do not believe for one minute, Mr. Speaker, that this legislation is to salve the desires of the persons who put us on tier two watch list. Say, well okay, look we did something, we have good legislation here, we have to make this good legislation mean something to the population and I believe that it is the responsibility of this Government to ensure that social services increases its capacity to make this legislation have teeth.

The police service must no longer feel that it can say, that is man, woman thing, we nah getting involved in that. In a situation that could well be something that fits under the human trafficking rubric provided for in the legislation. You know I had a situation where a lady came to me saying that she was beaten and threatened with a cutlass, I called the police and the officer I spoke to said, "Ms. Frederick you know the gentleman came here

to the police station and tell we she hard to go with.” And he chuckled, but the legislation exists for him to treat that offence a particular way as an offence under existing legislation. So the issue of enforcing legislation is not going to start with the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons Bill, it is an existing problem, but I am saying that this piece of legislation is too valuable to permit it to go out begging, Mr. Speaker. It must be placed in tandem with existing legislation that speaks to protecting women and girls particularly to ensure that this parliament can say, and this Government of which the Opposition is a part can say that something happened in St. Vincent and the Grenadines across political lines to secure women and girls in St. Vincent and the Grenadines [applause].

So I rise essentially to give my support, Mr. Speaker, to this piece of legislation, but to issue a challenge to the women and girls out there who are living lives mired with offences against the persons, sexual offences, situations of servitude and exploitation to come forward and make the state do its work to protect you because as the Prime Minister quite rightly said, “our human resource is what we have in this country.” And we ensure that our women feel their value as credible members of this society equally weighted in value as our male counterparts, Mr. Speaker, when we pass legislation, but not only when we passed the legislation, but when as a Government we enforce it to secure the spirit of women and girls in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, I thank you [applause].

HONOURABLE DAVID BROWNE: Any other further debates?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to thank all Honourable Members who have made very important contributions, each of them to this vital debate. Mr. Speaker, in winding up this debate before we go to the third reading because we do not have to go to a Committee of the Whole House because we have come out of Select Committee. There are several issues which have arisen. First of all, for the public to appreciate what do we mean by trafficking in persons. The definition section says as follows: trafficking in persons means the recruitment, the transportation, the transfer, the harbouring, or receipt of persons by means of the threat or use of force or other means of coercion, of abduction of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability, or of giving or receiving of payment or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person for the purpose of exploitation. That may sound like a mouthful, but the fact is this that every single phrase in this definition is pregnant with real meaning and every word and almost all of the formulations in this definition of trafficking in persons are themselves defined so that there is precision in cases where the ordinary meaning of the word would convey the meaning that is accepted.

For instance, for the purposes of exploitation there are several definitions which surround that particular issue including that relating to sexual exploitation and those Honourable Members who emphasized that the protection relates especially to women and girls they are correct, because that is the formulation in the protocol, but it clearly also relates to men and boys, because even where sex is not involved, but the issue of servitude or slavery that we may not have slavery here, but you see on television in Britain about a week or two ago, I saw on BBC a special programme relating to slavery in the United Kingdom, yes, today slavery is not just in Somalia or in Sudan, but also in the United Kingdom. There is slavery in the United States and it can happen here, but there could be servitude and it is defined, means a condition of dependency in which the labour or services of a person are provided or obtained by threats of serious harm to that person or another person, or

through any scheme, plan or pattern intended to cause the person to believe that, if the person did not perform such labour or services, that person or another person will suffer serious harm;

And very often the persons who are put into servitude are persons who are illiterate, poor, sometimes they are not even mentally well developed and we do have a number of persons in this country who are mentally deficient. So it covers a wide range of matters and we have a series of offences with very heavy penalties. I repeat that 12, 15, 20, 25 years, huge fines 100; 150,000; 250,000 depending on the nature of the offence and the aggravating circumstances. So I think it is important that we understand the breadth of the definition of trafficking and the range of offences which arise from that definition for which there is severe punishment.

Now, the second consideration which has been raised is that having realised the importance of all of these things, we here in the parliament there is common ground also that we must have a thorough going educational programme, information programme and this is not only to be done by the state, but clearly the state has the leading role because it has significant resources already API, a radio station at its disposal, a number of officers in the area of communication and people in the Ministry of National Security and the National Commission on Crime Prevention which is currently headed by a woman who is a professional communicator. She is a communicator by profession, so she would have skills to this. There are persons in the Social Development Ministry, the Ministry of Education and so on and so forth.

Then, Mr. Speaker, we have the non-government organisations who have their own role to play. Not just women's organisations, but trade unions and employers organisations because employers are ones who are going to be broadly involved in issues of servitude, a narrow group of them and persons must not assume that the only individuals in authority would be those in governmental authority, the way the statute is framed, it would include persons who have a position of authority even in enterprises outside of the formal state apparatus.

Now, the police have a vital role to play in this and this law would have to be part of their training. There are six months training, there are general training, but there has to be specialist training in this act as in fact you have specialist police who are trained in money laundering. For instance, at the FIU we have a number of officers, police officers and customs officers who are highly trained in the area of proceeds of crime and money laundering and police officers, male and female would have to be trained in this particular area and those who are not yet trained would have to read up and study on the subject to be able to address it.

The lawyers who work for the state have to familiarise themselves with this, and the lawyers who are in private practice because this would pass and there are some lawyers who work in the field of family law, who may consider this to be outside of their province, but this is very much germane to it. Similarly those who are involved in the practice of criminal law or labour law, all of these individuals would have to be engaged in this matter. The media generally and Mr. Speaker, I had made reference to an organisation called, "the task force" which is to be established under section 34, clauses 34 and following and the composition is interesting at clause 36(1), the task force shall comprise the Attorney General, the Ministers responsible for Finance, Foreign Affairs, Family and gender Affairs, National Security, Social Development, Social Security, Labour and Legal Affairs as currently constituted that is five Ministers including the Prime Minister who is the Minister of Finance and Minister of National Security and Minister of Legal Affairs and there is the Honourable Attorney

General and the other Ministers and then it goes on to say, the Task Force shall comprise other appropriate senior government officials including officials with responsibility for law enforcement, immigration, social development, foreign affairs, labour, justice, and appropriate non-governmental organisations and other persons with the relevant expertise who shall be appointed by the Cabinet and who shall hold office for two years, but may be eligible for reappointment. And it goes on to say in clause 38 (1) the Task Force shall regulate its own procedure and shall meet at least once a quarter and at such times as may be expedient or necessary and at such times and such dates as the Task Force may determine and the Cabinet will select Chairperson. Now and the functions of this Task Force are defined, it covers the whole gamut of issues relating to trafficking of persons.

Mr. Speaker, why I identified this Tasks Force is because it is going to play a critical role in the implementation of this act. Very often organisations are listed in statutes to help the implementation of statute, but they are not central to the statute. The Task Force here is central to the statute. By comparison I will say this, anyone who reads the misuse of drugs act would see that there is an advisory committee on the abuse and the misuse of drugs, but the advisory committee hardly functions whether under the previous Government or under this Government. It is not central to the operation of that act, but important nevertheless, because it can provide a series of services to touch real human beings. Similarly, we have just had an experience; we spent a lot of time today, the Minister of Agriculture went to lengths to speak about the deficiencies by public servants relating to the preparation of relevant documents for the ordering of (in layman terms) the oil for the spraying, because they had already the chemicals and this spraytex is the oil which is what really you mix it with the chemicals, you mix it with what in human terms you may call, “the medicaments”, the pharmaceuticals and the reason why you mix that is to be able to spray it properly and the spraytex stays on the banana leaves that is why the oil is so important. That they drag their feet for 6, 8 weeks whatever the time he said, he talked about the public servants and the relevant ones who are keeping telling their superiors that we have done the work when in fact they had not done it and the Minister himself had to go to the Ministry of Finance officials to say what is happening here.

And then a simple bill which is there several months almost a year to pay for the plane for the requirements for the plane to go up, some formal requirements \$12,000 a small sum of money that they had that and did not deal with it. The officials, people who are enjoined by virtue of their professionalism, I am not even talking about the Civil Service Orders, to do their work. But something is in the act, the Banana Industry Act which we passed here and this is where I am coming, which speaks about an advisory committee, a consultative committee which includes the public servants and farmers organisations, clearly, if that institution which we agreed here should be part of the banana industry act as a matter of policy and also of law, had been operating, it is likely that the bureaucratic deficiencies by the public servants would have been identified earlier. So that when we make the policy and we pass the law, they are not just words, here I would say, if I may just add, parenthetically, the Minister had said that that committee has subsequently been activated and he give what conclusions and recommendations they have made to prevent things like that happening in the future and I listened very carefully to what the Minister had to say. In other words, the act in that regard, the law has now been operationalised, but a challenge caused that. It should have been in operation all the time and it was the duty of the public servants to ensure that that is so.

Now in this case the burden is put on the Cabinet of this country. This is not now an issue for public servants; this is an issue now for the Cabinet to name the Chairman and five Ministers of Government including the Honourable Attorney General, a series of public servants and NGO personnel and other individuals. So this Task Force is vital for the operation of this act, it is not tangential and I make the point and repeat it that in the structure of the act of this statute is not something advisory in the case of the advisory body in the Misuse of Drugs Act or indeed advisory consultative in the Banana Industry Act, though we see now the importance of that particular policy decision and the law which followed in the Banana Industry Act and here I considered it my duty as the person who has the carriage of this Bill to point out the significance of these aspects to address the question which has been raised here regarding implementation.

And finally, resources have to be put to this. We may be able to draw on other existing resources and be creative, but clearly for a focal point some additional resources have got to be provided to have the..., the Chairman of the Task Force must have a secretariat. It may well be one person in the public service who has to be the secretary of this body, the Task Force and to be following and to be carrying out their work in addition to focal points in the police force and as an operational matter the Commissioner of Police will have to form an important..., either a unit by itself or a cluster of individuals in the police force will be charged with this as part of their central responsibilities. Not necessarily their only responsibilities because it is a police force of eight hundred persons, but as part of their central responsibilities.

Mr. Speaker, I think I have spoken enough in winding up. I did not want earlier to say any of these things. I wanted to see how the debate went and to pull things together as to see what the concerns of Members of this House are so that I can reply to them and to give them some focus and direction.

Accordingly Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Bill for an Act to give effect and to implement the protocol to prevent, suppress and punish trafficking in persons, especially women and children and to provide for matters connected therewith and incidental thereto, be read a third time by title and passed. I so moved.

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

3. SHIPPING AMENDMENT BILL 2011

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I do not know whether Honourable Members may wish to have a break for Members convenience or whether we are to try and conclude these two Bills, certainly this one on Shipping and the other one on the National Insurance which are tied together, the amendments. They are not huge bits of legislation, important [interruption] well, it may well be that those could be the last two and we can..., what I want to suggest as I had suggested to the Leader of the Opposition and I believe I had his understanding if not his agreement to..., we could suspend the House to a time towards the middle of the month of October, but with one proviso to permit us to alter the agenda to include one additional matter on the agenda not for something to debate, but just for a first reading and Select Committee concerning the Single Regulatory Unit Bill which I would like to have by the mid October put in so we could have about a month in Select Committee, so we come back like the middle of November and get it through,

where I would like to get it through before parliament is prorogued. I think somebody was just thinking that I may say dissolved [laughter] [interruption] nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, [laughter] nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, nah, I was looking at a particular friend of mine to see if he is looking up at prorogue and I wanted to curl my lips in a particular way to see if could get it somehow, to see if I could put the “P and the D” almost make them sound similar to excite him, but it would have been a false excitement for him given the result of what would happen if there were to be a dissolution, but that is a separate issue [laughter] because this matter of the single regulatory unit, the Bill is drafted already but there are couple of policy issues which I want to get direction from the Cabinet finally on and from our subcommittee dealing with legislation. So I was saying the acting head of the team on the Opposition side at the moment, I would not say the acting leader of the Opposition, so I was suggesting that we do these two, then we can then suspend but with the understanding that we could amend, because we ourselves can make the decision here to amend the agenda for the next time to include that. Not for the date, but for the purposes of a first reading and for the put in place of a Select Committee, but what we do the next time is really this existing agenda with one other item just for the purpose of a first reading and Select Committee. Is not that a reasonable... [interruption] fine. So we have an agreement on that, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we therefore move to the Shipping Amendment Bill. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that a Bill to amend a Shipping Act, to enable the implementation of the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 and for related purposes to be read a first time.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move under Standing Order 48(2) that this Bill be taken through all its stages at today’s sitting.

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

Question put and agreed to.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to amend the Shipping Act to enable the implementation of the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 and for related purposes be read a second time.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, at the second reading here I want to make just a short contribution and to put the context for this Bill. The Maritime Labour Convention 2006 which I shall refer to as the MLC was adopted by the International Labour Conference of the International Labour Organisation the (ILO) at its 94th Maritime session in Geneva in February 2006. And what

this Labour code, the MLC, the Labour Convention, does is the consolidation and updating of more than 65 International Maritime Labour Instruments adopted by the ILO for some 80 years preceding to this adoption, sets out a wide range of rights to decent working conditions for seafarers including health safety minimum age, recruitment hours of work and other vital issues affecting seafarers' lives.

We put in place for a single instruments a global regime to regulate decent working conditions in the maritime industry and complements the three International Maritime Organisation pillar conventions on safety training and certification of seafarers and prevention of marine pollution by ships and this is hail as a forth pillar convention of international shipping. The significance of this is that when the MLC enters into force its provisions will be apply to ensure that ships flying the flag of States which are not party to the MLC are given no more favourable treatment than ships registered in State parties. Compliance with the provisions will be rigorously monitored by the ILO.

The MLC 2006 will apply to the majority of ships flying the SVG flag. These ships would be subject to port state control inspections and if the SVG administration does not implement the MLC 2006 which laws regulations and policies as well as the inspection and certification of ships and if the SVG ship owners do not comply with these provisions there will be a risk of the following things:

- a) SVG being labelled as a flag which does not provide decent work for seafarers that seafarers not wanting to work on SVG ships.
- b) SVG ships being targeted for additional inspections by regional port states organisations and therefore increase in costs.
- c) Enforcement action including detention of ships or exclusion from port states in major trading nations resulting in the loss of revenue to the shipowners.
- d) And a flight of ships from the SVG register of ships resulting in the loss of revenue for the Government and possible collapse of the registry register altogether.

And you know we make \$4 million plus every year on the registration of ships. And because we are such an important ships registry we need to be a model in these modern labour conventions. Now, I know that it is said in some circles that a number of big countries impose these conditions which they themselves do not quite want to embrace and wish to put us at a disadvantage. The fact is this, these standards will become the norm and it is better we get into the game early because what is happening with our ships registry we notice that a lot of up market yachts are using our ships registry. We do not register anymore, we stop registering the fishing vessels because it is very difficult to monitor them, very, very difficult to monitor them. Of course, we have taken certain steps in relation to that and put ourselves in certain conventions because of the..., and to maintain the registration of a certain number of them because a number of Taiwanese vessels particularly out of Guy-sung which is in the south of Taiwan and given our relations with Taiwan and maybe just over 100 of them use our SVG flag.

If I may say in passing, Mr. Speaker, there are some individuals who do not quite understand this. I see in the newspaper from time to time some commentators who think that because we register fishing vessels from Taiwan that those fishing vessels are given permission by virtue of that registration to trawl in our waters,

absolutely not. That is a separate issue altogether. A vessel even though registered in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and is not owned by Vincentians cannot trawl in our exclusive economic zone, our 200 miles. They can go to the international waters which is the waters for mankind, the common resource for mankind and why we had to put certain regulations in place is in relation to the ICCAT, the (International Convention on the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna) which is a very sought after fish and we had to subscribe to that convention to prevent ourselves being blacklisted, in fact, there was a threat of a black list when we arrived here in office and if you are blacklisted on any of those things, they will stop you going into a port say in the United States and we have had to work out arrangements for the monitoring of the ICCAT.

Mr. Speaker, so I just want to say that it could be that we could say that we are not registering or re-registering anybody at all, any fishing vessels which are going into the Atlantic or going into the international waters, but we have a foreign policy and there is Taiwan and we have to in our small country in addition to being visionary, we have to be practical men and women of affairs in relation to resources which comes to us.

Now, persons who work on our ships with our flags, it is important that we have certain standards, because there is a huge number of vessels which are interested in registering with us, would be attracted to the fact that we are passing this kind of a law in order to strengthen our attraction whether we do the registration here or we do it out of Geneva. I may just say for persons who may not be aware St. Vincent is one of the few countries in the region which has set up a well-functioning maritime administration with Commander Robin in charge of it and of course in Geneva we have a Commissioner for Maritime Affairs Mr. BonAvick where registrations are done and their operation has a sub office in Monaco and a stringer in Dubai. So what we are about here is not something just academic, it is something which is of importance to us.

In the light of the importance and implications of the MLC (Maritime Labour Convention) to the maritime interest of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Government took the decision to become one of the first 30 states to become party to this Convention and benefits from early ratification and rapid implementation will include the following:

- a. Sending an important signal to the International Maritime Community that our country is serious about discharging its obligations as a flag state.
- b. Instilling confidence in the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Maritime Administration within the international community in particular among owners of ships flying the SVG flag.
- c. And regional port state control mechanisms.

Well the commencement and grant of the additional time for the survey and certification of SVG ships pursuant to the provisions of the MLC, a reduction in the likelihood of SVG ships being detained by port state control inspectors for noncompliance with MLC 2006. Averting flight of ships from the register of ships and its possible closure with consequential loss of the revenue stream for the Government.

Mr. Speaker, I notice that in addition to St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Bahamas and Antigua and Barbuda have ratified and the important countries like Switzerland, Spain, Singapore, Panama, Norway, Luxemburg, interestingly Liberia and Panama have ratified early like us because they also have, they carry the flags, so-call

flags of convenience, Canada, Denmark, so forth. The objective of the Bill is that it seeks to amend the Shipping Act chapter 363, to enable the implementation of this convention. Although the convention is not yet in force, it is expected to reach sufficient ratification to bring it in force at the latest by early 2012 and there are eight clauses in this Bill, if you look at them you will see the first one sets out the preliminary provisions of the Bill and the Bill comes into force on the date on which the regulations implementing the MLC come into force. Clause 2 provides necessary matters of interpretation relative to the Bill. Clause 3 seeks to amend section 2 of the Shipping Act to insert definitions of crew agreement and the Maritime Labour Convention.

The definition of the of the MLC refers to the convention as amended from time to time and under the convention the mandatory standards given the technical requirements may be amended by TACIT amendment procedure, whereby amendments approved by a committee of the ILO will come into force without further action by states unless a majority object. Clause 4 amends section 75 of the Shipping Act by repealing subsections 1 and 4. Subsection 1 contains definition for the purposes of later sections which have been repealed and subsection 4 contains an ancillary provision concerning the repatriation of distress seafarers. Clause 5 proposes to repeal and replace section 76. Section 76 sets out which sections of part 6 apply to (c) going ships only and which to all ships. Clause 6 will repeal sections which deal with matters which are now provided in the convention. Clause 7 will amend section 400 of the Shipping Act, this section contains powers to make legislations but does not seem wide enough to enable regulations under it now as worded to give full effects to the conventions. Clause 8 limits the scope of section 405 and that section provides that where the wording of the Act is in conflict with an international agreement to which this country is party, the agreement prevails.

The section seems unduly wide in the light of section 404 which requires affirmative orders for the alteration of the act to give effect to a subsequent international agreement. Accordingly the clause limits section 405 to situations where it is found that the act or regulations incorrectly implement an international agreement and not one subsequently ratified but not implemented in the legislation.

Now Mr. Speaker, this is putting us in the forefront of the shipping standards. I want to say this, once you get involved in shipping, we also have to be concerned about our own workers to see that our own workers who work on other ships, if we are interested in standards where they are working, we cannot have sub-standards on those which carry our flags. A little known fact, just over 2000 Vincentians are employed on the Royal Caribbean Cruise Line. I want that number to sink in, just over 2000. After the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the largest employer of persons ordinarily resident in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is the Royal Caribbean Cruise Line. More than Canouan which is about 1500 when they are up and when they have their construction going, Mustique is just over 1000. In fact, though a complete analysis has not been done, the data indicate that the value provided by those 2000 persons on one cruise line to St. Vincent is more than what the cruise ships provide currently to St. Vincent. Interesting fact eh? People often wonder how is it that this small country, how do we manage to maintain the standard of living like this? Of course, people when they come in, people who are not so knowledgeable, they say oh, and who wants to malign us, they say, drugs, but over 2000 persons and those... I know there are young politicians in this House, but if you have been around as long as I have been around and you go a lot to people's homes, you hear they will tell you, my husband, my boyfriend is working on the Royal Caribbean Cruise Line or my daughter is working on the Royal Caribbean Cruise Line and they have built houses. They send the money home for the children, they put the money in

Credit Unions, they put it in banks, and they put the money inside of Insurance Companies and the Building and Loan Association. That is a vital niche that is why I keep in touch a lot with Joel Providence for instance who they are the agents for all the Caribbean Cruise Line and when I was going to New York the other day I call to find out if any of the senior officers, the Vice President, I do not have to necessarily meet the President, is available, if he is going to be in New York so I can have lunch or breakfast. I told him in the next time I am going to Miami unfortunately none of them was going to be in New York, this is how we have to do the PR when you are in this business. And I want to speak it so that the younger Members of the House and those who will come after my generation to lead need to get a field as to what is required. And I have to give the benefit of my experience and my knowledge and that is a vital niche, a lot of people do not talk about it and we have to try and maintain it. Now there are possible competitors from India for instance. In some ships we have lost out to people from El Salvador, it is an important area of work, working on the ships.

Mr. Speaker, when I come to the other Bill which is the National Insurance, the amendment, is really to have those persons to participate in the National Insurance Bill, to protect them in their sunset years, that is what I will come to next. For these are very important practical pieces of legislation to lift people but also for dollars and cents. I am obliged.

HONOURABLE DAVID BROWNE: Minister Frederick, go ahead.

HONOURABLE VYNNETTE FREDERICK: Grateful to you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to lead on this particular piece of legislation before the House. I am not quite certain how given what the amendment to the NIS legislation is intended to do, how both things could be argued independent of one another, because the rationale for making the convention a part of the local shipping act is to enable our seafarers to benefit from being able to be contributors to the NIS. So I guess it is just a matter of style but not substance with regards to the debate. What I have to say will possibly overlap and very quickly just indicate the challenge that exist in shipping in St. Vincent and the Grenadines as a consequence of what is being sought to do by actually making this Maritime Labour Convention a part of our local shipping law.

The nature of shipping is international. Shipping involves and successful shipping and having a successful flag that is sought after by persons who wants to benefit from using your flag as the state flag of its ship depends on certainly sensible international relations and connections and a very proactive shipping registry. I note that the ILO's Press Release on the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Ratification of the MLC indicated that 3200 Vincentians are working on foreign ships worldwide. Of course, the Prime Minister give us the information that just over 2000 of them are on Royal Caribbean Cruise Line and in looking at what the intention is with the convention, the intention to solidify all of the basics with regard to running a safe ship that will have on it workers from St. Vincent and the Grenadines is all well and good for St. Vincent and the Grenadines as a flag of convenience, but what is happening in shipping in the world is that countries that previously were simply flags of convenience have found themselves in a position now where they have to become more. So I understand the intention of actually ratifying the MLC and coming now to give it the full force of our local law and making it a part of our shipping law.

The challenge I think that this jurisdiction will face is being able to secure the enforcement of the MLC and while I appreciate that the position is that we have these arrangements internationally, having a practical appreciation for how difficult it is to communicate with ships that ply their trade never in this part of the world, but who are subject to the control of this state by virtue of flying its flag is one of the most challenging obstacles that a country faces and will continue to face when we try to improve what we do with regard to shipping.

So what are we doing? We cannot in St. Vincent try to improve what is happening here and I have understood the list of improvements with the maritime administration and actually seeing that work, we cannot try to make those improvements but leave internationally what happens with Vincentian ships in the hands of those who might not have a more intrinsic desire to see St. Vincent move from just being a flag of convenience to running the kind of high powered ships registry internationally of which the Prime Minister has spoken and which he has alluded to.

So the challenge really is in increasing our capacity locally to secure the kind of attention that internationally we are seeking. How do we do it? And I say this because practically speaking in dealing with ships; one of the hardest things which we cannot now do in St. Vincent is search the ships registry, Lloyd Ships Register. We actually cannot afford it. You know it is not something that..., I cannot go to the maritime administration and pull up where a Vincentian vessel is X and Y place in the world. I cannot do it immediately. Maybe if I beg I could probably get it in a week and then it depends on what the issue is.

Interestingly, Liberia Shipping Registry was mentioned. In looking to Liberia, Liberia Shipping Registry is run by the United States of America. The United States of America runs the Liberia Shipping Registry and they run it 24/7; 24 hours a day you can speak to someone in the Liberian Shipping Registry, because they are monitoring their 40 percent of the world shipping. The flag that they fly is the flag of Liberia I am told from my own research. Now I do not know if that statistic has changed since I last looked to see what it was, but the thinking when you embrace this convention is that you will put yourself in a position to really capitalise on it and that is the thinking that has prompted, I believe, Liberia to jump on the wagon as early as St. Vincent has done.

So the challenge will be to enforce and I will speak also on the issue of NIS. When we put the spotlight on the Vincentians who are ordinarily resident here who work elsewhere on these ships that ply their trade for example, if you have somebody, let us say Henry James, I do not know if that name connects with any real individual but that is John Doe from Sandy Bay working on an Oil Tanker that is plying from Libya to the Pitcairn Islands how in practical terms is he going to be expected to contribute to the NIS. I mean we have so many of our seafarers who will say ordinarily they are resident here but they actually would just be sending money home as you say to build the house and to do X, Y and Z. I am saying that practically speaking I am just looking at the challenge, I appreciate what the intention is, but the challenge to enforce and to enforce in a uniform way, so as not to expose any inequity with regards to the seafarers who are out there is a challenge that we must speak to with regards to this legislation, because you do not want our seafarers to say either that they did not know, they could not do it or they were doing it and it actually was not happening and I could just see a myriad difficulties, but I appreciate what the spirit of the convention seeks to do and I see the step to take up the challenge to be more than just a typical flag of convenience as commendable but fraught with difficulties that I

am not quite sure St. Vincent has the financial capacity to actually address successfully in the short or medium term. So I just wanted to raise for the attention of the Members of this House those one or two little difficulties because shipping is a sort of technical non-interesting area that maybe only practitioners you know who do Bill of the Sea or have one or two issues will play close attention to it.

But I am still thinking about practically how we work to ensure that our seafarers get their benefit when our capacity to enforce is so severely limited and dependent on third parties who may prioritise just lower on the totem poles and we need to be considered a credible shipping registry that can attract the big money spenders for registration purposes and that is one of the main issues that concerns on this side of the House with regards to how we make it work and of course it make sense to go in the direction but we also need to succeed when we head in that direction.

And St. Vincent has long been considered to be just a flag of convenience and attractive as a registry for that very reason. The absence of the ability to enforce has been attractive to those who just want to pay fees and to be ignored. But now that we are saying that we will be more because the convention requires us to do more; I am saying that we cannot just depend on third parties to be our enforcers and we cannot leave it at that, so we have to look strategically at what we do locally in increasing capacity where we get the finances from to accomplish that and what we do to ensure that those persons who are so interested in the potential as a money earner which the registry presents itself as that they actually have the opportunity to do the work and secure the revenue that the country is looking for from this initiative.

I note and I think again it is not politics here; it is about making sure that it gets done. I note that we indeed have stepped up almost first in the region to get this done. The other countries who have stepped up boast similar size registries but we have a shipping registry; we are described in the ILO press release as having a long maritime tradition with over 2600 ships with more than 17,500 seafarers, 3200 of whom are Vincentians. So if we are going to target those 3200 Vincentians, we cannot do it, we are putting our eggs in the basket of those entities who may not fully understand the practical difficulties with enforcing to ensure that they can benefit, the seafarers can benefit from contributing to NIS and get the social security benefit that would be down to their families and you know all that the NIS has to offer. I am thinking that it would just be lost on Monaco and France and Dubai. So I am saying that our strategy must involve in showing that the capacity locally is improved to the extent where we can actively be something more than just a flag of convenience. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Mr. Speaker, I was moved by my colleague's very well informed discussion of this Bill and listening to her, it triggered certain things in my own mind that I thought I would comment on. The idea of essentially raising the standard of our registry by incorporating the international standards for labour conditions and working on ships is a laudable and really progressive goal. But we know the experience of any kind of environment where labour conditions become more favourable to workers, they tend to drive the employers elsewhere.

In my own experience in growing up in Bequia where a lot of the people worked on the sea, many of them from my own family, knowing and hearing of many of the conditions under which they worked whether it was on the

bulk carriers or the tankers or the Harrison line or the local carriers around the Caribbean, some of the conditions were horrendous. I have had relatives who were killed on these ships and they would tell you about the conditions of cleaning tanks in dangerous conditions and having explosions and so on and then you have to try and find compensation for the family members not an easy thing, because then the breadwinner is gone.

The International Labour Convention sets a standard that is to be aspired to by I suppose countries that have large ship registries, but also they would wish to have it to be the international standard not just in legislation, but actually applied. One of the criticisms you will hear from people in my community is why is it that we are not getting jobs on these ships that they used to in the years gone by is that they are now employing people from other countries whether is China and Bangladesh because they say that our seafarers are a little too wise and too demanding because they would not do things that are certain level of danger or they demand compensation and conditions that are suited to modern day working conditions whether it is on the ship or on land.

In cooperating the ILO standards in our own registry that may provide protection for persons who work on our ships as the Prime Minister said, there are a number of ships, the luxury yachts, I have seen them on television and fancy ports in Europe and so on carrying Vincentian flags. These are usually the people working on them are not Vincentians. So they do not actually provide much protection for our workers so part of the contribution I suppose that this effort by St. Vincent and the Grenadines to go out front in ratifying the convention and then adopting it locally would be to encourage other countries and other large registries to do likewise and to ensure that ultimately the goal of having a universal standard on all ships will be achieved in the shortest time possible.

Mr. Speaker, it is an opportunity as well for us to think not just of the conditions that exist on the ships, but for our own seafarers how they would be able to take advantage of the training necessary to get better positions on the ships. I recognise that a large number of them you know now working on the hospitality ships the cruise lines and so on, but more and more they have to expend considerable resources themselves to go to get the certification necessary, the STCW 95 certification and the various certificates that they must acquire in order to work on these ships. Many of them they travel at their own expense whether it is to Miami, Central America to Trinidad to get this training and it is time that we refocus our efforts as well to try and get the maritime institute here up and running so that our seafarers can take advantage of the opportunities that they have enjoyed in the past, but as circumstances and standards have changed internationally, more and more they are being left behind.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill hopefully will send a message that St. Vincent and the Grenadines that we are not just simply a race to the bottom. Usually there are people you know that take an advantage of an opportunity to register a ship and they pay their fees annually and they basically say, well leave us alone. The St. Vincent and the Grenadines Registry is been around for a long time. It preceded this administration and it has a good reputation worldwide and I think that this will enhance that reputation. My hope too is that in enhancing the reputation it will also enhance our business and that we will be able to increase the revenue that we get from the registry, because since I came to this parliament ten year ago, the figure was \$4 million annually and it is the same figure that is being cited by the Prime Minister now. So we have to have some sort of projection or goal of expanding and growing the industry into the future.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also, maybe the Prime Minister could mention something about it in his wrapping up, what effect this will have on our own local shipping that is the..., because you know we have a lot of local boats who work up and down the Caribbean, how is that going to affect what they do in terms of the standards that they apply and to the extent that it does, Mr. Speaker, we have to understand the conditions under which they operate. Increasingly difficult conditions and we have a tendency sometimes to introduce legislation which are high-minded and progressive and we take an enforcement attitude rather than an attitude of trying to help those who do not meet the standards to come up, we tend to take an attitude of punishment and that achieves the opposite objective as what we hope to do.

So the Prime Minister could comment on that because I think for those persons who are listening who have ships that might be able to say something about it then we would be grateful to that. As to the..., I suppose when the Bill comes up regarding National Insurance Service I may have a few brief remark on that as my colleague has already mentioned.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Members who have spoken on this matter and I am happy to see in the strangers gallery the Commander Robin who is our head of a maritime administration here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and to say he must be a very happy man that we are passing this amendment, the Shipping Act on the day the 29th of September, World Maritime Day, 2011 which is today when the International Maritime community is focusing its attention on the importance of shipping safety, maritime security and the protection of the marine environment.

Mr. Speaker, the old ways are not continuing much longer internationally. We just have to accept that. We have had the experience. When I came to office in 2001 at the end of March among the blacklist, well one blacklist and impending blacklist which we are going face regarded shipping (1) was by the end of May if we had not incorporated into our shipping laws the 1995 Seafarers Convention dealing with working conditions and safety there was going to be a blacklist against vessels registered in St. Vincent and in fact they were making noises, the unions and some maritime administrations, the unions internationally that they would place limitations on vessels coming to our ports, that is what we faced.

In fact, I must say this; the urgency of the matter was brought to my attention on the Tuesday after I came to office. Wednesday, we had the general elections March 28th, the 29th we were sworn in, the Friday I went to see the Geography of my office, on Monday I received a call from Sir James, he wanted to know if he could come and see me as a matter of urgency. The next morning at 9 O'clock we had a meeting and there are several things he spoke to me about but I recall two things. He said, "Ralph you are facing two blacklists in relation to shipping. This because we have not ratified and put in place the amendment in our law to deal with the 1995 Convention and he begun..., made a lot of comments about the legal department and so on and so forth and then he raised with me the question of the ICCAT (the International Convention on the Conservation of Atlantic Tuna).

Then and there I had the secretary at the Office of the Prime Minister call Mr. BonAvict, our Maritime Commissioner, because we had not set up our maritime administration yet, called her in Geneva and asked her if she can come down to St. Vincent quickly with a lawyer. She had one available, very skilled young woman,

for us to do the necessary amendments to take care of this law. They came with a draft within a week, they came the following, the following Tuesday or the following Monday and we started to work on Tuesday and we brought the amendments in two parts first. You will see in the month of May there was some amendments and then later on there were other amendments and subsequently a comprehensive shipping bill, a new one completely.

We also passed a law setting up a maritime administration in the OECS and I believe in the entire Eastern Caribbean it is the administration that people look towards, it has an excellent head Commander Robin. When Commander Robin who headed the Coast Guard was interested in coming to maritime administration, that is to say to you the importance we place on this on all the issues connected to and of course, it relates to issues of our economic zone and the law of the sea and all the rest of it, because it is a big issue. But I want to say this, anyone who looks at the Maritime Convention 2006 which this Maritime Convention revises a number of conventions, among these are the following and I want to select the later ones, the 1995 one is not here because the Labour Convention does not have to revise every single one, this one, but the relevant ones, 1987 Seafarers Welfare Convention, Health Protection and Medical Care Seafarers Convention 1987, it is 163 and 164 their numbers. Social Security Seafarers Convention, Revised 1987, number 165; Repatriation of Seafarers Convention, Revised 1987, number 166; Labour Inspection Seafarers Convention 1996, number 178; Recruitment and Placement of Seafarers Convention, number 179 of 1996; Seafarers Hours of Work and Manning of Ships Convention, 1996 number 180.

The point I want to make is that progressively in the community of shipping the welfare of seafarers has become a paramount consideration. For maritime administrations, for trade unions, the transport general and workers union, the TGW in Britain, they always have their eye out and I remember in 1980 in England, they were planning to boycott the handling of the banana boats which went up because of St. Vincent and the Grenadines' position as a flag of convenience and they were not addressing a number of issues relating to the welfare of people working on ships. That is what it is, solidarity and the like. So I want to make that point. I hear what the Honourable Senator Frederick is saying, but she has to bear in mind that we are moving in a different world it is inexorable.

Mr. Speaker, let me just say this, Honourable Members, in relation to the ICCAT Convention to stave them off at their November meeting of 2001, I had to line up a number of countries all over the world, several of them, I asked Britain, I wrote Tony Blair to help us with this issue. They did not, to see if they can sponsor us to say, well give us more time, they wrote back and said, no. The Barbados Prime Minister acted promptly for us. The President of South Africa acted for us, Libya supported for us to get the extension to put our house in order in relation to ICCAT, several countries. I personally called Prime Minister Basdeo Panday, he assured me, yes. Trinidad did not do anything. I mean the experiences which I have about matters vital to our country which help to shape how I think about a number of things, never talk about it. There are a lot of things..., I wrote an autobiography, and there are things which I had to write about afterwards about foreign relations. That is a separate book when I am finished when I could unload and unburden myself, where I do not have to meet people because I would be up Gorse living like a Rasta man.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: Without lacks?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: So I want without lacks, without lacks and without clutches [laughter] into my old age. Mr. Speaker, the issue has been raised about the question of enforceability on our ships. The ILO and its member countries have the obligation to enforce this. So when we are a signatory, when we have ratified this as we have, our name appears in ships administration and when the vessels come and they do their checks, ships administration, maritime administration and the ILO and the Unions would look on them at the ports and say, well this vessel is not complying. This Vincentian flag they report us. Our maritime administration is in touch with maritime administrations all over the world. These are not the days when you had send a pigeon from Britain to France to carry a message, no, these are the days of high speed internet and telecommunications of all kinds and there is close connection between the maritime administration or maritime commissioner.

In the last note sent to me by our Maritime Commissioner in Geneva, she said that even though there was a decline in new registrations of certain kinds of vessels there was a increase in luxury vessels, important point. The maritime administration is there to help us with the issues raised by the Honourable Senator Frederick. And if I may say, the question on it would arise in the next Bill, how people would pay, I mean to make the payment for the NIS, you get registered in the NIS, and there is a procedure. People who are overseas can get registered on the NIS currently. We made an amendment here. There is a mechanism for that and for the payments, they can either pay them from overseas or the people whom they send their money to here can make the payments. Once they are satisfied that it is important to be part of the NIS to take care of their sunset years.

Like some taxi men and own account workers here pay no attention to it, they may have other kinds of policies that is find, they might have annuities, I understand the point that she is making but what I am saying is this, the point can be overstated, that is the point I am making, that is the point I am making and that there are mechanisms which exist and the point here is that once these laws are put on the books, the relevant agencies have to follow through and do these matters.

Now, the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines has raised the point about why persons are not employed from say Bequia or other parts of St. Vincent as they used to be before on bulk and so forth. There are different employments patterns, there are some..., there is a shift it depends on who are the agents at the time and we have seen some difficulties in the different agencies in addition to the objective facts that they have gone to some other places where they consider that they can get cheaper labour, but all of that the real world is going to catch up with it and all things considered and upon the advice which we have received from the maritime administration and in particular, Commander Robin, from the office in Geneva, from other technical persons in this field I have convinced the Cabinet that this is the way that we must go. This is the way we must go and that is why the policy has been made here now in law. We are the second country in the Caribbean to ratify. Bahamas was the first and we came shortly after, then Antigua followed suit.

I know the competitive nature of the ships of ships registries and we are seeking to put ourselves in the market place to enhance the quality of our ships registry and to enhance the revenue collected. I may say one point before I move that we go into a Committee of the Whole House.

Mr. Speaker, security has been an important issue, security on ships including the issue of piracy. So what we have done, we have used the law which had been put in place for the World Cup, we have used that plus the general authority of the state to allow countries France, Britain, Canada, the United States to go on our territory which means our vessels, those carrying our flags if they reasonably apprehend that a criminal offence [interruption] yes, their reasonable apprehension that a criminal offence has been or is been or is about to be committed. I will show you the difference between that.

Christmas Eve 2001 I went to visit the Lewis Punnett Home and a call came from the British Government, they wanted me to give permission by way of the telephone and to put it in writing after because a vessel which had left Mauritius with sugar bound for a port Tate and Lyle Port in the United Kingdom and had stopped off in the Yemen and it was suspected that it had picked up terrorists and terrorists materials and they wanted permission to board it before it entered British Waters. They were tracking it and naturally I gave permission.

Now what has to happen in a similar situation like this, they will inform us that they are boarding that strengthens the safety and security of our vessels. I do not have any problem giving a friendly government that particular authority. It is an act of sovereignty to do it just like it is an act of sovereignty for me to have given the permission by the way of the telephone. All of these matters we do not hear a lot about them, because every day I this office has its complications with all kinds of things which come up.

I am happy to hear that the Members of the Opposition have supported this Bill and I take into account the considerations they have raised. That is why I have taken enough time in my winding up to address them as they have requested to give the respect to their own contributions.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to consider this Bill clause by clause.

House went into Committee.

House resumed.

Bill read and reported without amendment.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move a Bill to amend the Shipping Act to enable the implementation of the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 and for related purposes be read a third time by title and passed.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time by title and passed.

4. NATIONAL INSURANCE (AMENDMENT) BILL 2011

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for Act to amend the Insurance Act, the purpose is simply to amend it in relation to providing additional benefits for seafarers.

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a first time.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move under Standing Orders 48(2) that this Bill be taken through all its stages at today's sitting.

Question put and agreed to.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to amend the National Insurance Act be read a second time.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a second time.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, there has been some debate on this already. Basically what is happening is that the Shipping Act having come into force we simply want to amend the Act to make provisions, the Insurance Act, to incorporate the references to the Labour Convention and the Seafarer and to extend the benefits for them under the National Insurance Act. So this is what it is about, it is consequential on the other one. I am obliged.

HONOURABLE DAVID BROWNE: Any debates on the Bill?

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I do not think that we are going to have very much debate because I think the matter was properly raised in a previous discussion by the Senator Frederick and as the Honourable Prime Minister indicated it is one of those cases in which we had to be able to strike the appropriate balance and in a sense to be in keeping with the times maybe just by way of reinforcing the point that the Honourable Member was making that is Senator Frederick is that, as I understood it or we understood it on this side, is that in an attempt to increase or to improve the social security provisions to make some provisions for the rainy days as we would say in local language for the latter years of life, we will have to make an amendment such that they would be subjected to paying the NIS and it is not that there is an objection principle to that, but sufficient to say that she was trying to make the point that for some employers they look at social security provisions as a tax on business, that is, to the extent that they have to contribute matching funds it increases the cost of their doing business and so there is not just a social security matter there, there is also a social conscience issue in the sense that she wanted to have the assurance that such a tax (and I

am using tax deliberately here now) did not put Vincentians at a disadvantage to other nationalities vis a vis that to employ a Vincentian it is more costly to the employer than it is to other nationalities. I think that is the fear.

But to the extent I suppose that within short time as already the most competitive countries are signalling that they wish to fall in line then perhaps it takes away some of the sting of the disadvantage and put us in a more favourable position, because ultimately one could hardly have any quarrel with that provision.

Mr. Speaker, I see with some pleasure in the strangers gallery as we call it two of the most distinguished Vincentians in our society David Robin the Former Commander of the Coast Guard, he does not like me to call his name up too often, but Mr. Prime Minister, I make the point only, I remember when I was a young man, just back from university [interruption] no, but I am saying [interruption] I know that..., in my young day just back from university one the challenge I had was to encourage him, it was the Theobalds whose father passed on recently and Cambridge was the other guy, I think he actually went on into the..., he is probably still into the US Navy and there was the other guy Corea who also..., those four men leaving school to go into the Coast Guard which would have been in form..., and they have done great service you know and on the other hand we have Mr. Lennox Bowman who we know is a very fine Vincentian, personally I know who is here and the NIS we know have been in good management for very many years. So I am very glad to see that they are here today and support our debate.

Mr. Speaker, just for because the Prime Minister made this point you know because we come to the parliament, sometimes the international reference is also very important. I had the distinct pleasure of being in Geneva to represent St. Vincent to become a member of the International Labour Organisation. I was one of the members there when we became members of the ILO and it has been a struggle for years, I am linking both things into the other, that we sought a thought that ILO attendance was a unnecessary evil and every year you have these as to whether we should form these tripartite participation, because it is not necessarily cheap, because one cannot go without the other, there must be Government business and the labour body is there. I suppose this Government continues to make that same kind of judgement call, but it is critical that we sign on to those conventions and that we do not see them just as other administrative burden.

In fact, I also had the privilege to meet the Maritime Commissioner twice at her home. Very fine person and so that these are matters in which I have had firsthand experience. I remember Honourable Allan Cruickshank been there, I remember Alice Mandeville been there on one occasion and drawing on the services Professor, Roy Trotman, distinguished trade unionist out of Barbados who led us through because it is a maze of discussion when you get there in Geneva, you have to know your way to go about.

But to summarise the night of getting on, Mr. Speaker, we on this side are pleased to lend support to the amendments proposed here this evening so that there could be proper provision for the thousands of Vincentians who are at sea making a living and you know in a sense there is a deeper aspect of this conversation you know, because ultimately the notion of who are Vincentians really has increasingly being perceived to be not just those confined to our geographic boundaries here, but what they call the virtual frontiers of society wherever your stairs of influence reach. It is the same thing I once tried to deal with when I was once in football Vincy Heat was wherever Vincentians are. Whether in England, in America, in Holland, in Germany, in Portugal that is

Vincentian, extend our frontiers and it is the same thing we are doing, we are making sure that whether they are here on land or on sea and we always like to say there is more seascape than there is landscape. We are in fact moving in the right direction. So we are very happy on this side, Mr. Speaker, to lend support to the provision knowing full well that they are in very good, safe and competent hands, Professionally Managed Institution. I much obliged.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for the contribution by my Honourable friend and for the support from the Opposition on this Bill. Mr. Speaker, there is nothing more for me to say on this but to move that this Honourable House resolve itself into a Committee of the Whole House to consider this Bill clause by clause.

House went into Committee.

House resumed.

Bill read and reported without amendment.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to amend the National Insurance Act be read a third time by title and passed.

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

Question put and agreed to.

Bill read a third time by title and passed.

SUSPENSION

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, we do have the understanding that we suspend to a date I am suggesting Tuesday October 18th 2011. I do not think we should take any time longer than the morning session perhaps to complete the agenda and to address one other matter which we have had agreement by the whole House took place on the Order Paper. That is to say, the Bill relating to the Single Regulatory Unit which we want to add up in running for January and we are beginning to do recruitment of persons to strengthen the regulation of the Financial Sector for the non-banking financial institutions. So it is important that we get that on the way.

Mr. Speaker, I repeated it..., the agreement so that when we have the amendment. Honourable Members would know that and I assure them it is not for debate, it is to have the matter put to a Select Committee to have us enough time so that when we have the November meeting before the prorogation we would be able [interruption] well you know I love elections [laughter] and I love them even more when I am winning which I have been doing. I know you cannot say anything after that [interruption] [laughter].

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that this House do stand suspended until Tuesday October 18th.

**Question put and agreed to.
House stands suspended at 9:00 p.m. until
Tuesday 18th October 2011 at 10:00 a.m.**