

No. 7

Thursday

Fourth Session

18th June, 2009

Eighth Parliament

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

ADVANCE COPY

OFFICIAL REPORT

CONTENTS

Thursday 18th June 2009

Prayers	5
Obituaries	5
Congratulatory Remarks	8
Minutes	9
Statements by Ministers	10
Reports from Select Committee	22
Petitions	22
Questions for Oral Answers	23
Orders of the Day	47
Resolutions	55
Adjournment	57

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE SEVENTH MEETING, FOURTH SESSION OF THE EIGHTH 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

18th June, 2009

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

Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign
Affairs, Commerce and Trade
Honourable Louis Straker

Member for Central Leeward

Minister of National Mobilisation,
Social Development, Gender Affairs,
Non-Governmental Organisations,
Local Government, Persons with Disabilities,
Youths and Sports
Honourable Michael Browne

Member for West St. George

Minister of Education
Honourable Girlyn Miguel

Member for Marriaqua

Minister of Rural Transformation, Information,
Postal Service and Ecclesiastical Affairs
Honourable Selmon Walter

Member for Central South Windward

Minister of Urban Development, Culture,
Labour and Electoral Matters
Honourable Rene Baptiste

Member for West Kingstown

Minister of Transport and Works
Honourable Clayton Burgin

Member for East St. George

Minister of Agriculture,
Forestry and Fisheries
Honourable Montgomery Daniel

Member for North Windward

Minister of Telecommunications, Science
Technology and Industry
Honourable Dr. Jerrol Thompson

Member for North Leeward

Minister of Housing, Informal Human,
Settlements, Physical Planning, Lands
and Survey and Local Government
Honourable Julian Francis

Government Senator

Minister of State, Ministry of Agriculture,
Forestry and Fisheries, Parliamentary Secretary
Honourable Saboto Caesar

Government Senator

Minister of the State in the Prime Minister's
Office with Responsibility for the Public Service
Honourable Conrad Sayers

Member for Central Kingstown

Minister of Tourism
Honourable Glen Beache

Member for South Windward

Honourable Rochelle Forde

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 Terrence Ollivierre

Member for Southern Grenadines

Honourable Major St. Claire Leacock

Opposition Senator

ABSENT

Minister of Health and the Environment
Honourable Dr. Douglas Slater

Member for South Leeward

Honourable Richard Williams

Government Senator

Honourable Daniel Cummings

Opposition Senator

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 18TH JUNE, 2009

PRAYERS

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Speaker read the prayers of the House. Honourable Members, we have visiting with us this morning students from the Pamelus Burke Government School and we want to..., I think this one is a charge on the Prime Minister and we want to welcome them this morning to our Parliament and trust that they would enjoy it.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to join you in welcoming the 32 students from the Pamelus Burke Primary School at Byera and the three teachers. Mr. Speaker, they went ahead of me, they in an act apparently to absolve me of this payment, they have made arrangements independent of me and they will be going to Kentucky Fried Chicken. It is clearly the initiative in North Central Windward [laughter], Mr. Speaker, I never want to suggest that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition is a scrooge, I will not suggest that at all, but I cannot recall whether he had ever made any payment. It may well have happened but Mr. Speaker, we welcome our students and our teachers from Byera, from North Central Windward, this is their first experience and I am quite sure that they will enjoy it and that it would be educational. I am not certain that I can join them at Kentucky Fried Chicken, because I have appointments in the luncheon period, but I wish them all the best. Thank you.

OBITUARIES

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: Mr. Speaker, I rise at this time to pay brief tribute to three persons who passed away recently, Mr. Elford Da Silva of Lowmans Hill who is well known in that community, made a great contribution at the community level and also in his life's endeavours, he was honoured by the Lowmans Community Development Organisation last year at their official launch. Also to Ms. Clothel Iris John of New Montrose who is an ardent Anglican, member of all Anglican Communion Organisations and made a contribution particularly in the neighbourhood and in visiting members of the community. She worked at the Kingstown General Hospital at the time for many years and Mr. Dennie Young formerly of Layou. He is the father of Sophia Young our NBA Basket Ball Star who passed away in the United States of America, he was a trombonist, he played with Asterisks and a number of other bands and made a significant contribution during the carnival season in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. He played for Alston Becket Cyrus for many, many years. May they rest in peace.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Senator..., I will take Senator Leacock.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, I wish to join with the Honourable Member for West Kingstown in her condolences to the persons named but to just highlight a little bit Mr. Speaker the name of Dennie Young from Layou died in Canada I think it was, he was laid to rest by cremation and then I think there was a funeral service in Brooklyn just last week for him. So I identified with those condolences Mr. Speaker, but I wish to add Ms. Veda Hinds of Kingstown, we had the opportunity in the last Parliament but special circumstances did not permit us to do so at that time Mr. Speaker. Veda Hinds of course is the..., survived her husband Hubert Hinds famous #6 market shop and they now have this imposing building across there, I think Duncan's and other places are there. They have been outstanding people in the Paul's Avenue area for some time, I think earlier this year, she lost her sister from Largo Height as well, and these people are being pioneers in their contribution to this country. I had the privilege of going to school with one of her sons Alick, I think he is going back to America on Saturday. He was an ardent sportsman as well, I nearly said sister Baptiste had prompted me on that..., instead of giving me something, but I leave that for..., Honourable Speaker and I want to add to those condolences Mr. Speaker Cappie Laidlow from Hollywood in the Sharpes area, another outstanding person. Someone at whom all politicians sat Sir James, Parnell Campbell, Prime Minister himself, Gonsalves all visited him at that domino table to get some political wisdom and he give a good contribution to VINLEC, CBC it was then in the time, as I said that in giving the Eulogy at 87 Cappie Laidlow had 66 grandchildren and 64 great grand, a virtual polling station by himself, but people like them have really, really made contributions to this country Mr. Speaker. May they Mr. Speaker, rest..., I prefer to say not in peace, but rest peacefully. I much obliged.

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the teaching fraternity mourns the loss of a stalwart in the field of education. Our records indicate that Mrs. Lorna Debique began her teaching career as an Assistant Mistress at the Girls' High School on September 14th 1959 in the areas of History, French and Physical Education. She however tendered her resignation in September 1961 but was subsequently reemployed on a temporary non-pensionable month to month basis, also at the Girls' High School later in that very year. The then Headmistress Ms. B.M. Headle supported her reemployment stating that she has worked conscientiously, has been a most helpful colleague and has conducted her classes very efficiently in a quiet and ladylike manner and the results have been encouraging. Approval was given for her permanent and pensionable appointment as an Assistant Mistress Girls' High School with effect from September 19th 1967. She proceeded to the Cave Hill Campus of the University of the West Indies in September 1979 to read for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in History and English. She successfully completed the requirements for the award of the stated degree with Second Class Honours in July in 1982. She was appointed on promotion to a post of Assistant Mistress at the Girls' High School with effect from July 1st, 1982 and then to post of Deputy Headmistress of the very school with effect from January 1st, 1984. Approval was given for her Acting appointment as Headmistress of the very school during the period September 3rd, 1984 to November 23rd 1984.

In her 31st year of service at the Girls' High School, approval was given for her appointment on promotion to the post of Headmistress of the school with effect from September 1st 1990 following the retirement of Mrs. Norma Keizer. She retired from the teaching service on May 15th 1993. During her tenure at the Girls' High School Mrs. Debique endeared herself to staff, students and parents with her gentle pleasant disposition. She was one of those teachers to whom teaching was not a job, but a vocation and she went beyond the call of duty

to assist those who were challenged. Many of her students will remember her as a lady who was serene, courageous, caring and completely dedicated to serve.

One may never have recognised the profound nature of her illness or the extent of her suffering since she was not given to complaining. We are confident however that her family will be comforted because she is now in a place where there will be no more pain and suffering. The staff in the Ministry of Education extends our sincere condolences to her immediate family and at this time we cannot forget our dear Clerk who had to call her auntie. So the condolences go out to her immediate family and the Girl Guide Movement that she nurtured for many years. She began as a Brownie Guide at age 7 and she gave 64 years of active service in guiding. Rest eternal grant unto her and may perpetual light shine upon her. I am obliged Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I will like to associate myself with the remarks and the condolences offered to all those persons who were mentioned here this morning particularly Mr. Laidlow and Mrs. Debique. I want to say a few brief words in relation to Mrs. Debique. She was a lady, a person who I admire greatly because of the way she conducted herself. One would look at her and assume that humility that she exuded is a characteristic that many of us would like to have. When one attended the funeral, as so many members of this House did, it was clear that she was held in great esteem and the evidence of her work was also seen by the numbers of young people in uniform who attended the funeral. I believe those young persons dominated the numbers at the funeral, you had the Brownies and the Guides Rangers and you had the students of the High School in particular.

Mr. Speaker, she was a lady who made a contribution to St. Vincent much greater than we would have thought looking at her. She was a lady who cared, a lady who was soft, yet firm and a lady who in fact we will all miss and I am sure that the institutions which she served will miss her greatly. I want to offer condolences to her family including the Clerk of this Honourable House who was her niece and I think they all know given their Christian background that weeping may endure for the night, but joy, real joy will come in the morning. I am much obliged.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. I will just like to pay tribute to a gentleman who buried recently Mr. Wilmoth Hadaway originally of North Central Windward Mount Grenan. I know him from since I was a tiny tot living in San Souci. He was one of the last sugarcane truckers; he is a very skinny guy, driving a big 10 ton truck with sugarcane from the Balcombe Estate up to the sugar factory in Mount Bentick. After sugar collapsed, he moved his family into the city and they lived at Beach Mont a property which later became the home of the Unity Labour Party for seven years 1998 to 2005, the very critical period in the life of the Unity Labour Party. He went into the import business and being in fact a half brother to the late Beryl Baynes became a very close business associate of hers and was sought of caretaker for most of her properties in and around Kingstown. He lived Mr. Speaker a life..., although he died at 82 I would say that he died..., he lived young at heart and he died at a young old age because Wilmoth was very active and we shared many things in common despite our difference in age and I did have great respect for him. Naturally I am closely connected to his children Jaff, Wade, Merle and Jean, their wives and husband, in fact Wade being my brother-in-law and Jean being the husband of one of the Dabriels of the Chester Cottage fame.

So on behalf of my family, the Unity Labour Party and the Government, I wish to extend condolences to those who he has left behind. May he rest in peace Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE CONRAD SAYERS: Mr. Speaker, I recognise and realise that we have a rather very extensive period of obituaries, so I will be brief, but I will just like to associate and endorse the words of condolences that were expressed by my colleagues on both sides of the House and particularly pay reference to Mrs. Debique a very outstanding educator and to Mrs. Hinds outstanding business woman who has seen the growth of a business from a micro business as it were to a respectable level of business operation here in Kingstown and to Mr. Cappie Laidlow a man who has made tremendous contribution in the area of extending electricity to many villages throughout St. Vincent and the Grenadines and has been a very friendly and a great gentleman. May they all rest in peace and may the families of these people be comforted and strengthened by our God. Thank you.

HONOURABLE DR. JERROL THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I too want to make some brief condolences on the passing of Eric Slater who was the son of a former parliamentarian Sam Eric Slater of North Leeward. He passed few weeks ago on the heels of the passing of his own son one week earlier and I thought it was fitting to really raise in parliament, it is interesting that currently I own the property where he grew up in Chateaubelair, it is my constituency office and of interest Eric was my first Vincentian patient in the United States when I practiced there. So I certainly want to tell his family that may Eric rest in peace and his family bears these condolences.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAER: Okay, that brings us to the end of Obituaries.

CONGRATULATORY REMARKS

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Mr. Speaker, I know I did mentioned in passing the last time, but the lady was just 104 then, so sister Millicent Browne celebrated her 105 birthday a relative of Minister Browne on the 7th of this very month. So I want to wish her continued health, I am not going to say long life because she has a long one already, so is continued health and you know Mr. Speaker, someone said to me, but comrade you always for the eight years you have been in parliament I have heard you mentioned eight persons who have reached the 100 and I heard you always telling me well you and the Honourable Opposition Leader and Mr. Speaker have hopes but he said, I have never heard you mentioned a man, all have been women [laughter], so I said to her, well we have some men who are in the nineties so chances are we still up for it you know. So I want to wish her continued health and strength and persons who want to deliver the message like preacher you can visit her, she is well verse in the scripture and all that matters, all the best to her. Thank you very much Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE DR. JERROL THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I rise to congratulate 20 year old Veronique Williams on winning [applause] the 2009 Miss St. Vincent and the Grenadines and she won this from a very talented field of other contestant. Our Veronique won the interview, the evening wear and the swimwear categories as Miss Darcheville Construction Equipment Sales Caribbean Limited and a string of other prizes which included a scholarship valued at \$80,000 to fulfill her dream of becoming a [applause] financial

consultant. I certainly think that this certainly is something that the Ministry of Culture as an innovation has introduced since 2004 and is a very positive innovation in terms of a scholarship.

Veronique is currently employed with my Ministry in the National ICT Training Project which is important, but you know her victory was particularly touching to me and the various North Leeward Communities, in particular Chateaubelair as Veronique was the first Miss St. Vincent and the Grenadines from the North Leeward End [applause]. Mr. Speaker, their hearts were filled with pride and this was also captured by the large number of congratulations witness in the Searchlight Newspaper. Mr. Speaker, at the time when persons in the area faced various challenge, this was certainly very reassuring to know that positive values, beauty and talent from the North Leeward area was being recognised. Veronique now moves from being the pride of North Leeward to being the pride of the entire nation of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and as she moves to her next challenge of Miss Carnival, I am sure that she is going to perform extremely well and she is going to be a successful contestant in that particular venture and certainly successful in the rest of her life. I personally and certainly on behalf of everyone else want to congratulate Miss Veronique Williams Miss SVG and that she moves on to be successful in anything that she tries to be. Thank you very much Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to associate myself with remarks made by the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works. Mother Browne is well known in that community, her penchant for dealing with matters of the scriptures is also well known. Her daughter-in-law, the wife of her late son Gregory goes to church with myself and the Honourable Minister and she keeps us abreast of Mother Browne's health and welfare. I spoke to her quite recently and she did indicate that she seems to be getting stronger. It is not often and I have to join the Minister here outside of East St. George that we have people who reached those sorts of years and I just simply wish to say on behalf of my family and on the behalf of others here that we wish her continued health and I look forward to hearing of her next birthday. I am much obliged.

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to add congratulations at least Mr. Thompson takes all the credit and I would not be forgiven by the Cultural Community especially all the Soca Artiste that come out of North Leeward if I did not rise and also congratulate Miss SVG on behalf of all of us, on this side and the other side of the House. Thank you.

CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES

The Minutes of the sitting held on Thursday 28th May, 2009, copies of which had been previously circulated were taken as read and confirmed with few amendments.

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: Mr. Speaker, I rise in connection with a matter that I did not see recorded here and perhaps Madam Clerk may correct me, representation of the People Act, the Amendment was not being recorded and that was one Bill that went through the House in the last session, which was moved by me. There was debate by myself and the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines and the Bill was passed all stages.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: All right, Madam Clerk would take note of that and make sure the necessary correction is made, therefore all who are in favour say I, all who against say no, the Aye's have it.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister for Education, Member for Marriaqua.

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the number of students who wrote the now concluded Common Entrance Examination which was held on Friday 29th May, 2009 was 2327. Once again the success rate of our students is encouraging. The proportion of students who met the prescribed standard was 51.62% with 22 students earning in excess of 90% of the total marks. Richard John of the Kingstown Preparatory School was the top student with a total of 94.35%; second place went to Delight Ollivierre of the Richland Park Seventh Day Adventist Primary with 94.09% and third place was Asheenie Best of the Sugar Mill Academy with 94.03%; Sherwin Peters of the Kingstown Preparatory School was in the fourth position with 93.82% and the fifth place went to Averyl Hamilton of the Kingstown Preparatory School with 93.49%. The first ten places were taken by the following schools; Kingstown Preparatory had three students out of ten, Richland Park Seventh Day Adventist one student, Sugar Mill Academy one student, Georgetown Government two students, Cane End Government one student, Calliaqua Anglican one student, Winsor Primary one student. The subject performance can be summarise as follows: In General Paper, Shalex Bailey of the Cane End Government School scored 96.67%; in English Language, Reisha Byron Cox of the St. Mary's Roman Catholic School scored 97.73%; in Math, Aaron Knights of the Kingstown Government School, Nateisha Richardson of the Winsor Primary, Delight Ollivierre of Richland Park Seventh Day Adventist, Keyshuba Caine of the George Government scored 98.33% in Maths, the spread of places illustrates that at our primary schools, teachers are working tirelessly to educate our children. The Ministry of Education is proud of this accomplishment.

In all three subject areas, the highest score was well above 90% in Mathematics an area which can be considered to be difficult. There was an increase in performance of students. Language Arts figures maintained an average of 53% a similar performance to that of 2008 while there was a slight decrease in General Paper. This year 1223 males wrote and 1104 females, 163 students scored 80% or more in total marks, 29 more than last year. In addition, in 2009 59.42 of females and 43.90 of males attained the required standard. Mr. Speaker, there are good quality passes this year. For the last three years we have seen performance of over 50% of the examinees meeting the prescribed standard. This has not been seen before. In 2001 only 39% gained a pass mark, thanks to the education revolution [applause]. The upgrading of our education facilities training and retraining of teachers, all lend to the success that we have witnessed over the last few years. I congratulate students for their accomplishment in this year's examination, parents and teachers you have worked tirelessly to ensure the success of our students. I encourage all students and teachers to strengthened existing team spirit and continue to strive for excellence. A great tasks is ours, the nation future is in our hands. Mr. Speaker, I am obliged.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, there are two substantive matters or two matters on which I would like to make substantial Ministerial Statements and two

other matters, one of them of some importance which I would mention. The first Mr. Speaker, concerns the issuance by the United States Government of a trafficking in persons watch list on which St. Vincent and the Grenadines has been placed this year. On June 16th 2009 the state department of the US Government issued its Ninth Annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report. In this report St. Vincent and the Grenadines was named on the watch list. The text of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Country Narrative in the 2009 TIP, Trafficking in Persons Report reads in the substantive part as follows: (I think we are having some unevenness in the sound)

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Just a minute, maybe the speaker is giving problems, so maybe you need to just cut it out and perhaps leave the volume on the others. So just take out this one altogether.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I am obliged Mr. Speaker. The text of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Country Narrative in the 2009 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report reads in the substantive part as follows:

Mr. Speaker, it is available on the website, “St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a potential source country for children traffic internally for the purposes of sexual exploitation. It may also be a destination country for women traffic for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation... (We still have the same problem Mr. Speaker.)

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Just a minute please, can’t we do something about the line, just cut it altogether, unplug it if you have to do that, it is annoying.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I will try again Mr. Speaker. The text of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Country Narrative in the 2009 Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report reads in the substantive part as follows:

“St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a potential source country for children traffic internally for the purposes of sexual exploitation. It may also be a destination country for women traffic for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation. Anecdotal reporting suggests the number of victim traffic into or through St. Vincent and the Grenadines is comparatively small. Information on the full extent of human trafficking in St. Vincent and the Grenadines however is lacking, as neither the Government nor NGO’s have conducted any real investigations, studies or surveys. Reports indicates that a traditional practice of sending children away from home to live with another family is sometimes misuse for the purpose of crossing children into commercial sexual exploitation. In these situations, caregivers force foster children into sexual relationships in exchange for financial and incline compensation”.

The tare two watch lists involves no sanctions placed against St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The report lists a number of recommendations for possible action to be taken by the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines as follows:

“Develop and implement a comprehensive anti-trafficking law; investigate allegations of the commercial sexual exploitation of children; utilise existing legal statutes to prosecute cases of

women or children post into commercial sexual exploitation and provide protective services to children rescued from commercial sexual exploitation”.

The Government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines received with utter shock and dismay the announcement by the state department that St. Vincent and the Grenadines has been placed on a watch lists regarding human trafficking. This veritable bolt from the blue is arbitrary, I handed wrong based on the most flimsy evidence and is at complete variance with the facts. St. Vincent and the Grenadines does not have trafficking in persons, it is prohibited by law and our law enforcement and social services institutions are always on the active look out for any sign of it. Right thinking persons in our country are asking; where is the human trafficking? Indeed, the very TIP Report on St. Vincent and the Grenadines by the US Government reveals that there is no evidential basis for the issuance of a placement of St. Vincent and the Grenadines on any such watch lists. The opening lines of the report state and I want to repeat them, St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a potential source country for children traffic internally for the purposes of sexual exploitation. It may also a destination country for women traffic for the purposes of commercial sexual exploitation. Anecdotal reporting suggests the number of victim traffic into or through St. Vincent and the Grenadines is comparatively small.

Honourable Members, please note the words, potential source country may be a destination. Anecdotal reporting suggests that the numbers is comparatively small. The Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines has responded swiftly and formally to the US Government on its TIP Report and the placement of St. Vincent and the Grenadines on this so-called watch lists. Yesterday I protested verbally to the US Embassy in Barbados in the person of its Chargé d’Affair Mr. Brent Hardt, who currently heads that mission in the absence of US Ambassador. In my two conversations with Mr. Hardt, I outlined in detail the unfair wrong arbitrary and discriminatory placement of St Vincent and the Grenadines on the so-call watch lists. I did the same thing to the Assistant Secretary of State for the Western Hemisphere at the State Department, Mr. Tom Shannon whom I had requested to telephone me to discuss the matter. When I spoke to Mr. Shannon he was already in possession of a copy of a letter which I had sent a few hours earlier to the Honourable Secretary of State Hilary Clinton. He undertook to convey the details of my conversation with him to Mrs. Clinton. Mr. Shannon was most sympathetic to the position of the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and was unable to defend the issuance of the watch list in relation to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. It appears to me that the agency in the US State Department charge with the responsibility under American law to issue such watch list is oblivious to the real factual situation regarding any alleged trafficking in persons in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and relies on hear say, unreliable allegations and some mischief making possibly by some busy bodies. I shall find out about this sooner rather later.

Yesterday too, I was in touch with the Ambassador of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to Washington, Her Excellency Ms. La Ceila Prince and give her certain information and instructions. She attended yesterday afternoon a general briefing on trafficking in persons at the US State Department for Diplomats in Washington. I await her report which I expect to receive today. In fact, before coming to Parliament, I received an oral report in which she said it was a general discussion about the process and they invited no questions or queries in relation to any particular country. In my conversation with the charge de affair at the US Embassy Mr. Hardt, he made clear that the evidence on human trafficking in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is slim at best. He informed me too that he had urged the relevant agency in the US Government not to proceed with the naming of St. Vincent and the Grenadines on the watch list. It is most doubtful that an agency in distant Washington

would know more about St. Vincent and the Grenadines on any issue than the American Diplomats and Officials on the ground in the Eastern Caribbean. Indeed, the text of St. Vincent and the Country Narrative in the 2009 TIP Report, published by the Agency of the US Government is inchoate, short on facts and probabilities and long on possibilities even fanciful ones.

Mr. Speaker, this country has friendly relations with the USA. If an agency in the US Government has any concern or allegation in relation to the issue of human trafficking in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, normal courtesies surely will demand that we be informed for appropriate comment. A proverbial sledge hammer, wielded by a powerful neighbour upon a geographically small and relatively powerless ally would not easily commend itself to reasonable persons in these circumstances. Care ought to be taken not to stylize any unfounded allegations as facts. Accordingly, I have protested formally on behalf of my Government at this unfounded and irresponsible naming of St. Vincent and the Grenadines on the watch list for alleged human trafficking.

My Government has long committed itself to working with all responsible international bodies and countries including the Americans on all issues of international concern including human trafficking. I have requested formally too, that the state department make a thorough review of the matter of the placement of St. Vincent and the Grenadines on the said watch list. I expect that my Government would have an opportunity to comment on any relevant consideration in this review. I sincerely hope that the name of our country would be removed soonest from this watch list. I have been advised Mr. Speaker that there would be a review of the watch list sometime early next year, probably February.

Mr. Speaker, for the record, let me state the following regarding the issues of trafficking in persons in relation to St. Vincent and the Grenadines, first the legal framework, there exist in this country a body of laws which criminalises and punishes the commercial sexual exploitation of children and women and prostitution. These offenses include intercourse with a girl under 15 years old, indecency with a child, permitting a girl under 15 years to use premises for intercourse, causing or encouraging prostitution of a girl under 15 years, causing prostitution of a women, detention in a brothel, man living on earnings of a prostitute, woman exercising control over a prostitute, keeping a brothel, procurement of a woman by threats or false pretenses, administering drugs to facilitate intercourse and indecent practices between persons of the same sex, each of them and other sexual offences carry hefty terms of imprisonment. The Constitution of St. Vincent and the Grenadines prohibit slavery and forced labour:

2. Law enforcement, the Police Force is well equipped to enforce the laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Indeed, this administration established a major crimes unit in which there is a section which specialises in sexual offences including prostitution and the commercial sexual exploitation of women and children. The law courts are equipped to address these matters too. There is a family court and serious offences court at the magisterial level and a high court in its criminal jurisdiction. There is an independent office of the Director of Public Prosecutions and also a team of competent police prosecutors. St. Vincent and the Grenadines Coast Guard with support from the RSS air wing and RSS coordination of other coast guard services assist in stamping out human trafficking. A competent civilianised immigration service exists, there are tough immigration laws addressing issues touching and concerning the trafficking in persons.

3. **Support institutions in the fight against trafficking in persons, including advocacy, interventions, reportage, and social services action, and these are the support institutions which we have at work**
 - a. **The Ministry of Social Development and its specialised agencies.**
 - b. **The 39 district health clinics, the main hospital and the five district hospitals.**
 - c. **Community Health Services.**
 - d. **Counseling available to all 61 primary schools and 27 secondary schools.**
 - e. **Parent-teachers Associations in all schools.**
 - f. **The permanent national commission on crime prevention headed by a woman, a former Superintendent of Police.**
 - g. **Non-governmental organisations' such as Marion House many of which are supported by the Government.**
4. **Advocacy awareness, public awareness and profile of issue this is done on an ongoing basis by**
 - a. **The aforementioned institutions**
 - b. **The political directorate including the Prime Minister**
 - c. **The very active news media print and electronic**
5. **International coordination, the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines works assiduously with Governments international agencies and NGO's worldwide on the issue of human trafficking.**

I wish to make a final comment Mr. Speaker, on the basis of the TIP Report regarding St. Vincent and the Grenadines, if our country is to be placed on any such watch list, then every country in the world should be on it, but if every country is on a watch list in the end it means everything and it means nothing. I made the point to the Americans, I say, what about human trafficking in your country? They concede that they have lots of it. I say, is your name on the watch list? They say that they have legal measures in place to track what happen. So they have a lot, they concede that we hardly have anything like that, but yet we are on and they are not and we can talk about in relation to several other countries. So we need to let a rational and fact base analysis be done.

Finally Mr. Speaker, a bit of historical information. Sometime in 2003 or there about a group of women from the Dominican Republic were brought into this country by someone under a false cover, but in reality to engage in commercial transactions in sex, swiftly, the police and immigration authority acted and on my instruction, I caused them to be deported or mass. The Government has no tolerant of such activities. Since then, no individual or group has attempted such a venture in this country. We were swift and decisive and we will continue so to be. I reiterate our firm stance in every material particular against human trafficking. We will continue to work with all nations in combating it on every front and Mr. Speaker, this ministerial statement which I am making here I will cause it to be circulated to every Government in CARICOM, every Government

in the Organisation of America States and every Government in the international..., the United Nation System, I will not allow our country to be besmirched by some unelected officials in a unit or agency of any Government anywhere.

Mr. Speaker, incidentally Mr. Speaker, in the report if I may just say parenthetically, in the report to me this morning by our own Ambassador, she said that the person who actually wrote the section of the report on St. Vincent indicated to her that she was already been informed that I had raised the matter at a very high level and that she knows that a letter had gone to Mrs. Clinton the Secretary of State and that the matter would be discussed further.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to give the assurance to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, it doesn't matter how any country is powerful, I am not going to allow anything to be done against our country which is unfair and wrong, I will act promptly.

Mr. Speaker, an update on the Millennium Bank matter. First some background, on March 26th 2009 the International Financial Services Authority (IFSA) here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines placed Millennium Bank Incorporated under receivership pursuant to the authorities powers under the International Banks Act 2004. The authority appointed Chris Biton of KPMG Cayman Islands and Charles Streche of KPMG Advisory Ltd Bermuda as joint receivers of the bank. The authority acted on information received by the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) that Millennium Bank was allegedly involve in a US \$69 million ponzi scheme and took action to immediately preempt the destruction of records and the dissipation of assets belonging to Millennium Bank and to assist the US SEC with its investigations. On April 2nd 2009 the authority revoked the banking licenses of Millennium Bank pursuant to the authority's powers under the International Banks Act 2004. This action was taken with the advice of the Honourable Minister of Finance in accordance with the said banking act. The authority's action to revoke the issue, the licenses of Millennium Bank was based on the findings of the joint receivers of the bank. These findings reveal unauthorised activities by the bank during the period January to March 2009.

Mr. Speaker, I should add that this is the second time I have advised upon the revocation of this license on the first occasion in 2003 – 2004 when the high court on a technicality restored the license. On April 3rd 2009, the Director of Public Prosecutions acting upon information provided by the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) and IFSA obtained the restraint order against the property of William J Wise, Director of Millennium Bank Incorporated and several companies believe to be affiliated with and or under the control of Mr. Wise. This restraint order prohibits any dealing including sale or dispensation of property or diminishing the value of property belonging to Mr. Wise and the said companies and the property so restrain includes a residence at Ratho Mill and its contents, motor vehicles and boats. The overriding objectives of the restraint order is to preserve all assets believe to be belonging to Millennium Bank Incorporated not covered under the authority of the joint receivers.

On April 9th 2009, Charles Streche and Chris Biton they have aforementioned of KPMG was subsequently appointed as joint provisional liquidators of the bank by order of the Eastern Caribbean Supreme Court of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. This appointment as joint provisional liquidators followed the presentation of a winding up petition by IFSA consequent upon IFSA's determination that the bank had breach the International

Banks Act and or had been conducting its business in a manner that is detrimental to the public interest, the interest of its depositors or the interest of other creditors.

On 24th April 2009, an employee of the FIU and an employee of the Ministry of Legal affairs were appointed as St. Vincent and the Grenadines joint receivers over the assets of Wise and the banks affiliated companies, including Millennium Aviation Incorporated, Tommy and Nelson Legacy Place Incorporated, Sterling Administration Incorporated, and Midnight Falls Incorporated. The appointment also covers assets held by former employees and directors of the bank, the joint provisional liquidators are assisting the St. Vincent and the Grenadines joint receivers with the realisation of assets that are likely to benefit the estate of the bank. To date, investigations are continuing by the joint provisional liquidators who are also working with IFSA and the FIU and the US receiver regarding other potential realisable assets and potential actions against the former directors affiliated companies and third parties.

Mr. Speaker, I want to address the issue of the importance of International and Local Corporation on this matter. The local authorities in particular IFSA, the FIU, the Director of the Public Prosecutions and the Attorney General have been working together with the joint receivers and joint liquidators as well as the US authorities with the objective of investigating fully all issues relating to the fraud in which Millennium Bank is alleged to have been involved. The US Securities Commission and the US Quota Pointed Receiver Mr. Richard Roper have repeatedly expressed gratitude for the high level of response, interaction, assistance and cooperation which it has been able to receive from St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I repeat Mr. Speaker, The US Securities Commission and the US Quota Pointed Receiver Mr. Richard Roper have repeatedly expressed gratitude for the high level of response, interaction, assistance and cooperation which it has been able to receive from St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The response from St. Vincent and the Grenadines to the allegations made against Millennium Bank has been swift, decisive and effective both from an institutional and national level. There is a recent development. A class action has been filed in the US District Court for the Northern District of Texas on April 15th 2009 by a Texan resident Ann-Marie Lytson Grandburg against the US Bank JP Morgan Trace and Company on behalf of persons who are victims of the fraud allegedly perpetrated by Millennium Bank. Of significance, is that this class action was not filed against Millennium Bank that is Millennium Bank is not named or joined as a defendant to the proceedings, but instead, the legal action is being taken against JP Morgan Chase and Company, formerly Washington Mutual. The claim is for compensatory and exemplary damages for all investors who invested in Millennium Banks alleged ponzi scheme, accusing the JP Morgan of constructive fraud, aiding and abetting fraud, breach of fiduciary duty, and negligence.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, we must remember that Washington Mutual JP Morgan Chase they are reputable banking institutions in the United States. An extract from the complaint of this class action suit which was filed states in part, quote:

“this is a class action suit arising out of the defendant breach that is to JP Morgan Chase formerly Washington Mutual out of the defendant breach of its common law and statutory duties in relation to perpetrating the perpetrating of a fraud ponzi scheme by third parties with the defendant’s knowledge and with substantial assistance from the defendant”, it goes on, “plaintiff’s complaint is not against the defendants in case 709cv000500 but rather against Washington Mutual now known as PP Morgan Chase, the bank which has not only turn a blind eye to the

obviously illegal activities being carried out with its complicity and facilitation, but even knew of those activities provided the wrong doers with substantial assistance and profited there from.”

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, you may remember when I first spoke on this issue, when the headline was St. Vincent in ponzi scheme and I pointed out that the complaint by the SEC showed the evidence that the fraud was perpetrated in the United States of America that was the allegation, but the headlines as always wanting to tar a small country. It is easy for other people to evade their own obligations elsewhere and put the tar, the brush on a small country. Well, as you noticed I am defending the patrimony of this land, I am defending our nation, because if we have done anything wrong, I will say well, we have done something wrong, but if we have not it is my duty to defend this country and its citizens.

The significance of this class action bears some comments Mr. Speaker. The significance of this class action is that it recognises and seeks to have recognise by the court where the large part of the culpability lies for the fraud with the JP Morgan Washington Mutual Bank in the US. From what has been presented, it is cleared that the fraud was perpetrated using a bank account at the Washington Mutual Bank in the name of the United Trust of Switzerland. The United Trust of Switzerland is not a Vincentian company, but a limited company registered in Nevada USA with its principal office located in Napa California. Investors were asked to place their funds into this account and would have had some measure of assurance of the safety of their deposits due to the status of the Washington Mutual Bank as a licensed and regulated United States Bank. In this class action, it was claimed that the United Trust of Switzerland which is the parent entity of Millennium Bank was running a bank within a bank at the Washington Mutual and JP Morgan Chase and that Washington Mutual and JP Morgan Chase use its status as a licensed regulated bank to assist the United Trust of Switzerland in the selling of banking products such as certificates of deposits that is the gravamen of the complaint in this class action suit.

Of significance to note also, is that the activity of the United Trust of Switzerland Account was able to continue for several years before any suspicious activity was reported to the authorities. You may recall that I made the point that in St. Vincent and the Grenadines under our laws and under our regulation, if there was any significant movement of money in a bank, any of our commercial banks here in the way it took place in the Washington Mutual JP Morgan Chase, there would already have been a suspicious activity report made to the Financial Intelligence Unit under the Proceeds of Crime and Anti-Money Laundering Legislation of this country which this Government passed in November 2001 shortly after we came to office. Incidentally, it is this Government too which established the Financial Intelligence Unit and modernise the Offshore Finance Authority by establishing the International Financial Service Authority.

The allegation that the US\$69 million fraud was perpetrated in the US is supported thus far by the findings of the joint liquidators. Current information is that majority of the funds or are approximately US\$69 million as set out in the Securities and Exchange Commission complaint were deposited into the United Trust of Switzerland account with Washington Mutual JP Morgan in Las Vegas Nevada. It is not believed at this stage that funds deposited to the United Trust of Switzerland at the Washington Mutual JP Morgan were ever remitted to the Millennium Bank Incorporated in St. Vincent. According to the US SEC investors cheques and wire transfers were not made payable to the Millennium Bank, but rather to the United Trust of Switzerland or UT of S. The joint receivers joint liquidators have been involved in extensive investigations locally and globally for the past several months since the appointment on the 26th March 2009 and to date have identified

that potential credit acclaims against Millennium Bank from depositors and local creditors total approximately US\$3 million. This figure differs significantly from the alleged claims against the bank of US\$69 million quoted in the SEC complaint that led to the appointment of the US receiver. Certain US investors appeared to have place deposits with the bank's parent United Trust of Switzerland and it may be that the SEC complaint included such claims. Further investigations are on the way to establish if they represent legitimate claims against the bank. To date, only a small number of depositors have contacted the joint liquidators who lodged claims against the bank, so more claims may emerge. The findings of the liquidators thus far coupled with the recent class action filed against the US JP Morgan lend support to the initial premise by the authorities in St. Vincent and the Grenadines that the activities alleged by the SEC thus far appear to have taken place outside of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

And Mr. Speaker, when this issue first arose, there were lots of an attempt by those who are unpatriotic, as soon as they see a headline, they do not wait for anything else. On the basis of partisan politics or any other agenda, they jump and start to see if they can create some mischief. As always the truth will come out.

Mr. Speaker, the two other matters which I will like to mention the first British American Insurance Company, CLICO issue. In respect of CLICO as I have reported on more than one occasion though there are challenges, it appears as though CLICO Barbados matters are being addressed satisfactorily by the Government of Barbados and CLICO Trinidad by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and they works in progress. In relation to the British American Insurance Company, Headquartered in the Bahamas but operating from a management standpoint centrally out of Trinidad and Tobago and in the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union countries, there are liabilities amounting to EC\$1.6 billion to policy holders and investors.

Mr. Speaker, as the Chairperson of the joint action, the joint taskforce of the OECS in the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union, I have been spending a lot of time on this matter and two weeks ago, Friday a committee was set up, which had been set up of technical persons but all the Minister of Finance in the region are asked that it may be done under my chairmanship, we met here and a proposal which we had put forward for British American was accepted in principle and we were mandated to, that is to say St. Vincent and the Grenadines draft a memorandum and circulate to all the stakeholders, all the Governments. We worked on it over the weekend Mr. Speaker and by Tuesday morning it had been sent. Today a number of technical officials are meeting for a joint meeting of the OECS Eastern Caribbean Currency Union and that proposal will be discussed. Sadly some of the go slow at LIAT is proving difficult for some people coming in and tomorrow the Heads of Governments will meet under my chairmanship and this is an item on the Agenda.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago would not be there, because this is an OECS Eastern Caribbean Currency Union Meeting, but I have spoken on the telephone this morning with Prime Minister Manning, his Government is critical to an ongoing solution in this matter. The solution which we are seeking Mr. Speaker, rest on four propositions, first that there be a regional solution, secondly that there be a new company in which we keep British American going as a going concern, thirdly that the objective is to protect policy holders, depositors and investors and fourthly to ensure that no fallout from British American creates a systemic risks to our financial system and those are the guiding propositions. We have a detailed proposal; it is not yet Mr. Speaker, a matter as to the details of the proposal which I will like to make public since there are some elements

in it which are still being negotiated by various entities, various Governments, but that the proposal has been accepted in principle and we are trying to finalise all the details.

Mr. Speaker, this matter has been occupying a great deal of attention, because for all practical purposes, since 1997 British American was functioning, operating as an insolvent company but being protected in a sense by the assets and resources of CL Financial. Clearly there has to be if our proposal is to work, we will have to have an agreement with British American when it goes into liquidation. I have asked the Government of the Bahamas to hold their hand on the liquidation issue, they have put the matter into judicial management and until we get our operations in order in accordance with the proposal that I have and clearly we will need an agreement with CL Financial because of any interparty transactions between British American and CL Financial.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important public policy issue and I am personally spending a lot of time on it, because of the \$106 billion in the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union in liabilities, some \$190 million are in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and there is a short fall in the assets in the statutory fund in relation to that \$190 million. It is not clear precisely the exact extent of the shortfall, but it may well be between 40 and 50 million dollars and the point has got to be made also Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, that some of the assets in the statutory fund would not easily be realisable in cash. One of the real problems with British American is that over several years they have raised about US400 million in the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union on a set of instruments which are really banking instruments properly speaking and they invested in real estate in the United States which real estate investments have as you will say, they have tanked, so that is a challenge as to how those investments are to be rescued and with the encumbrances which upon them. It is a complex matter, extremely complex and not susceptible to sound bit solutions as some persons may tend to do, but I want to assure again all depositors and investors, all policy holders that this Government is working assiduously to find a full and complete solution to this matter so that their earnings, their pensions and so forth would properly be protected.

Mr. Speaker, there is one immediate matter with British American which will have to be determined tomorrow hopefully and I have already put forward a proposal in that regard. We will require between US \$1.5 and US \$2 million within the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union to pay the reinsurance premiums which would become due shortly on policies which persons hold with British American and I want to make sure that in this hurricane season we do not have exposure without the reinsurance and I have made a proposal for this money to be part of the investment from the Eastern Currency Union in the new business, in the new company that we can take that money from the second fiscal tranche at the central bank which will be available for such an activity or perhaps even from the profits which are about to be declared. But as you would see Mr. Speaker, we are actively seeking solutions to this matter and I give the assurance that we will continue to pursue resolutely.

One final matter Mr. Speaker of a more lighthearted nature, it has been drawn to my attention that some lovers of calypso have been a little concern by some propagandist who have said that I have asked that some line or lines of particular calypso or calypsos be amended. Mr. Speaker, I have not heard any offending calypso, I have not asked anyone to address any matter concerning a calypso or calypsos, I have given no instructions and if anybody is acting in my name, I want to say they are doing do without my authority and as far as I have been advised, nobody is so acting. So I want to make that point absolutely clear.

Two years ago there was a similar rumour apparently the Carnival Development Corporation which has the responsibility to these matters told a particular calypsonian to take out some lines or amend them. I called the calypsonian and tell them to sing the calypso how he has made it, I say, you can even sing more than what you sing, it is no sweat off of my nose, absolutely none. I realise that because I am in office, some calypsonians would sing about Ralph for kicks, even friends of mine, because men want to make the big yard, men want to impress, beat up on me if you want, it is all right. It is over forty years men trying to beat up on I man and you lick me up, you knock me down I get right back up, I am a hard man *fi* dead. Thank you very much.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to raise a matter which I have raised before. This morning we had some very important statements raised by the Prime Minister in his Ministerial Statement, especially those having to do with the situation CLICO and British American. You have already made a ruling that the Opposition, we cannot respond or ask questions in relation to these matters. Mr. given the present world economic and financial situations, I am again asking that consideration be given that given those types of critical issues that at least we will be able to ask questions on these matters. They are critical to the future of our countries and as would it be expected, we should be able to at least seek clarifications, ask questions given the fact that much of that information is being developed and will not be privy only except in the case of statements from the Minister of Finance. So I am asking Mr. Speaker, if there could be a suspension at least for the time being of that ruling which will permit us to ask such questions.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much Honourable Member. I too I am aware of the critical nature of the situation as it exists. I am asking the technician once again if you can do something about this speaker behind me because it is totally annoying almost ineffective, I am wondering something, if you can't isolate this speaker because it is definitely creating an annoyance. Please work on that for me.

Yes, I am aware of the critical nature of the situation and I have only been performing according to rules of this House and I need to correct you, it is not a question that a question cannot be asked by the Opposition but questions generally cannot be asked in relation to Ministerial Statement, so whether Opposition or Government Minister cannot question anyone in relation to Ministerial Statement.

As I have indicated I do not want as Speaker of this House to open a situation that would set a president here in this Parliament with reference to these matters. I know on a number of occasions that you would have asked the Prime Minister to explain an issue and I know he would oblige and I know that if there is a particular aspect of this statement that maybe you want him to explain which you didn't fully understand, I believe that he might want to oblige you on it, but as to make it a general rule of questioning on statement, I cannot do it at this point in time. But I am sure the Prime Minister may consider as you said the nature of the nature of this situation and may want to clarify any issue that you may not fully understand in relation to what statement he would have made. Honourable Prime Minister I do not know if you want to respond.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, we have addressed these rules before; we have been here on several occasions. I have indicated to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition that I..., our actual proposal which we have put forward I can get a copy to him I told him that privately. Mr. Speaker, I would rarely even outside of the House would have liked to have the Leader of the Opposition and discuss everything in detail, including the matters of a confidential nature, but the last time I did so, I got burnt. He

turned around despite assurances given then and became political in a partisan way with information which I give him in good faith. Now I am a person of extraordinary generous spirit I believe, but if I get burnt once I will be very shy the second time so that Mr. Speaker, I come here and I give information, in fact I give more information in these Ministerial Statements than perhaps I should even properly give in the delicacy of certain matters. But I do so in the interest of transparency. But I am prepared to have one of my officials share with the Leader of the Opposition the actual proposal which we have put forward and certain amendments which had been suggested. In fact, even a copy of the draft memorandum which we have put together though I fear greatly as soon as he has it in his hand, he would treat it in a manner which may not be within the interest of the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. He may disagree with me, I am sure that he would, absolutely sure that he would disagree with me but he can appreciate my apprehension. In other words, I offer a hand but when I offer it I keep an eagle eye as to what is happening to that hand which I offer.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Member.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I am not asking the Prime Minister outside of this Parliament for this information. What I am seeking to do I think it was important enough that in Ministerial Statement of the type just delivered by the Prime Minister in relation to CLICO and given the exposure of St. Vincent and the Grenadines of both the public and private sector. I think it is of benefit to all if all of us have an understanding of the issues and the way they are being dealt with. I am not asking for information outside of parliament; but rather to seek when these statements are delivered to get further clarification and understand firstly exactly what is being done. Many people are involved; I think with the last figure we had was some Vincentians including the public sector were exposed to the tune of \$347 million and today the Prime Minister has indicated that the OECS is at \$1.6 million. I am not asking for something outside of the parliament, I am seeking essentially to ensure that all of us have a clear understanding of what is being done in relation to these matters, particularly because we still have a issue of confidence by the population, which all of us are seeking to assure to avoid any possibility of any run on any bank or any other institution. I think I have been playing my part in this regard in relation to the CLICO and British American matter. That is what I am asking for.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: As I said again, I am sympathetic to your situation and again, maybe in relation to that issue of confidence, perhaps it might not best be served by trading the questions and answers across the floor of the House. Maybe, it might be better served if both parties through whatever instruments you may use can meet and discuss these issues. This chair understands and as I say is quite sympathetic to the cause; but there are some things that I just cannot at this moment do. I mean if I may use another issue: members would realise and I am talking about the understanding of the chair on these issues, members would realise even when I served in this House previously that the issues of question time, members were only required to say, "I rise to ask question No. (1) standing in my name or No. (2) standing in my name and then sit down and the person who is providing the answer; answers that.

We changed that that was changed in 2001 and allowed the member asking the question to read the question out so that everybody listening to the broadcast would get an understanding of what the question is. And that was a significant change in relation to the way things are being done in this House and therefore, if I responded as I have responded; it is that I am hoping that members would understand the situation as it is. Thank you very much, we shall move on.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker; may I crave your indulgence to say one thing. Mr. Speaker, the comments I have made just now on British American are comments which I have made essentially in this House and at Press Conferences. Simply, I condensed them in my presentation here this morning and it is of interest to note that fifteen questions: the opposition has available to it to ask (15) questions for oral answers and not one single one covers British American. [Applause] Secondly, Mr. Speaker, under the rules they have the right to ask (20) questions for written answers, four for each member and there is none for this sitting, so they have an opportunity to ask in the aggregate (35) questions; but not one is on CLICO. I think that puts the issue within some context. [Applause]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Shall we move now to the other items on the Order Paper.

REPORTS FROM SELECT COMMITTEES

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I just simply want to report that the Select Committee on the Constitution Bill met yesterday and it is schedule to meet again, Mr. Speaker, on the 21st and 23rd July from 9:00 a.m. onwards. In the case of the 21st, from then until about 1.00 o'clock: 9 .00 a.m. until about 1:00 o'clock and all day on the 23rd. Mr. Speaker, there are certain decisions being made and I am certain you would address those in due course in respect of the process. It was a disappointment to the people who I heard commented on it that the opposition absented themselves yesterday.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay, let me address two other issues before we move on. One, I just want to inform parliamentarians that the court is in session downstairs and you need to go light on your tapping, if indeed you have to tap or maybe you can applaud in some other way. And secondly, it is my understanding that it is difficult at this time to adjust the situation relative to the speakers since they are wired in a particular way; series of three pairs or something of that sort, the technicality I do not fully understand; but I understand it is difficult to make the adjustment at this time, so I am hoping that that would be taken into consideration and these things would be fully sorted out so that by the next meeting of the House we will have all of that straightened out. So we will just have to bear with what is happening today. Thank you very much.

PETITIONS

HONOURABLE SELMON WALTERS: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to present the petition of the Trustees of the 'FULL IN THE SPIRIT PENTECOSTAL CHURCH', which is situated at Ottley Hall. The petition is signed here by: Terron James of Largo Height, he is the Pastor; Hazelene Stapleton, Largo Heights, Trustee Secretary; Sandra James, Largo Heights, Trustee; Vasty Stapleton, Largo Heights, Trustee; Delores Chandler, Ottley Hall, Trustee; Brian Gordon, Chauncey, Trustee; Bernard Dublin, Rose Place, Trustee; Osmond Cameron, Arnos Vale, Trustee. The petition, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members is in order as is the usual case with petitions coming for incorporation with the Trustees pledging to uphold the work of the church within the state of St Vincent and the Grenadines, pledging their full service to all the people as is based on the Bible which is the word of God. I present the petition to the House.

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWER

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

1. **HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** *Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask Question No. 1 standing in my name of the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Planning, Economic Development, Labour, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs:*

Would the Honourable Prime Minister explain if it is possible from a legal perspective to hold in addition to Coroner's Inquest an independent enquiry into the police shooting of the three young men of Vermont?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, Mr. Speaker, I am quite sure that this question is out of order; but it has not been so ruled and I am not inviting you to rule it out of order, Mr. Speaker, because the Honourable Leader of the Opposition is asking me to provide him with legal advice. He, Mr. Speaker, had an opportunity to seek my legal advice but went ahead and got legal advice from some Junior Counsel who did not quite understand this subject and made a number of statements; public statements which was wholly wrong. Or indeed, if he did not want to contact me as a Senior Counsel he could have contacted Mr. Parnell Campbell Q.C. who is still a card carrying member of the New Democratic Party; but it seems as though the Honourable Leader of the Opposition has decided to exclude his most two talented members: Sir James and Parnell Campbell from his advisory team; but it is not for me to advise him as to the persons from whom he should take advice.

I want to say Mr. Speaker that I had given all the information which I thought it possible to give on the last occasion in this Honourable House at the time of the Obituaries when the Honourable Leader of the Opposition rose to offer condolences to two of the persons who died in the altercation with the police in the Vermont Valley, I understand last night, Mr. Speaker that there was a vigil for three of them including a fugitive from justice from Barbados. The Opposition Leader has obviously taken a side already before there is any inquest heard on the evidence and that side is not the side of law and order.

Mr. Speaker, I will nevertheless answer the question and provide the factual basis first. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition became a member of this parliament and a member of the Government in 1998 in June. Between June 1998 and when he demitted office at the wishes of the electorate on March 28th, 2001; he held the office of Minister of Finance, the most senior position in the Government after that of the Prime Minister and then was Prime Minister, in those 2½ years, 1998 to 2001 March, there were 8 persons who died at the hands of the police and in none of them did he ask for an independent inquiry outside of an independent inquiry known as the Coroner's Inquest. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, he left office when there was an inquest or other legal action

only in respect of 4 of those 8. I want to repeat Mr. Speaker, there were 8 in 2½ years and let me add, Mr. Speaker, since 1984 and 2009 in this period of 25 years the period in which you have had most police killings: I am not saying that they were not justified, Mr. Speaker; the most happened in the 2½ years when the Honourable Leader of the Opposition was either Minister of Finance or Prime Minister. The most, 8 in 2½ years because in the whole of the NDP period of 16½ years there were 16; but in 2½ years there were 8 and in none of them was there an independent inquiry asked for and indeed in 4 of them they left office without ensuring that the legal requirement for Coroner's Inquest be held.

So when the Leader of the Opposition speaks on this issue he comes to the table with a hand and a voice which provided no authority to speak on this subject matter on the basis of his own performance and his government's performance. Mr. Speaker, between 2001 and 2008 in that 7 year period there were 4 'police killings' and we have had: sorry there were 7 police killings in that period and so far, Mr. Speaker, inquest have been held in 4 of those 7 and arrangements are being made for the holding of the other 3 and of course, there have been 4 in this year and they have just occurred and they are under investigation. Mr. Speaker, the independent inquiry under the law of this country is the Coroner's Inquest and the independent inquiry is guaranteed in the following ways: the Coroner's Inquest being the independent inquiry. Whenever there is a sudden or unnatural death where on the face of it there is no criminal culpability or no evidence of criminal culpability either on the face of it or at all and what you then hold is the Coroner's Inquest and the independence of the Coroner's Inquest is assured in the following 10 ways, Mr. Speaker, and the Counsels from whom he took advice. I hope they take notes, whether they are in here or outside: so that we would not have to go through this again.

I do not see why the Prime Minister has to give advice to the Leader of the Opposition; but in the interest of good governance I will provide the advice.

- 1. Coroner's Inquest is presided over by a magistrate, a coroner whose appointment would have been previously made by the Regional Judicial and Legal Services Commission, chaired by the Honourable Chief Justice.*

The Executive does not appoint the Coroner. In the case of any other inquiry I would have to do the appointment, so I do not see how it could be independent.

- 2. A five member jury which adjudicates on the facts of the case before the Coroner is selected in accordance with a similar independent selection procedure as before the High Court on the trials and indictment.*

Section (21) of the Coroner's Act; sets out this procedure in detail. Mr. Speaker, if I may give a reason why that has developed: in 1986 I represented the family of one Horace Sutherland popularly known in Sandy Bay as 'boney'. Boney was shot and killed by a police officer at the police station in Sandy Bay. A Coroner's jury was summoned and a verdict of misadventure was returned. Both the Coroner and myself; both of us thought that the verdict was against the run of the evidence and I wrote the then Attorney General, the Honourable Parnell Campbell at the time and said to him that the jury for the Coroner's Inquest has a flaw in it: it was under the 1963 Coroner's Act, selected by the Superintendent of Police for the district, generally speaking that is not such

a bad thing; but if it involves the police it becomes problematic. So, I made a representation that it should be done precisely as it is done in the High Court on trials for indictment and the procedure is set out there. So you have an independent jury five members.

3. *Where a Coroner's Inquest has been completed, the independent Director of Public Prosecutions not the Attorney General may require further investigations by the Coroner if he considers it necessary.*

Under the Coroner's Act of 1963 again it was the Attorney General who had a supervening power or authority; but there is a judgement in the High Court delivered by Sattrahan Singh arising again from the Horace Sutherland's case that where you see Attorney General in the Coroner's Act of 1963 after the Independence Constitution of 1979, you must read Director of Public Prosecutions because it is a quasi criminal proceeding and when the law reformers came in 1990 to do the law reform they took account of that judgement so that in the blue books now you will see that it is the Director of Public Prosecutions and not the Attorney General. Mr. Speaker, I could have given all this advice because not only have I participated in these things I lived them and I helped to change the law to make it independent. I did not just come yesterday keeping noise you know, I did not do that. You know, Mr. Speaker, sometimes because I go about the place I talk and Comrade everybody and I go by the shop and I have a drink and I sit down, sometimes I wonder if they believe that I am an itinerant – they fool themselves so much, they talk they have their own echo chamber; you think I am itinerant sanitation worker, I do not have any experience in anything [interjection] but why you did not ask me first. You could have asked me, you should not have asked your Public Relations Officer or the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines. You could have asked Dr. Lewis he might have had an idea and I am sure he would have called me [applause] if he did not know.

4. *The jury at a Coroner's Inquest may return one of several possible verdicts including death by misadventure or manslaughter or murder against a named person or persons.*
5. *The Inquest is the Coroner's it is not a police inquest; all statements are required to be submitted to the Coroner in the matter prior to hearing of the evidence in open court. The police may submit statements, so too individuals through a lawyer. The Director of Public Prosecutions may submit or the Coroner himself or herself.*

You may go to any of them as a witness to make statements. So the people in Vermont if they are listening to me, they can give the police a statement; who claimed they have seen what happened; they can go to a Lawyer, they can go to the Director of Public Prosecution or they can go to the Coroner himself or herself. And those statements will be recorded in writing and circulated to all the relevant persons. Of course, a lot of times people say they see things and they go on the radio; but when push comes to shove they do not want to give any statement because they never saw anything. I have been in this court system as a practicing lawyer for twenty something years so I know what I am talking about.

6. *The Coroner permits lawyers to appear for the interested parties including the police and the families of the deceased persons.*

7. *The lawyers' present evidence and cross examine witnesses; but the procedure is not adversarial, it is truth seeking and guided by the Coroner.*
8. *Lawyers may be allowed to address the jury on the law arising from the case; but as in every hearing the Coroner as the presiding judicial officer gives direction on the law to the jury which they are bound to follow.*
9. *The Coroner summarise the facts of the case before him or her; but it is the province of the jury to adjudicate on the facts. The jury may accept or reject the Coroner's opinion of the facts.*
10. *The Director of Public Prosecutions who is independent receives the decision of the Coroner's Inquest, the DPP may or may not act further depending on the evidence unearthed by the inquest and the verdict of the jury; thus the matter may end with the verdict of the Coroner's Inquest or may go further in a criminal trial process if the facts of the case warrant it: in the independent judgement of the DPP.*

Mr. Speaker, the Coroner's process do not ... the Inquest begins from the moment the police carry out their statutory duty under the Coroner's Act to report the death of the persons in Vermont to the Coroner. The police would contact the Coroner and say words to the effect: 'three persons are dead' they will outline to the Coroner the circumstances under which the people met their deaths and would ask the Coroner which is the usual thing: 'Do you wish to come to the scene or do we have your permission to remove the body'? They cannot remove those bodies until they get the instructions from the Coroner and the Coroner would give them the instruction to remove the body and say to them make sure that a post mortem is done within such and such a time and make sure that the post mortem report gets to me. I know that this happens, Mr. Speaker, because I have participated in several Coroner's Inquests and when you cross examine the police this is what you get and the Coroner would tell you yes. From the Coroner's table he says **"yes, yes, yes: yes, Dr. Gonsalves, they did this they contacted me; do not let us delay on that and I told them they can take the body and so on and so forth"**.

So, when you ask for an independent inquiry other than the Coroner's Inquest the Coroner's process having started what do I do with that Coroner's process? Let me make it plain, Mr. Speaker, it is not the Prime Minister, it is not the Executive, it is not the Attorney General who commences the Coroner's process the process is commenced by law when the police under his statutory duty calls the Coroner and the Coroner gives appropriate instructions. If I seek to intervene with an independent inquiry at that point the Coroner could stop me. He can go to the court and get an injunction to restrain me, the DPP, the police or the families involved because I will not be acting properly in accordance with the law as laid down. You see rather than reading the law, they go on the website and they see an inquiry is set up into something in England or in the United States. Well an inquiry will be set up in England in a court trial, in an inquest if in fact on the face of it the inquest or the trial revealed some set of manipulation by investigators and other persons to give rise to an issue which affects the administration of justice and then it is an inquiry not into the deaths; but an inquiry into the process.

I do not see if after all these years that I have to come to give a free law lecture on the Coroner's Inquest; but I realised that the Opposition is inadequate, I realised too from the candidates they have named, Mr. Speaker, recently that they are doomed again to the opposition, so I am prepared to do a public service of educating the opposition in the hope that somehow they will improve the quality of their work. [Applause]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much. Question No. 2, Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Supplementary Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR SPEAKER: Hello.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Supplementary.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary question.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I simply wish to have this matter clarified can we have independent inquiry? I got the impression that the Coroner's Inquest, from the Prime Minister is the independent inquiry; yet I heard the Prime Minister said if they were to be another one, he will have to appoint the person outside; so the answer is the answer to the question yes?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: No.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: But how can you appoint; if you can appoint?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I was answering the Honourable Leader of the Opposition rhetorically to say to him look you want me to appoint an independent inquiry under what law I can do it? If I do so administratively it is not independent. I cannot cut across that is the point I am making.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Alright Honourable Prime Minister I think we get the message that is how I understood it myself. [Interjection] What is that that kind of language really should not be used here? What he said; referred to you as doubtful? Alright, since no official charge is made let us move on. Question No. 2, to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Let us please Honourable Member I think I know what I heard, so let us just – Question No. 2, Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

2. **HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** *Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask Question No. 2 standing in my name again of the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Planning, Economic Development, Labour, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs and to ask him to indicate;*

the main terms and conditions of the US \$25 million line of credit from the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) to the Government of St Vincent and the Grenadines for Financial Sector Reform.

HONOURABLE MR SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the loan of US \$25 million from the Caribbean Development Bank is a policy based loan; Mr. Speaker, for the information of those Honourable Members who may not be aware, the CDB historically has given what you may call project based loans that is an area in which the Honourable Leader of the Opposition had worked when he was at the CDB. A policy based loan is not tied to any particular project; it is tied to the policies of the Government as deemed to be necessary and desirable by the Caribbean Development Bank for loan to be granted and you can spend it at large. And this loan which we asked for is US \$25 million and it is aimed at supporting reforms to improve macroeconomic management and more broadly overall macro economic development and the investment climate.

The reforms are expected to help to consolidate the recent gains in relation to economic growth, fiscal sustainability and improved debt dynamics and this can occur through the more efficient management of the public sector resources spending on public sector investment projects contributing in the process to greater returns to public expenditure. Mr. Speaker, the terms of the loan relate to two portions of the loan: there is a portion which is called a SFR portion that is the Special Fund Reserve portion; the amount is US \$9 million; the interest rate is quite favourable 2.5% as in fact, you have happening to the special fund resource portion: the interest rate is usually more favourable and the repayment there is 80 equal and consecutive quarterly payments commencing 5 years following the first disbursement of the loan, so it is a very attractive loan for us.

The other portion, the bigger portion of US \$16 million is what is called the OCR portion, which is the Ordinary Capital Resources portion: the interest rate is higher but still favourable at 5.42% per annum and the repayment of that is in 60 equal and consecutive quarterly payments commencing five years following the first disbursement of the loan; so it is again concessionary. A commitment fee of 1% per an annum on the amount of the OCR portion, on the \$16 million portion, on withdrawn from time to time shall accrue from the sixtieth day after the date of the loan agreement. The loan will be disbursed in 2 equal tranches of US \$12.5 million in each tranche; and there are certain conditions precedents for the first disbursement and for the second disbursement.

I want to just summarise the conditions precedent to the first disbursement and Mr. Speaker, you will see some of what we get criticized for in some quarters; it is lucky that we have put them in place. In fact, we have had these in place and that is what is helping us that next month we expect to get the first 12.5 from the first tranche. What are these, Mr. Speaker? Mr. Speaker, let me say, we did not know that we were going to go for this policy based loan in 2009; but the first thing on the list implementation of a value added tax: VAT; we implemented that in May 2007. Implementation of Asycuda World; we implemented the Asycuda World System in October 2007 and it is already operational. Mr. Speaker, they said that they want to see an increase in personal income tax threshold and a reduction in corporate and individual tax and in personal income tax levels. Well you know we have been doing that all the time the last one was effective January 2009, where the individual tax threshold was raised to \$18,000 and at the same time the personal income tax and corporate tax rates were reduced from 37.5% to 35% and we have been bringing them down from 40%. We did not know at the time what we were doing it but it is good policy.

Restructuring the VAT to streamline the number of zero rated and exempted items. Mr. Speaker, we have stream lined these and a number of items in the food basket that are consumed by the most vulnerable persons were zero rated originally and under subsequent VAT amendment; that we must train all the staff in the Budget Division in budgeting and forecasting techniques. PARTAC we had brought them in The Research and Technical Assistance Center. They did all this training in 2008. They ask that we must give effect to Financial and Administration; a new Financial and Administration Act and accompanying Regulations. Mr. Speaker that Act was passed in 2004, in fact, on that day the opposition absented themselves and went to a mock parliament and what we are doing now, Mr. Speaker, the regulations are being edited by the Honourable Attorney General's Chamber and will be published presumably in another week or so, which is really the last thing to be done; but all those things were in train.

They asked that we upgrade Human Resource Development skills in the Debt Management Unit; but Mr. Speaker, we had done that since in 2008 with the assistance of the Common Wealth Secretariat. It is as though we knew we were going for this loan and we put all these things in place way, way in advance. The Honourable Minister of Tourism will be interested to know and he would not have known about this: they said we would like to see you have a Tourism Authority; well, we established that since last year and it is up and running; that we must assign monitoring for public sector enterprises to an officer in the Ministry of Finance and Planning. We are the ones who set up the monitoring mechanism on public enterprises and have somebody in the Ministry of Finance with special responsibility. In fact, they are strengthening that area and those are the conditions for the first tranche.

In relation to the second tranche everything else there we have every single item which is on stream: bringing the new Audit Act into effect; prepare medium term strategic papers a basis for the annual budget; establish annual budget calendar and issuance of the budget envelope; financing plan develop as a part of the budget and update it quarterly; completing the cadastral survey; change the land tax evaluation system to a market base one; publish Central Government fiscal and debt data within 90 days of the end of the fiscal year; undertake Information and Communication Technology readiness assessment in the public sector; undertake assessment of the debt unit and debt management practices using the World Bank debt management performance methodology; debt management strategy approved by Cabinet; retain Consultant to undertake the study examining the feasibility of merging the Public Sector Pension Scheme and the National Insurance Services; establish a Tax Reform Commission and complete the poverty reduction strategy.

Mr. Speaker, all of these things you would have heard me repeatedly talking about these things, some of these are completed, which I have just read, for the second tranche and some are in the process of being done. Those are the main terms and conditions of the loan.

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

3. **HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** *Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask Question No. 3 of the Honourable Minister of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries.*

At the previous sitting of Parliament, the Honourable Minister indicated that virtually all the workers of the St Vincent and the Grenadines Banana Growers Association would be absorbed either by the FAIRTRADE Organisation or the Banana Division of the Ministry of Agriculture:

- a. *Can the Honourable Minister indicate whether this is still the case, or will some Banana Growers Association workers be sent home; and*
- b. *if in the affirmative, how many would be sent home?*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Agriculture; but before you answer the question, maybe I would like the teachers of those students from the Pamelus Burke Primary School, we know it is about twenty five minutes to one now, perhaps it might be time for them to get their lunches now, so maybe you can go at this time if you so desire, okay if you want to move now you can do so or whenever you wish. Thank you. Okay Honourable Minister.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Mr. Speaker, Cabinet on the 20th May, 2009 approved the dissolution of the St Vincent and the Banana Growers Association in accordance with Act No. (3), of 2009, which calls for the dissolution of the St Vincent Banana Growers Association and the establishment of a Banana Unit in the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries. Mr. Speaker, effective June 1st, 2001 all workers were sent on one month vacation leave giving notification of the dissolution of the St Vincent Banana Growers Association. Mr. Speaker, all eligible workers of the St Vincent Banana Growers Association will be paid their severance. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, these payments are now being processed in the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries. In the meantime, however, Mr. Speaker, arrangements are being made for the recruitment of persons accordingly.

WINFA FAIRTRADE, which has already started operations where the St Vincent Banana Growers Association once operated; WINFA FAIRTRADE has already recruited six persons. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, this Ministry, Mr. Speaker is in the process of recruiting persons for the Banana Division. Mr. Speaker, these include 8 Extension Officers who will actually join 5 Extension Officers of which we would have recruited even before the dissolution. Nine persons are to be employed as daily paid employees and they will be employed as members of the leaf spot team.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Could you try another mike and let us see if it would be better because it is ... We are on Air that will not go on Air. And there was a statement you made just prior to me stopping you there; I do not think we got it.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: I was saying Mr. Speaker; already six persons would have been employed by WINFA FAIRTRADE and WINFA FAIRTRADE is already operating where the Banana Growers Association used to be operating. Outside of that I am saying Mr. Speaker that the Ministry of Agriculture is presently doing some recruitment of that recruiting, 8 Extension Officers will join 5 Extension Officers of whom we have already recruited before the dissolution of the Banana Growers Association. I also indicated, Mr. Speaker that 9 persons who will be daily paid employees that they too ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Daily paid that is what I heard.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Daily paid employees...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Right.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: That they too will be employed very soon with the ground crew that is the crew that controls the leaf spot. They will be employed together with two drivers. The two drivers will be employed as normal drivers in the Ministry of Agriculture. Mr. Speaker, the pilot will be contracted to continue to provide services of aerial leaf spot spray. There is also a truck with 5 workers and these 5 workers will be assigned to WINFA FAIRTRADE who will be operating the truck as once owned by the St Vincent Banana Growers Association. Mr. Speaker, further assessment is being done with the other office staff to ascertain the position within the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries or in other areas of the Public Service.

There are requests from one or two of the workers who would wish to work in the Ministry of Tourism, in the Ministry of Health and so discussions are ongoing as to the placement of these workers. Mr. Speaker, when all of these processes are completed the Industry's transactions would have been effected. I want to say Mr. Speaker that when the ULP came to office in 2001, we would have done many or righted many historic wrongs. In the case of [inaudible] estate under the last administration some four hundred workers were sent home: none was reemployed and we had to even offer severance to those workers. In the case of the Sugar Industry, Mr. Speaker, hundreds were sent home: none was reemployed. In the case of the Diamond Dairy, Mr. Speaker, for months the institution there was lingering no severance were being paid; again this administration had to sort it out, Mr. Speaker. This Government is committed to the development of the working class and the people we serve. Thank you very much. [Applause]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: [Inaudible] Yes Sir [inaudible]. Question No. 4, Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines.

4. **DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** *Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask Question No. 4, standing in my name of the Honourable Minister of Lands and Informal Human Settlements:*

In the light of the fact that Government-owned lands at Hamilton, Bequia in the area commonly known as Point Hill were recently surveyed, will the Honourable Minister please explain:

- a. *why the lands have been surveyed;*
- b. *whether the lands have been subdivided and if so into how many lots; and*
- c. *whether the lands will be offered for sale to the public and at what price?*

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Mr. Speaker, the fact has been stated by Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines in the light of the fact that the Government lands at Hamilton have been surveyed; yes it has been surveyed. Why the lands have been surveyed? Mr. Speaker, the thing is if we do not survey them, they ask why we do not survey them; when we survey they ask why we survey. But there was a request from the Northern Grenadines Director for more lands in Bequia. There is a constant demand for lands in Bequia and the Chief Surveyor instructed that these lands be surveyed. They were subdivided into 15 Lots; 14 of them residential and 1 commercial. Well that is at that level.

The third question, the (c) question is the applicable question. The important part of the question; not because lands are being surveyed and lots are being subdivided that the Government will sell. The case is being made by the Chief Surveyor, I understand, I have not seen the document as yet; the survey was done in March and I understand that a Cabinet Memo is being prepared for my signature or recommendation to be made to the Cabinet that is how we operate and that is the law of the land. The Chief Surveyor will do the surveying; he will send me the information with his recommendation, I will either support or not his recommendation; but even as Minister of Lands I cannot make the decision to sell the lands that is a Cabinet decision. So to answer (c), I do not know if the lots will be offered for sale, I am awaiting the Memo from the Chief Surveyor with his recommendation and I will consider his recommendation then take it to Cabinet and Cabinet will make the decision. The price of the land is also decided by Cabinet. So, when that time comes I will make public if Cabinet has decided to sell the lands and at what price they will be sold. Thank you.

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

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 5, Honourable Member.

5. **DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** *Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask Question No. 5, standing in my name of the Honourable Minister of National Mobilisation, Social Development, Family, Gender Affairs, Non-governmental Relations, Local Government, Persons with Disabilities, Sports and Youth Affairs:*

In light of the dilapidated condition of many of the country's sporting facilities and playing fields, will the Honourable Minister please state;

- a. *whether his Government has any plans for the development repair or improvement to the country's regional playing fields; such as those at Campden Park, Owia and Port Elizabeth; and*
- b. *if so, what are those plans and what is the timeframe for the implementation?*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Sports and Youth Affairs.

HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, this Minister of Sports is very well positioned to address this question from a historical standpoint because in 2001, when the administration changed I was then the Minister of Sports and I am now the Minister of Sports and therefore, well poised to put things in a certain

perspective. The Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines begins his question with a profound inaccuracy. I have to choose my words very carefully because this is Parliament; but you cannot say in light of the dilapidated condition of many of the country's sporting facilities or ought not to say if because that is factually incorrect.

Mr. Speaker, the responsibility for sporting facilities, playing fields, hard court et cetera; as I have repeatedly said in this Parliament is that of the National Sports Council and since 2001 when this administration took office the National Sport Council has been very expeditiously addressing the question of the bad hand that we got from the New Democratic Party administration that is to say the dilapidated playing facilities that we inherited from them. Many of the facilities were neglected and hence in a state of dilapidation. Many were simply not completed and several undone and it was indeed a kin to a nightmare for the Minister of Sports, to have to deal with that inheritance. Fortunately, for me I had a very competent Co-Minister in the form of a representative of East St George and he very manfully addressed along with the National Sports Council this terrible legacy of the New Democratic Party.

Among the facilities that were neglected or left undone by the NDP administration and the list is long; it is a real litany of woes: you had the Largo Heights Playing Field and the Member for West Kingstown would be very familiar with that history. The Redemption Sharpes Playing Field, which was a mud bed, I use to live right on the edge of that playing field, so I could tell you firsthand about that playing field; fast forward to now: 2009 and the developments that have taken place under the Honourable representative, very competent representative for Central Kingstown, the Honourable Conrad Sayers. The Daphne playing field, which is in the constituency of West St George, I had to finish that. The Layou playing field; the Orange Hill playing field pavilion; Georgetown playing field pavilion; the Greggs hard court; Kirton's playing field pavilion; Old Montrose hard court and pavilion; Rose Place hard court and Petit Bordel playing field some that we inherited.

Mr. Speaker, presently, the National Sports Council is benefiting from a Government initiative which is providing funding for the upgrading of several sports facilities which are being mostly implemented in conjunction with the social investment fund and the Ministry of Rural Transformation. A number of the upgrading projects are currently on stream with SIF (Social Investment Fund) being responsible for 16 such projects as follows:

- Fancy hard court
- Fancy playing field
- Chili playing field
- South Rivers playing field
- Park Hill playing field
- Daphne playing field
- Ottley Hall playing field
- Penniston playing field
- Petit Bordel hard court
- Petit Bordel playing field

- Rose Bank hard court
- Mayreau recreational facility
- Richland Park hard court
- Mount Greenan playing field
- Cane End playing field
- Diamond playing field

And in conjunction with the Ministry of Rural Transformation we have the following:-

- Colinarie school yard playing field
- Colinarie school yard hard court
- Park Hill hard court
- Richland Park playing field (jointly with the National Sports Council)
- Sandy Bay hard court

The National Lotteries Authority has recently completed the upgrading of the beautiful Biabou hard court to add to the long list of projects of which twelve of the 22 are completely new. So, we just listed 22: 16, 5 and 1 that is 22 and 12 of those are completely new. And we need to salute the work of the National Lottery's Authority in relation to Victoria Park. I do not think we mentioned that as one of the bad hands we got from the NDP; but that was in a horrible state and we have invested with the lights and all the facilities, I think over half a million dollars on that facility. That has been lifted to such a point, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members that we were able to pass the test of the International Football Federation, so that we could have hosted Concacaf on the 20th in January in that facility. That would have been unheard of because we would have had to go to Arnos Vale where the better facility is but that has been upgraded to such a point that we could have held an international encounter in sports; in January for the under 20.

Mr. Speaker, I think, I do not know when last the Honourable Member did visit Owia because he had identified 3 places: Campden Park, Owia and Port Elizabeth specific ones. In relation to Owia that facility the playing field was used to support the work for the Fishing Complex at Owia and so at one point it was in a state of not being used as a sporting facility; but since then it has been graded with a drain; still an earthen drain because it was recently graded to allow for it to be developed with grassing into a proper playing field. And I should add, Mr. Speaker that right next to it on the southern side or should I say the west eastern side, there was a hard court which was recently refurbished. So, the hard court was done and the playing field is now being done.

Mr. Speaker, the Campden Park playing field recently hosted a tournament and yes it would be clipped; the grass would be clipped; but it is in pretty good state. The pavilion again something we inherited from the previous administration needs a lot of work and we know there is a proposal to address the stand. I should point out, Mr. Speaker that in the case of the Clive Tannis, I addressed that question some time ago. The Honourable Member for West Kingstown, the Honourable Minister of Culture and other matters has recently received communication from Ocean Life Limited, of Port Elizabeth Bequia and Ocean Life is a professional employment organisation, with head office located in Port Elizabeth Bequia with a subsidiary company in the United States and they provide foreign labour to the US Oil and Gas Industry from St Vincent and the

Grenadines and other Caribbean Islands. And without elaborating because I know they have to negotiate this, there is an offer from Ocean Life Limited to upgrade the facility there and they have sent drawings and designs of how they are proposing that the facility be upgraded and I am sure the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines will be happy with this information because I am aware of his concern. And this is through correspondence dated 26th May, so it is fairly recent and we do not want to pre-empt the discussions that would have to take place with the Honourable Member, so I wouldn't elaborate anymore only to say that this letter and the designs are here.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the National Sports Council has conceptualize and estimated works for the construction of a new pavilion at Campden Park, as well as for lighting. It is a very ambitious project and it is awaiting funds and would soon be implemented once the funds have been identified. The Government and the National Sports Council by extension plans for a continuous programme of development for the nation's sports facilities including those that were mentioned in the question; but of course, as I have indicated repeatedly, the work has to be prioritized given the scope of facilities and the resources that are available. For example, currently there are 56 playing fields in this country that have to be addressed and 62 hard courts that is a significant number that would total what 118; and there are new ones coming on as the Social Investment Fund releases them to the National Sports Council.

The Council is cognizant of repeated calls for the Government to reduce spending and to shelf much of its infrastructural development plans in the wake of the world economic downturn. Such calls are obviously bound to influence our operations; but we will continue within the framework of the resources that are available to address generally all the facilities and specifically the three mentioned by the Honourable Member.

Mr. Speaker, as I take my seat I remind colleagues, Honourable Members that this administration has recently invested some \$55 million to upgrade the Arnos Vale Sporting Complex and the stadium and the fields at Sion Hill and Stubbs and I take this opportunity to invite Honourable Members and the whole nation to the test match right after Carnival; Thursday after Carnival: between Bangladesh and the West Indies. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 6, is it?

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

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes No. 6.

6. **DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** *Mr. Speaker I rise to ask question No. 6 standing in my name of the Minister of Culture Urban Development and Electoral Matters. The question has four parts.*

a. *What changes are being made in respect of the National Identification Card?*

b. *Why are the changes being made?*

c. *What actions will they require on the part of our people and*

d. *when will the implementation of the changes be completed?*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Culture and Urban Development and Electoral Matters.

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: The changes which are being made are reflected in the SRNO No. 8 of 2009, which I believe the Honourable Member would have a copy with his Gazette, which I will later on deal with in another section in the agenda of this Honourable House; the changes that they outlined. Be that as it may, perhaps I can in more graphic detail show the Honourable Member the differences in the changes that are being made. This is your current ID card; on one side you will see here what purports to be the public seal of St Vincent and the Grenadines which is hardly legible. This is it here that is the public seal here, you could hardly see what is on it, secondly, this is a photograph which is a black and white photograph and you see that this is a piece of paper without any security features; an ordinary laminate machine you can buy and put the plastic over it and it looks like an ID card.

At the same time I would like to; just for historical record show what the ID card looked like; this is 1984 moving from this in '84, you remember this one with a piece of plastic. This is 1994, it became this and this was 2000 and then we moved to this one later on in 2001. Now, at the back of this card which is the existing ID card that we have, the information on the back says: National Insurance Number; Voters' number; Banana Registration number and Marks. And it has this little graphic here, which is easily duplicated which is supposed to be another security feature; but actually in fact, they are not working out in that particular way because those who are quite skilled with computers do strange things. We have a couple of cases pending and under investigation. Now, new card: the change is this card and you can see quite clearly the National Flag of St Vincent and the Grenadines and the lettering of St Vincent and the Grenadines in improved case, right, and here: this is a specimen, you can see quite clearly the coloured photograph of the individual; the electronic signature just like you do as your passport; even though we take it on the card it is electronically dealt with within the new system, I will invite you all to see it when it is commissioned and then at the back of this card ... in the front, you put the distinguishing features instead of the back because the photo is on the front. At the back of this card is a barcode that is the barcode: this barcode includes the ISO standard that is required now for identification that is the International Standard Organisation and the iCure Standard for using this card as a travel document.

The changes and security features would be notified to the banking and financial institutions and the immigration services; the Supervisor of Elections has informed me that she has had discussion with the Immigration Services and a document will be produced for them similarly to the way a document is produced by the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank; for us to know how our banknotes if they are genuine bank notes or counterfeit and this outlined. This is just a sample that outlines what the security features are which I would not go into detail in this public place; because it is security and it will outline what the security features are inside. Of course, Members of Parliament will get their copies when it is completed.

Now, why: the current system that we are using like everything else has to be upgraded and the information and data on that particular system indicates that it has expired, just like your computer, you know after a while it just would not switch on; so the Government of St Vincent and the Grenadines entered into a contractual relationship with the Canadian Banknote Company that produces currency of Canada, passports of many countries, Identification Cards and also lottery and gambling facilities. This new card will be a highly durable, secure and machine readable one that complies with ISO and iCure Standards for machine readable and security features and can be validated at various ports of entry. It is to have a foundation document that can be reliably used for other identification purposes such as opening of a bank account, application for loans, identification for government services, such as health care and education. It can also be used as a backup in applications for passport and passport renewals, for travel and also to reliably identify voters at times of elections.

It will also because of the way it is made, if you notice this one and of course, we got some little people, when you are doing testing you call them focus groups they can cut this open and change it and a few people have tried that, they have couple cases as I said under investigation. This one if you attempt to do that the data has been put into the card itself, so if you decide you want to try and cut this the card is immediately destroyed: you cannot do anything with it. The data is lasered into the card. Now, this one as you see is the size of a credit card or bankcard and the system that is used to prepare this will accommodate future expansions. If you notice there is a little blob here in one of the identification and the features, it will be able to tell whether or not somebody has tried to fiddle internally. That is you register and somebody tried to change any of the information; because even to be on the system you will have particular features, so you cannot call somebody and say put this in, in there for me; because that person may not have access or privilege on the new system. So this little blob also will show the face of the individual and it is extended to include fingerprint when we are ready for that.

The solution is it will be user friendly and it will incorporate state of the art hardware and custom application software, which has been specifically developed and in introducing the ID card. Now, when you did these it was one at a time; one at a time, one at a time, this will be produced at the rate of 24 at a time, okay. I think that deals with two.

What actions are required on behalf of our people? As you know the process of getting an ID card is under the representation of the People's Act and the regulation thereto and what you are required to do, registration is a continuous process. This new system: right at this very moment training is being held now at the Ministry of Culture Conference Room. There are five team leaders who are here from CBN to start to commission the system because we are still temporarily in these quarters, we expect to move shortly as soon as the functionaries who have been charged with the responsibility to see that we get into our new quarters act with expedition; the full system will roll out in the new quarters; but that does not mean that the world will stop, so we are putting part of the system so we could roll it out, as I said, I will invite Members of the House to see it. So, you can continue to register and by mid July we will start to roll out the card.

Those who are being registered now and those who were previously registered like myself would have this in mid July; we will start getting the new ones that is persons who are eligible to be registered and the resident non-nationals who are eligible to hold a St Vincent and the Grenadines identity card. Registration will be conducted at the constituency level and what the Supervisor of Elections has informed me is that to speed up the

process she is discussing with certain heads of government departments and schools and so on; because now of these days the thing is as you know, how computers work: we can take your picture digitally and send it anywhere in the world. So, we will go to work places, say for example the Customs and say “we are coming at 2:00 o’clock this afternoon, could we do the entire Customs Department, take everybody photograph there”? The reason I say this is that people work long hours; they work in Kingstown, by the time they get out to their constituency is 4:30; the registering officer is there and the officer may have left at 6:00 because they did not see anybody else to register; but people are getting home at 5:30, 6:00, 7:00 o’clock so we try to facilitate those persons at their work places.

She is working out the modalities for that to ensure we can take your data, take your photograph, roll out your card and you can get it from your constituency. Then it will be helpful for like persons in the Grenadines; imagine having to come up to each ... We are having I think, 17 or 18 photographers are going to be trained to use the cameras. We have 24 cameras because you know, these things are made by man, they can go bad so instead of having to wait for one to come from Canada we made sure we have in supply; they are going to be trained to use these cameras and not just the photographer, each constituency will have a photographer and the registering officer and the assistant registering officer are also being trained to use the camera in case somebody gets a toothache and they did not come out to their place at the time that person will be able to use the camera as well.

So, we anticipate since it is an ongoing process that we hope to have all the persons who are currently on the list and as people become eligible on the eighteenth birthday that we should be finished; well then say finish because it is an ongoing process; but we will try to speed up as much of it as possible for you to get your new ID card and she is thinking by the end of the year, the current system those who are all on the list should have their new ID card. Much obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 7, Honourable Member for the Southern Grenadines.

7. **HONOURABLE TERRANCE OLLIVIERRE:** *Mr. Speaker I rise to ask question No. 7 standing in my name of the Honourable Minister of Education:*

- a. *What is the status of the program to increase access to computers in our schools for which this country has received assistance from the Government and people of Taiwan?*
- b. *How many computers are in working condition presently in each government owned and assisted secondary schools and how are they being used for the instruction of the students?*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Education.

HONOUR GIRLYN MIGUEL: Thank you very much Mr. Speaker. The Status of the programme: the Government entered into an arrangement with the Government of Taiwan for a sum of \$6 million to be spent on computerisation of schools; to date the sum of \$5,864,555.00 has been spent. The sum spent was used for the

purchase of 947 computers and these were placed at 43 schools throughout the country. Some of the schools were primary schools and some were secondary schools. The 21 secondary schools that existed before 2005 had fully furnished computer laboratories: some of them in Phase (1) and the others from Phase (2). This project started before we took office and we accelerated the work of ensuring that computer laboratories were maintained. Schools have had their laboratories upgraded under various other projects and from donations from various other organisations. At the moment the Government is in a relation with LIME to provide Macs Computers to primary schools and Learning Resource Centers.

Further the new secondary schools, such as: Thomas Saunder's Secondary; the George Stephen's Secondary; the Buccament Bay Secondary and the West St George Secondary Schools will have their computer laboratory fully functional by September this year if no setbacks arise. The Intermediate High School will have its own fully functioning laboratory also by September if all go according to schedule. While the Sandy Bay Secondary is not in the same position as those named before the school has use of the laboratory at the Sandy Bay Learning Resource Center. The point that I am trying to make Mr. Speaker is that there are more than 947 computers within the system in the secondary schools at this time. At our last count there were more than 1500. In some schools there are 2 laboratories and in others even at this time work is on the way to create additional laboratories. The matter of increase access is ongoing with our without funds from the Government and the people of Taiwan.

(b) Of the question, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I would not mislead this Honourable House and say that any specified number of computers are functional because the number changes continually, in fact, the numbers change on a daily basis. What I can state is that we have a pool of technicians who are constantly at work servicing computers on an ongoing basis parts are replaced. A computer could be in working condition on one day and not in working condition on the next. I may further state Mr. Speaker, that for the recently concluded Caribbean Examinations; Council Caribbean Secondary Examination Certificate Examination that there were an adequate number of computers in working condition for the students to their examinations.

I am advised by the experts that there are many variables that determine the number of computers in working condition. One such variable is the age of the computer. I am further advice that providing an average will not really give any clear indication of what is happening at schools. Honourable Members, the Honourable representative of the Southern Grenadines can have access to the information pertaining to the Ministry's work associated with the maintenance and servicing of the systems. The Computers are used to teach students electronic document preparation and management of information technology at the general and technical proficiency levels. The figures indicate that the number of students attempting examinations associated with the use of computers is increasing. Computers are used to teach computer appreciation to all our students. Computers are used to do research by students and teachers. Computers are used to assist students who do not have access to computers at home in preparation of the school base assessments. Mr. Speaker, I am obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 8, Honourable Member for the Southern Grenadines. I suppose you do not have a supplementary right?

8. **HONOURABLE TERRANCE OLLIVIERRE:** *Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask question No. 8, standing in my name of the Honourable Minister of Tourism it states:*

- a. *Has the Tobago Cays Marine Park presented its Financial Report to the Government; and*
- b. *if not when will the report be prepared and submitted?*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Tourism.

HONOURABLE GLEN BEACHE: Mr. Speaker, this question was misdirected; it should be directed to the Prime Minister since the Tobago Cays Marine Park ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of clarity of questions on this matter; there is one entity for the National Parks Commission which is not within that is the Tobago Cays Marine Park, it is kept within the because of its special nature; in the Minister for the Grenadines: so, it is a separate legal entity. Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed that the opposition, they do not share questions with each other; they just send them in like this because I could not believe that this question would have been sent had it been reviewed by the leadership of the party. "*Has the Tobago Cays Marine Park presented its Financial Report to the Government*": for which year? Normally the question; the question would have asked about the audited statements, I mean these are categories which ... so it is clear from this that they do not do their work together they just send them without any coordination which does not really say much for an opposition, I mean really I would like you to be coordinated. Well, Mr. Speaker, I will answer the question; the answer to (a) is yes, the answer to (b) is irrelevant since the answer to (a) is yes [applause].

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question 9 Honourable St. Clair Leacock.

9. **HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK:** *Mr. Speaker I rise to ask question No. 9 standing in my name of the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, Labour, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs:*

- a. *What is the total cost of the recently concluded Vincy Pac Police and Military Exercise;*
- b. *What amount of that cost was borne by the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines; and*
- c. *Was there any direct or indirect contribution to that exercise by the United States.*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister, Minister of Legal Affairs and National Security.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, this was an entirely homegrown operation with no involvement whatsoever by any country outside of the RSS, the Regional Security System, that is to say the independent countries of the OECS plus Barbados, and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. No contribution whatsoever was sought and none was offered in respect of the United States' government. The cost to the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is \$1,002,684.43. The significant expenses, Mr.

Speaker, were for airfares for a number of the persons concerned coming in from overseas, allowances for 400 men, rental of buses and the provision of fuel for vehicles; meals ready to eat, and dry rations on the ground, bottled water and accommodation for the officers for 26 days at a hotel and I just read the major ones. As I said \$1,002,684.43; direct cost to the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

In respect of Trinidad and Tobago, their contribution was assessed at EC\$1.38 million. Their contribution came by the way of subsistence and special allowances and the like from their government for 132 persons the operational cost for helicopters services that is a significant one, the diesel and premium gasoline that was paid by the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and monies for ration, and some of their party's commercial air travel. In relation to the rest of the Barbados RSS, those costs are really more imputed, \$1.2 million, therefore the value being put to like, for instance, 1665 hours of professional consultation, that had a value put to it. Several hours flight by the RSS air wing for 130 police from the RSS member states, 16 coastguard officers from RSS member states, 83 defense personnel from RSS member states, but those costs were absorbed within the RSS system. So that is \$1.2 million; as I say some of these are imputed. I mean cost for professional consultation, for instance, that is the answer.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, I do need clarifications. What I understood the Prime Minister to have given us was cost of participating nations; Trinidad, Barbados and St. Vincent, and I am to assume if I add those I would get the total cost, but there was an inference that there was a contribution from the Regional Security System, as separate from the major participant namely, Barbados, Trinidad. No?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: When I said that Barbados RSS, I mean the RSS based in Barbados, not Barbados as a separate entity. For instance the consultation monies and all that, we are talking about Barbados, so there are central imputed costs out of RSS and there is Trinidad and Tobago and then there is St. Vincent and the Grenadines. That is why I gave three figures.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: May I Mr. Speaker? Because in that case we are talking just over \$3 million 1, 1, 1 Mr. Speaker, could the Prime Minister just indicate and this is for education, whether or not there is really a Regional Security System pool per say, which all of the members contribute and therefore when this exercise takes place, it is paid out of this pool rather than from the individual countries in this case Barbados, for example. So let me make it clear, the \$1.2 from Barbados, that is not Barbados' Government, that is the Regional Security System.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: That is RSS.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Thank you, very much. So the only independent government was Trinidad Government and St. Vincent?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Yes.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Thank you. Could I, Mr. Speaker?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes.

10. **HONOURABLE ST. CLAIRE LEACOCK:** *Mr. Speaker I rise to ask question No. 10 standing in my name of the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, Labour, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs:*

In recent media statements you have indicated your determination to rid this country of a “ghetto Culture.”

- a. Please explain what precisely are your intentions;*
- b. What do you mean by the expression ‘Ghetto Culture’ and ‘ghetto’ mind;*
- c. Has the Government determined which “Ghetto” communities are to be targeted;*
- d. Without compromising national security, what specific intelligence has guided this new determination to rid the country of “Ghetto’s”; and*
- e. Can we expect similar aggression in communities where “White Collar” crime has manifested itself.*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, it seems as if today is my day for giving lectures. First of all, Mr. Speaker, the question is premise on an assertion which is false. I never said anywhere to any media that I have a determination to rid this country of a “Ghetto Culture”. The only issue where the word “Ghetto” arose, I was on a call in programme several weeks ago on WE FM, and a caller called in and said that Senator Leacock said that in the campaign to come, he was going to wage a “Ghetto” campaign. I said, what did he say he meant by that? The person said, he did not know, so I said maybe it is a product of a “Ghetto mind” that is what I said. Because the way the caller in the context of the discussion, the caller was talking about a campaign being run on the basis of bad boy-ism. That was not my formulation; so if you ask me, I must explain my intention, I have no intention, because I did not make the statement, and what do I mean by the expression “Ghetto Culture”, I did not use it. Of course, I can certainly recommend, several books on the issue of culture and its connection with different parts, geographically of communities, and this one “Culture Matters, How Values Shape Human Progress,” edited by Lawrence E. Harrison and Samuel P. Huntington. Harrison is well known for his book Under-Development is a State of Mind, and Huntington is well known for his book, the Clash of Civilization, and an earlier one was Political Development or Political Decay. When I was a student, I had to read that and subsequent of course, since I have been in this business I have read several of his works. And in particular there is lovely essay by Professor, Orlando Patterson, out of Jamaica who is known for writing his work on the sociology of Jamaica and the Children of Sisyphus which is a novel about conditions including what he would have called in Jamaica certain “inner city Ghetto conditions”.

The Government of this country, we are not targeting “Ghetto Communities” what we do have Mr. Speaker, as is well known that we have undertaken a study, an assessment of poverty, living conditions in a Caribbean small island developing state, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, and we secured the consultants, Kairi Consultants who had been the consultants for the New Democratic Party Administration in 1996-1997; and poverty, in 1996 was assessed at 37.5% of the population, and indigence, that is to say dirt poor poverty, at 25.7%, the same consultants, the same methodology, essentially.

In 2007-2008, poverty had been reduced to 30.2% and dirt poor poverty, indigence from 25.7% to 2.9%; so we are targeting poverty, we are not targeting any geographical area called a “Ghetto”. In fact, I believe that the term arose historically if you look in any dictionary or any analysis to the Jews, the Warsaw Ghetto for instance which had a particular connotation and it has come into popular and sociological literature to mean a geographic part of a city which is particularly pressured or depressed and the like. This is the preliminary work, Mr. Speaker, which I had the opportunity to read as Minister of Planning. And there are areas that have been identified in this study; particular geographical areas, where there are higher levels of poverty than in other areas in St. Vincent like for instance the North Windward, particularly north of the Dry River, this is why we have spent... I did not need the study to tell me that, I saw it when we took office and we have spent a lot of money in that area to lift the community, similarly for instance, North Leeward and in the case of North Leeward there are particular challenges which have arisen, consequent, North Leeward and North Windward, in some families consequent on Vincy Pak activities. The Member for North Leeward has in fact, submitted to me a proposal with a series of alternatives for specific intervention in that area and we are actively discussing this. And similarly the one for North Windward which had been submitted by the Honourable Member for North Windward, the Minister of Agriculture, who had submitted it, in fact upon we coming into office and it has been updated. That is the work which we are doing. Generally, we have a series of measures to address poverty and hardship, but we also have targeted, strategic interventions with particular groups and particular geographical areas.

Now, in so far as to the issue of aggression, the only aggression we are having in any inner city, the aggression is an aggression against poverty or communities, against poverty, we have no aggression against people we have an aggression against poverty because that is really an enemy and wherever there is ignorance these are... and that is why we have poverty reduction and that is why we have the education revolution. I do not use ignorance here in a pejorative sense; I am talking about a lack of knowing, in terms of undeveloped skills and the like, to function in a modern, scientific world, in our broad frame to build a modern competitive, post colonial economy. We have a number of safety net measures and they have been identified. I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, if I may quote something which this report has said and it is still in the draft, but I am thinking in as much as the question, I do not think the drafters would mind me quoting this on the question of the underground economy.

“The growth and size of the underground economy threatens the capacity of the country to develop a sustainable and competitive environment in which every generation can contribute and grow by the pursuit of decent and socially rewarding work. However, rewarding it may be for the few, the underground economy leads to an enviable gang formation and to gang wars which undermines social order and depreciates the quality of life and sense of security of innocent citizens. There would be need to invest in sophisticated equipment for the police, information systems, surveillance systems, fast patrol vessels and helicopters and the like.”

Mr. Speaker, we have an approach when we have NESDEC which the opposition said that they do not want to participate it, we came here with a statute we passed the law for the National Economic and Social Development Council, it has been operational, they are the ones who provided the interim poverty reduction

strategy, document which we have used to help us to reduce poverty as we have seen, and I believe that the workings of the economy and the education revolution will further have an assault against the poverty.

Incidentally too, Mr. Speaker, I may indicate in as much as this question has arisen, the gini coefficient which assesses the extent of inequality when the NDP left office, it was in excess of 0.56% and greater equality exists when the gini coefficient moves towards zero. In 1996 which is the figure, I am answering. You may ask a follow up. Mr. Speaker, the equality is now 0.41% which means that there is a narrowing of the gap between the rich and the poor, so we are not assaulting people, we are assaulting poverty and the gap between the rich and the poor which leads me to the last part of the question about so called aggression in relation to white collar crimes. Of course there is aggression in relation to white collar crimes but not in relation to any community save and except to address the issues of poverty and development.

Mr. Speaker, this government is proud on its assault on white collar crime. Indeed, it is we who have piloted a very strong Proceeds of Crime and Money Laundering Prevention Act. We have set up the FIU. We have built the Financial Intelligence Unit into the best such unit in the Caribbean. It is noted by the Americans, the British, the Canadians, everybody. And that is why we have been able to target the big money launderers and to squeeze the oxygen from them, and which has caused the corresponding diminution of gang violence. But every time we act against the big drug barons, the Opposition raises questions about what we are doing as though they are in defense of big drug barons and the big money launderers. In fact, I hear it on the radio. And even if they do not, Mr. Speaker, come out and say we support drug trafficking or we support money laundering, the questions they raised, the smoke they seek to throw in people's eyes is to obfuscate illegitimate fight against drug trafficking and guns and gang violence and money laundering. We hear them all the time, we can give examples, if they want and that is what we have done. It may well be that some may feel, I am not saying it relates to any member of the opposition in this Honourable House, that they may feel that by moving against money launderers, and with the collapse of the Sanford Empire, it may well choke the Opposition of oxygen for the elections, that is to say, money and therefore that is why there is such a concern for these matters, but Mr. Speaker, I want them to come to challenge me on these things, and that is why I am unyielding with anybody who raise any of these things. And I finally say, this Prime Minister has grown up and socialized in communities of the poor and the working people and we are involved in lifting them out, not in denigrating them, we speak the truth about limitations but we also talk about their possibilities and that is why we have so many programmes for them, and we can talk about it, and you will never hear me saying something like people in St. Vincent and the Grenadines are so poor that they have to buy half a pound of chicken back and half a soap, insulting people.

The making of such statements could only be somebody who does not understand people who are poor. You do not... even if it were true, and it is not true, you do not go about and broadcast that people buying half a pound of chicken, it is an attempt to ridicule them from your perches. I could give a whole sociological lesson on this subject. So I am glad you raise this question for me to speak in the terms that I have spoken. But the fundamental premise of your question is wrong. And I say this, I have been involved in every election campaign since 1979 and I have never been involved in a campaign of violence. I have never been involved in other than opened discussions seeking people's votes and I have taken part in several elections and have lost and now the people have accepted that I should win, like Joshua, like Moses, like Aaron, like Nehemiah; I am

made of wilderness material, and those who want to wage “Ghetto” campaign, I am awaiting it. I am made of wilderness material, and you cannot come to leadership unless you are made of wilderness material.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, supplementary.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary, go ahead.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Quite clearly I do not need the Prime Minister’s lecture on culture as like the Prime Minister, so well schooled...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: That is the supplementary?

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, I am seeking the same sort of accommodation that you allowed when the Prime Minister responded, Mr. Speaker. I want to make the point, Mr. Speaker, that I take my responsibility in this House very seriously, and I am speaking emphatically that I listened to the Prime Minister on a CMC interview in which he made the remark “Ghetto Cultures” in St. Vincent, and his intentions. And I am also saying beyond that, Mr. Speaker, in the records of this House, his reference to “Ghetto Culture” to “Ghetto man” and “Ghetto mind” is made. And it also appear in the columns of his party’s paper. If he is today retracting from that assault on the “Ghetto” he must so say, but I will produce to the House, that television statement of the Honourable Prime Minister, and I hope then, Mr. Speaker, an appropriate apology would be tendered.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: All right. That is the question?

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: I am making a clarification, Mr. Speaker, I am not making a statement. I want to say that I did not choose and frame my question lightly, and therefore his correction, and his lecture was out of place.

Mr. Speaker, I proceed to question 10 in my name, 11 sorry, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question 11, Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, oh sorry.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: May I proceed, Mr. Speaker?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Go ahead.

11. **HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** You would understand the anxiety. *Mr. Speaker I rise to ask question No. 10 standing in my name of the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, Labour, Information, Grenadines and Legal Affairs:*

As the economic forecast remains gloomy for growth in the OECS;

- a. *Has the time come for us to shift from our import substitution approach to development such that a more resource based strategy be employed;*
- b. *If in the affirmative, is any consideration being given to regionalizing and internationalizing our efforts by e.g. marrying nutmegs in Grenada with arrowroot in St. Vincent and the Grenadines using our mills and research for a more value added pharmaceutical industry;*
- c. *Is there a possibility for us to link with Belize, Grenada and other OECS states using nutmegs, patchouli and citrus for essential oils; and*
- d. *Further can we encourage partnership with firms like Coca Cola, already operating here under license with Hairoun to use local and regional fruits in the health drink industry?*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Before you answer that, Honourable Prime Minister, I was just looking for some,... my old copy of the questions that were submitted because I think I did make some notes on that question. And it is relating to, I noticed particularly you were asked to give an opinion. I do not have that part here, and we know that contravenes the rules of questions. [Interjection] Why you say so, Honourable Member.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Out of respect for your office, I leave private conversation for private.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I do not know what you mean by that anyhow. I still do not know what you mean by that. I am saying that this question is asking for an opinion and really it should not have been brought here, but if the Prime Minister wants to answer it, he can so do.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I wanted to give him again an elemental lecture on economics, as I sought just now to give him one on culture and made the reference points.

Mr. Speaker, the point is this, I want to indicate, since he is not in a receptive mood for lecturers, simply to indicate that the development paradigm pursued by this government as articulated in every single budget speech and in my writings, they are available for the Honourable Member, the Senator to peruse. And he would see that this development paradigm is not confined to this kind of narrowness, in the submissions which have been made; really a kind of a first year undergraduate kind of submission. It is not a policy of exports, substitution or alternative export led growth, it is not either or, it is a combination of things with certain emphasis and guided by a careful assessment of the volatile and often fragile global financial and economic situation. Considering sound macroeconomic fundamentals and sensibly balancing the needs of our country with all the available resources which exist. But Senator Leacock persist in these kinds of undergraduate excursions, first year, I really am not having any more patience with it. So that is my answer to a question that should not have been asked. Thank you, very much.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: This brings us to the end of question time. Are you going to take a break now, or are you...

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, we can go on and finish.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Leader of the Opposition has asked to be excused, having to deal with some other issues.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES LAW REVISION (AMENDMENT) BILL, 2009

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move, that a bill for an act to make provision for the revision and consolidation, of the Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and for matters connected therewith be read a first time.

The object of the bill is to make provision for the revision and the consolidation of the Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and for matters connected therewith. I so move.

HONOURABLE SIR LOUIS STRAKER: Honourable Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Question 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 and passed.

HONOURABLE SIR LOUIS STRAKER: Honourable Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Question read a first time.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a bill for an act to make provision for the revision and consolidation, of the laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and for matters connected therewith be read a second time.

HONOURABLE SIR LOUIS STRAKER: Honourable Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

Question put and agreed to.

Question read a second time.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Debate on the bill?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, the current Edition of the Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines was prepared in 1990 under the authority of the Law Revision Act, 1990, Chapter 1. Before that, the last revision of the laws was done in 1926, before 1990, they were what we called as practitioners the grey volumes of 1966, but those grey volumes were never completed and approved, so that

they remained only convenient for practitioners to check the state of the law and in fact, in some of those instances what was had in the 1966 grey volumes had errors, so it meant that between 1926 and 1990 what you had to do was to look at the individual statutes which were published and collated annually, you can see that made a nightmare for the practice of the law. In fact, in some cases, the practice of the law became who really had the books because as a young practitioner you could not find anything published in 1930, because they were out of print, the annual laws published by the Printery. And then Mr. Parnel Campbell QC, when he became Attorney General, picked up from some work which Mr. Grafton Isaacs had started and accelerated the work to have a law revision. And Mr. Campbell and the then government did this country a great service by having the laws in 1990. Because in set of volumes, the blue volumes, they are now consolidated and there were revisions and editing, typographical corrections because the statute under which that was done the 1990 Law Revision Act so empowered them, in the way in which this bill before us is seeking to empower the commissioner, the law commissioner in some respects and the Attorney General to do certain things.

Now, from 1990 to now, 19 years, you now are having that problem but not quite as bad as between 1926 and 1990. So a young practitioner coming out or the ordinary public want to consult very easily the law reform volumes cannot really get in one place all the laws. And one of the difficulties in the 1990 Edition is that you got the volumes bound in one volume, in one bound, Volume Two, and when there were amendments they could not be easily be added because they were not loose leaf and you did not have other kinds of media, like for instance a CD ROM; so we now are doing the revision and whilst as I give full credit to Mr. Campbell and the then government for the 1990 revision, because that is very important for the maintenance of law and order and for proper commercial certainty about the law and everything, for the organization of the society, we have to do not just as well as was done in 1990 but better in circumstances and which is what we are seeking to do. Because, Mr. Speaker, if you go to the Printery, -- I do not know if the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines has tried it -- and you go and seek one of the annual laws, say before the year 2000, you cannot find a copy, but that is the point I am making, but that means, you just come to practice, so there are ten years essentially lost to you after 1990, between the year 1990 and the year 2000. And you can imagine the new practitioners who come in and people who want to know the law; you have to go to somebody's chambers. I used to have to go to the Attorney General's Chambers as a young practitioner who had just come to the bar,...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEKAER: Honourable Member, I want you to just hold for a while and acknowledge the Honourable Deputy Speaker, for the next five or so minutes.

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER LEFT THE CHAIR
HONOURABLE ROCHELLE FORDE DEPUTY SPEAKER IN THE CHAIR**

HONOURABLE DEPUTY SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Prime Minister, please continue.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: So, Madam Speaker, for the ordinary man on the street, the \$1.4 million which we are going to spend on this project and we have released \$400,000.00 already to start, it may seem as waste of money because it does not include lumber, cement, galvanize, school books, medicine, any job for anybody, you say you are spending \$1.4 million but it is absolutely vital for the administration of justice, for proper commercial activity, social interaction, maintenance of our democracy and for civilized living; absolutely essential, as simple as this task is. So what we are about now is to provide the legislative

basis to do this new revision. In fact, Madam Speaker, these blue volumes that you see, I do not have one here to hold up, but I think you know them. These were printed at I think, I and Spottish Wood, and the thing is this, and Mr. John Heavers, Q.C., and Englishman was the commissioner, adopted under the law. But these are now, if you want a new set of these, you are not going to be able to get them because they are now out of print, and the Attorney General came to me and said, Prime Minister we have a problem, and I had to pay, not I, the government had to pay through our noses metaphorically, to get 50 volumes for \$300,000.00. So I said but, we need to do something, and that is why we are where we are at the moment. We had to put out so those persons who are coming on new to the Bar to get a set of these and in fact, to persons who are now buying them we are subsidizing the cost, because we charge \$2500.00, for the... originally it was \$2500.00 but I cannot recall now, but we still subsidizing it, because of the cost to do these, because they are out of print, you had to get them to start over the exercise so to speak. So all of those difficulties make us take a fresh guard and say look, let us do this thing properly. So this is where we are.

Clause one of the law, as usual provides the short title. Clause two provides the interpretation of the words and phrases, clause three provides for the Law Revision Commissioner to be appointed by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister. Clause four provides that January 1st 2009 will be the appointed day on which the law is to be included in Revised Edition shall be determined. So the new edition will be 2009. But I will indicate how we are going to be able to do it better than the last time, as we go through the Bill, so we are not going to have this problem of they going out of print easily.

Clause five provides that it shall be the duty of the Commissioner to prepare a Revised Edition of the laws, in accordance with the Act, important clause, clause six, if colleagues would look at that, provides that the revised edition may be published in various formats so as to reflect the technology available, these are bound books, collection of booklet, loose-leaf volumes; CD ROM and a data bank accessible by remote computer. This section also provides for the frontispiece of every Act and the subsidiary legislation to be identifiable to be the Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines Revised Edition 2009 and published with the Authority of the Government. What we have done, is we have entered into a publishing agreement with LexisNexis Butterworth of Der Bourne, South Africa and under the agreement will LNB, LexisNexis Butterworth, as you know Butterworth is a famous publisher of law books. They have agreed to the revision and consolidation of the laws of St. Vincent and Grenadines, so this Act is really to facilitate the revision and the consolidation. What we are about to do, is even more costly than before, because we are having by the end of 2008, Madam Speaker, there was a total of 17 years of updates to be done with approximately 8,000 pages of additional legislation to be put in, since January 1st 1991, 8,000 pages additional, in those 17 plus years.

Section eight details the contents of the revised edition we have to put the constitution of every Act and all the subsidiary laws enforced by January, 1st 2009. Also included are the Acts passed but not yet brought into force. Provision is also made for the inclusion of the treaties and conventions relevant to St. Vincent and the Grenadines and those Acts of the United Kingdom Parliament applying to the state. I will mention something here because those current one does not have those things. I will give two practical examples. There are others. You take for instance; there is a legislative provision which has come out of the United Kingdom which applies to us, 1951 I think, maybe 1952. That law governs the movement of aircraft in the Grenadines and between the Grenadines and St. Vincent. The provisions in relation to accidents presume the situation when you had dirt strips, different kinds of aircrafts situation that is still the same as I know. But if you were to look for that law,

as members of the Northern and Southern Grenadines, or anybody else, there are only one or two chambers you can find that in; very old chambers, in fact, I believe there is only one. I happened to have a copy of that; I do not even think the Attorney General's Chambers has one. That is one. If you look in... this is volume one, if you look in volume four, the Fugitive Offenders' Act, if we can get volume four we can make the point. Madam Speaker, I get very animated about these things because I know the value of what we are doing. It is a very important law which we are passing. Not everybody appreciates it and I want to let this Appreciation be made and I am hoping Madam Speaker, that when I finish this job I am doing, and when I retire, I hope that some of the younger folks will come where I am and just sit and talk with me, I do not want any money, I just want to pass on some information and knowledge which is in my head and experience. This is volume 126, you take a law like the Fugitive Offenders Act, which makes reference in its schedule to a series of provisions, and the law in relation to Fugitive Offenders is grounded on a series of treaties. And there are treaties which were made by the British Government, when we were a colony which are still applicable to us, because we succeeded to them. For instance, if you want a treaty, the order in council is unnumbered of March 24th 1873, between the United Kingdom and Italy; you are not going to find that anywhere in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, except in my archives. I had to go to the law library in Barbados, and it took me three days to find it in an old book, the gifts which had come up from the Fount Federation where all the law books for the federation had come up there. But if somebody is to be extradited to Italy, the provisions for that, that issue has to come 1873.

Take another one, France, Order in Council on numbered of May 16th, 1878 and so on, all those things properly speaking should be in a volume, they are not available here, they are listed that they applied because the old laws show that they apply, but do you have them available, you have to hunt for them? This is part and parcel of a pain of a young and growing democracy. They exist in the world, you go to the United Kingdom, you could ask to get it, presumably you go on a particular internet service and you will pay a fee to get it, but it is not readily at hand. So clause seven is important in that regard.

Clause 8, provides that the Commissioner may omit certain Acts from the Revised Edition, these comprise mainly private Acts of Parliament and Acts or subsidiary legislation omitted under the authority of the Attorney General; because you would not be able to put every single piece, like for instance when you come with the religious ecclesiastical bills and so on. But they exist and you will still be able to access them but you do not necessarily have to put them in these, if the Attorney General says do not. Clause nine permits the Commissioner to omit from the Revised Edition subsidiary legislation being of a limited or temporary nature and application, like for instance, some of our provisional of Taxes Order and those things.

Section 10 provides that the validity of a law will not be affected by virtue of the fact that the law is omitted from the Revised Edition. So even if it is omitted it is still valid. Section 11 provides for the powers of the Law Revision Commissioner in the preparation of the Revised Edition. These powers are to ensure a proper editing and perfecting of the laws contained in the Revised Edition.

Section 12 provides however that the Commissioner may not make substantive changes or alternations to the law except by legislation submitted to Parliament and by the Attorney General. That is very important provision; the revision commissioner cannot make substantive changes by themselves, because Parliament makes the law. They can do some, editorial corrections which do not change the meaning or in fact improve the meaning of the law, but you cannot make any substantive changes. Clause 13 provides that any reference to the

Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines will mean the laws as set out in the Revised Edition. Clause 14 provides for the rectification of errors. Clause 15 provides the Revised Edition of the law is not to operate as new laws but as a consolidation of the existing law. Clause 16 provides that the Revised Edition will be the sole source of the written Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Clause 17 provides for the preparation and publishing of an appendix to the Revised Edition comprising among other things, laws of the United Kingdom applicable in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Clause 18 provides for the bringing into force of the Revised Edition by our Head of State following the approval of the Revised Laws by the Assembly. Clause 19 provides for the updating of the Revised Edition in various published formats. And Clause 20 provides for the repeal of existing Law Revision Act. This is a most vital capital project.

I want to thank the Honourable Attorney General's Chambers for doing this and I feel particularly proud as Minister of Legal Affairs to be associated with this venture. I again commend the previous government for the work which they did in 1990 and in particular Mr. Parnel Campbell. I reiterate that. But we are seeing to go a few steps better and Clause six helps us very much in that regard and I am hoping that we would not come about with a situation as we have now, so we have something more lasting. Of course this has served us very well, let there be no mistake about it. I do not think we will have any controversy on it, and in the same way in which I have been putting praise of the previous administration and Mr. Campbell, I am sure that in the same spirit the professionals, the lawyers, the accountants, the management consultants and of course those in the Opposition would be very pleased that we are coming with this particular law at this time and the exercise upon which we have embarked. I am obliged.

HONOURABLE DUPTY SPEAKER: Just before I invite any further debate, let me just allow the Speaker to resume the Chair.

**HONOURABLE DEPUTY SPEAKER LEFT THE CHAIR
HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER RESUMES THE CHAIR**

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Any further debate on the Bill Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: The Honourable Member has given way to me, just to make a quick contribution,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: What is that? I did not get you.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: I stood but you were looking on the left hand side and he recognized me before you did. So he gave way for me to speak. Just for a short contribution.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Go right ahead.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Mr. Speaker, I just like to congratulate the Attorney General and Honourable Prime Minister and to bring to the attention of the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs to Clause 11 (q) and I think he would be quite pleased with the inclusion there, to "to correct punctuation" in the laws.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: What is that?

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a contribution on the Bill. The Law Revision Act 2009 and as the Prime Minister noted in his remarks this is a continuing process, a great leap forward if you will took place in the Revision of 1990 which really brought the laws together in bound volumes, made it much more accessible and has been a tremendous benefit, I am sure to the legal practitioners but also to persons at large, people from abroad who were considering investing in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and who wanted to have a quick look at what the legislation says and so on. But, over the years with the various amendments, repealing of legislations that happens within this House, those volumes themselves had become like a maze to try to find what the current law is in any case. And part of the weakness came from the fact; I mean if you live in other countries, Canada where I practiced for a while, you have mired of services, that will update and provide citations and so on, that you can follow, changes that have taken place and you are able very quickly to go to a single source who will tell you what the current situation is and if you want to go further it is up to you. Here, however, each lawyer basically had to do the original research himself and given the broad scope of most people's practice, if you deal with something one day and if you do not deal with it again, for another year, essentially when you go back to it, and you have to start over from scratch. The Honourable Senator will always refer to the economic aspect of it as the fees, well, I am sure lawyers charged what they are worth.

Mr. Speaker, it is a welcomed change, and in fact, just last month...

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I hope they are paying their taxes...

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: you know, there was a particular bill that was coming to this House, and I went quickly to my office before I came up on ferry to try to find the amendments and it was very difficult to do so in the short space of time that we had. There is service that is published from the Law Library in Barbados, that gives a yearly up to date of the amendments that are made and that has been very, very helpful. And it is something that really should be done here locally if we could, to ensure that we have quick access to the legislation so that, the time that lawyers spent doing this would be reduced and obviously the fees correspondingly reduced. But, Mr. Speaker, we have an obligation here in this Honourable House as well, because the changes that have taken place, sometimes can be avoided, I hate to see it when we spend a lot of time, especially when you are dealing with new legislation, let say the Merchant Shipping Act, for example, it replaces entirely previous legislations. And as soon as we have gone through here with the committees and so on, a year later we come back to Parliament with five or six amendments. If they are substantive in the sense that circumstances have changed, and we have to do it and so on, but very often it is because we have overlooked something, because we have not been very careful in the work that we do, or there are errors that are simply errors so that they have to be corrected but then that becomes an amendment to the legislation. Maybe I am a perfectionist but I would like to see if they drafted the legislation and we passed it, that at least unless there is something substantive that has to be done that we can look to this legislation and say well this is the law of St. Vincent and the Grenadines for the next little while in any event. So we have an obligation in this House as well to do our jobs a little better, so that the legislation that we bring here when are amendments that they are necessary because of substantive changes and not just simply because we have been careless either in the drafting or in anticipating changes down the road are contingencies which we should put into the current

legislation. That is a process having been involved in it myself, in a different jurisdiction, I know how painstakingly detailed and careful the process has been to make sure that when legislations come to Parliament and it passed it is what the executive intended, and when Parliament passes it is what Parliament intends as well, not that there are unforeseen or careless errors that have crept into it. So, that is something that I think we can work on here ourselves.

The second point, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister mentioned section 6, or clause 6 I believe of the bill, which is welcomed of course, because in the last Revision you would not have had reference to CD ROMs and data banks in that previous bill probably; but the technology has changed since the last revision of the Statutes of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. And it really is sometimes, it is easier to find out what the law is, say in Canada, the UK or the United States because you can go on line and you can find the legislation and you can read it and they will tell you it is current up to say January 2009. Because it is updated continuously, this is something which we really in a modern economy and a modern society that we really ought to strive towards.

The laws really should be available online so that they are not just accessible to lawyers; they should be accessible to every person who has a computer. The society is becoming much more literate, people want to be able to go and read for themselves, and say you know this is, you have a perception of what the law is and if they want to see how the courts have interpret it, then they will come to a lawyer and say well how will this be applied in reality. This is a service that is not a privilege anymore; it really should be a right of every citizen; now that the technology is available to make it affordable that they can have access to this legislation. If we were to put them again in bound volumes, whether it is loose leafs format which allows for updating more easily but even those will be prohibited expensive for most citizens, if not for most young practitioners of the Law of St. Vincent and the Grenadines; whereas if it is on line, once the initial expense of setting up is done, the updating of it has to be a lot less costly, and certainly it will be a lot more useful for people who are using them. So I am encouraged by Clause 6, but you know, all clause 6 does is it says that the Revision may be in such in the following format as the Commissioner may determined. And it mentions in (a) bound books, (b) a collection of booklets; (c) loose-leaf volumes; (d) CD ROM or other means of electronic storage; (e) a data bank accessible by remote computer. That means that they are all possible under the law, he has the authority to do it. The next question is, is he going to do it? How is he going to do it? This is the question I am talking about. We have to aim to at the end of this process to have (e) at least in place; we have the bound volumes, but have it available if it is on CD ROMS but I think the online data base is the format that I have seen used in other jurisdictions, because it is accessible they are accessible wherever you are, you cannot forget, your data base at home, as you can with a CD ROM, and now with computers you have all the built in Modems and so on, you can have access anywhere, these are things that will put us in the forefront of the technology for those who are interesting in that but more importantly, it will let others see that we are interested in transparency and openness that we are on the cutting edge of ensuring our laws are made available to everyone so that they can be followed and enforced and that the citizens and other persons whom might be interested in doing investments here will be able to have access to them and encourage them to come and do business in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

So essentially, the point that I wish to make is that it is a right, I believe of all citizens to have access to the laws, because very often you know, when you go to court you cannot plead ignorance of the law, because they always tell you ignorance of the law is no defense, but if as the Prime Minister pointed out, in the case of some archaic legislation which is no longer available, if you do not have it, you know, the defense still is not available

but practically speaking, the person will be at a huge disadvantage, so it is a right of all citizens. To have the laws available, as accessible as possible and we should strive to do that in this exercise, otherwise I think we will only have gone half way and not do as much as we could.

Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House we welcome the revisions. We hope that it is done speedily, it is done thoroughly and whoever the commissioner is, is somebody who is up to the task, it is not the sort of thing that I would wish to do, because it must be a tremendously difficult job to be able to do this, but I would think that there are persons who are expert in the world, who are able to do it, effectively and in a cost effective way, and that we will have these New Revised Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines available very soon. On behalf of the members on this side of the House and the public at large and as a member of the Bar, I am sure that other member of the Bar will support this, that I support the legislation and moreover I wish that the work be completed speedily and my suggestion regard the online availability be taken as a priority not as a luxury somewhere down the road. Thank you, very much.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Any further debate on the Bill? Honourable Prime Minister there seems to be no further debate on the Bill.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Honourable Members who spoke including punctuation, and Mr. Speaker, I share the passion of this subject with the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines, it is evident. And as the Minister of Finance, I hope you will share with me the commitment, to the issue of the money. This is a matter which is costing with LexisNexis Butterworth, \$1.4 million. That does not involve any fees for the law commissioner, and we have someone in mind, and of course, these things you know, there may well be further sums, so it behooves the lawyers to not give difficulties to the VAT collectors, that they must pay their VAT on time, and it is unlikely that there would be any lawyer who has gross earnings below \$120,000.00 a year, very doubtful who are in private practice. I noticed that the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines is smiling very uncomfortably. I also want, Mr. Speaker, to urge that they pay their fair share of personal income taxes, because this is a lot of money, we are putting out, and the society is going to be benefiting but the lawyers would be in the frontline of the principal beneficiary. It is very difficult I have been advised to see some lawyers who own big houses and expensive vehicles report sums almost approximating a loss. I do not know their names, but I heard so; because as Minister of Finance I do not... it is not my business that is the business of the Comptroller of Inland Revenue. But I think that given what we are doing here and the measures that have taken place, to improve the legal system and the administration of justice, that the lawyers should help the society and in a sense help themselves.

I know that too many of them I am metaphorically spit in the wind, but I am hoping that there is a sufficient number who would appreciate the concepts of fairness and reasonableness, because they preach these things to us daily, and rightly but it relates also to paying your fair share. With that Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House dissolve itself into a committee of the whole House to consider this Bill clause by clause.

House went into committee.

House resumes from committee.

Bill passed committee stage with no amendments.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move, that a bill for an act to make provision for the revision and consolidation, of the Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and for matters connected therewith be read a third time.

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

RESOLUTION

REGISTRATION OF ELECTORS (AMENDMENT) REGULATIONS 2009

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Electoral Affairs. Debate on the resolution?

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to move this resolution standing in my name on the Order Paper of today, it reads as follows:

WHEREAS, by section 67 of the Representation of the People Act (Chapter 6 of the Revised Laws of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, 1990 Edition) it is provided that regulations may be made generally for matters relating to the registration of voters;

AND WHEREAS, regulations were made and published in the Gazette on the 9th day of June 2009;

AND WHEREAS, section 67 (4) provides that regulations made under the said Act shall be subject to a negative resolution of the House of Assembly;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that this Honourable House pass the Registration of Electors (Amendment) Regulations 2009 by resolution of the House of Assembly.

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the resolution.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I would like to suggest that there be an amendment to the Resolution that involves not just the passage of the registration of electors amendment regulations 2009 but also the House of Assembly Election Amendment Rules 2009 because they are both circulated. And if the Honourable Minister would accept that amendment it is just formally to put it in. The regulations were published both of them on the 9th of June. One is regulation 8 the other is 9.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Honourable Minister.

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the Honourable Member to include in the resolution House of Assembly Election (Amendment) Rules 2009. The first one was in respect of Registration of Electors Regulations and this one is in respect of the amendment rules. Just in the event that it deals with just one little section and some punctuation marks, and the (d) just simple deals with removing issuer of signature, because that was already done but no regulation was made in the former years, so we are just tidying up the procedures.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Do we have a seconder to this?

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the Resolution.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Seconded? Honourable Members I notice that the resolution has called for a negative vote and therefore it is not necessarily have to be debated. No debate on the resolution. So the resolution therefore has been passed.

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: I lay it on the Table of the Honourable House.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Prime Minister, 30th of July.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, while we recognize that there is no debate on this subject matter you heard earlier in answering to the question on related matters by the Honourable Minister, she quite interestingly made mention of some initiative that the Electoral Department would be taking with respect to preparation of the new ID cards, no doubt occasioned by the new technology that attendant on that exercise. But we are really just a few months just before another important exercise here, a referendum exercise and we cannot help but recognize that on this side of the House that there are not a specific set of legislation that deals with referendum situation and we just want to be assured that that matter is in fact engaging the attention of the government, and that will be coming for us.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes that issue was raised previously and we were advised that that legislation is coming. We recognize that there is a need for it. Thank you, very much. [Interjection] We in the House of Assembly I am part of it. Am I not? Do not be tactical with me. I am a part of this House. Yes Honourable Member?

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: I crave the indulgence of this Honourable House that you would have heard an announcement on radio in the earlier part of this week, indicating that the Office of the Supervisor of Elections was closed. It was closed to the public, while the new system is being installed at the offices. That is the only reason that it is closed. It does not mean that no work is being carried on at the office. Work continues but it is closed to the public, because you cannot have everybody tripping over the wires and what is happening in there. So just to let you know that it will be opened. It is my understanding they are hoping to be reopened by either Friday or Monday to the general public.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: All right, thank you, very much, Honourable Member. Yes, Honourable Prime Minister

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: The adjournment?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes, we are waiting on the motion.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I just want to congratulate the Honourable Minister of Electoral Matters for seeking to further modernize our election system, and to strengthen our democracy. It is a very important job and we are moving ahead, despite the fact that there are some difficulties as she has hinted with some of the state officials who are responsible for effecting certain matters practically. It does not have anything to do with resources it has to do with getting some things done, and not people in the electoral office either.

Mr. Speaker, I am suggesting the 30th of July, I know that there are many persons who would like to enjoy their carnival and not have interruptions. We come here one or two good friends of Bacchus, the god of wine, and engage in some bacchanalia, I am looking forward also to the carnival. It is unfortunate that every year some of the days I am at CARICOM heads of government but on this occasion CARICOM meeting would be finished on the Sunday 5th so that on the Monday and Tuesday I will return. Mr. Speaker, there is a bar not too far away from ... [Interjection] actually no it is not the ghetto at all. A bar not too far away from Rose Place, and when I take credit there the owner of the bar, at least the lady who owns the bar she does not... she says for my good works, I hope that Honourable Members from the Opposition would not take that as a que that when they see me there to come and expect that they can put the thing on my bill because it would be paid for. I am issuing a warning in advance, Mr. Speaker. I think we should have a good carnival Mr. Speaker, and people are in good spirits, streets are safe. Of course, you would not have a complete absence of crime occurring but we have seen some dramatic improvements. And I am hoping that we keep it that way and we go into a good mood into the carnival. And that we have a lot of people who are coming home and a lot of Caribbean people also, come and enjoy this carnival which is magnificent and which has grown from strength to strength.

So, Mr. Speaker, we put the date at the... we have a lot of work to do in Select Committee for the Constitution Bill, so after the Carnival we will do a couple days of select committee work and then we will come on the 30th in Parliament.

So I beg to move accordingly, Mr. Speaker, that this Honourable House do stand adjourn until Thursday 30th of July, 2009 at 10:00 a.m.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned at 3:00 p.m.

House adjourned until Thursday 30th of July, 2009 at 10:00 a.m.