

No. 2

Tuesday

Fourth Session

26th March, 2009

Eighth Parliament

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

ADVANCE COPY

OFFICIAL REPORT

CONTENTS

Tuesday 24th February 2009

Prayers	5
Welcome	5
Obituaries	5
Congratulatory Remarks	11
Minutes	12
Questions for Oral Answers	12
Urgent Matter for Public Importance	62
Motion	66
Bills	78
Adjournment	79

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE SECOND 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.

SEVENTH SITTING

26th March, 2009

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

The Honourable House of Assembly met at 10:15 a.m. in the Assembly Chamber, Court House, Kingstown.

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER IN THE CHAIR

Honourable Hendrick Alexander

Present

MEMBERS OF CABINET

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

Member for North Central Windward

Attorney General
Honourable Judith Jones-Morgan

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 Marriagua
Minister of Rural Transformation, Information, Postal Service and Ecclesiastical Affairs Honourable Selmon Walters	Member for Central South Windward
Minister of Health and the Environment Honourable Dr. Douglas Slater	Member for South Leeward
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 Tourism Honourable Glen Beache	Member for South Windward
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

Honourable Rochelle Forde

Government Senator/ Deputy Speaker

Honourable Richard Williams

Government Senator

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 Major St. Claire Leacock

Opposition Senator

Honourable Daniel Cummings

Opposition Senator

ABSENT

Honourable Terrence Ollivierre

Member for Southern Grenadines

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 26th MARCH, 2009

PRAYERS

Honourable Speaker of the House of Assembly, Mr. Hendrick Alexander read the prayers of the House.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, this morning we have with us two sets of students and their teachers, representing the JP Eustace Secondary and the Campden Park Technical Institute, I think it is, and we want to welcome them here to Parliament, both students and teachers and we hope that they would be enriched by what takes place here today, or during the period of time they are here with us. We want them to feel extremely welcome, and we are indeed happy to have you, thank you, very much.

OBITUARIES

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Mr. Speaker, I want to express profound sympathy to the family, relatives and friends of the late Vincent Mc Lean of Church Road, Stubbs. Mr. Speaker, he was an ardent community activist in the community of Stubbs and the surroundings. He was involved in all aspects of community life; sports, education, culture, et cetera and especially cricket which was his most ardent sport and activity and this is borne out in his children, Nixon, who was a former West Indian fast bowler, Reagan and Kissinger who represented St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the Windward Islands in cricket; and Golda who was a champion female long distance runner. Mr. Speaker, it was indeed a pleasure to know him and to have played cricket with him and worked on community projects with him. May his soul rest in peace, his funeral, I think, is Saturday.

Also, Mr. Speaker, I want to extend profound sympathies to the family and friends of Mrs. Edna Dougan of Ratho Mill, - the Dougan family. This lady lived to a grand age of 95; and I know members are watching the East St. George representative and also the Opposition Leader for their longevity, East St. George you know, but it could only happen if you live right in the other communities.

Mr. Speaker, she was a fine lady who made her contribution to the development of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in various ways. She produced children who have excelled in their chosen fields of endeavour and are still making tremendous contribution to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. We are grateful for her time and life and what she has given to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. May her soul rest in peace.

And finally, I wish to extend our sympathy to the family of Lynda Abiaka who was laid to rest last Thursday. In my youth years growing up, she was my neighbor. And Lynda was a wonderful individual who went out of

her way to ensure that others were okay. She helped all and sundry. She was a very ardent supporter of the government and the ULP. She was also a dedicated and faithful member of her church, the Anglican community. May she rest in peace. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Education.

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Mr. Speaker, I rise to express sincerest condolences to the family and friends of the late Lawrence “Larry” Bascombe. In 1970, when I became a young teacher, I was given a class in which Larry sat. A chubby little half Indian boy, who worked well at his lessons but in working with him I noticed that Larry loved art; he loved to draw. And we used to have a good joke of Larry drawing buses and he had a favourite bus which he drew; it was called “Sports Man”, and he would draw that bus with the driver sitting at the wheel. Larry also liked to compose poems. Larry loved sporting activities. And while I was thinking of words I could truly put on behalf of Larry, these words came to mind. *“The childless father of the man, and I could wish my days to be bound each to each by natural piety.”* What Larry did when he was little it came out in him when he became a man. As fate would have it along the way Larry went into auto mechanics and Larry had an accident. After the accident he was taken to Trinidad where his relatives sought to have him better but again after trying for a while, it seemed that Larry had to spend the rest of his days in a wheelchair. He came back to Marriacqua, we showered sympathies on him but Larry would often time tell you, I do not want too much sympathy. Larry was strong willed. Larry felt that sitting in the wheelchair could give him time to do work, that maybe some of us would not do, while we were in our classrooms or in our offices. And so, while we worked, Larry was at home and he organized sporting activities. He organized the tournaments; netball, volleyball, cricket, and later basketball.

Larry’s voice was heard from morning to morning on the airwaves. Larry coloured his words that he spoke and I know that even today many people who would have listened to him, did not know the man who was speaking. The people in Marriacqua favoured Larry. Larry if it was raining would be lifted up by the young people. If he had to go upstairs, they lifted him. Many of acts of love were showered on Larry. The Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines through the Ministry of Social Welfare Development took care of Larry, and the citizens of Marriacqua on a whole. His mother lived in England and circumstances did not allow her to be here. But we saw the good in Larry and we helped him. Mr. Speaker, after a while, Larry had to amputate one of his legs but before that, he came to my house one day and he told me of his illness. We spoke from time to time on the telephone and spoke of ways and means by which Marriacqua Sport Association can keep alive. But we know that in this life we are pilgrims and we are strangers travelling to another land. Larry was called home to eternity. The people of Marriacqua turned out in their numbers and the sports enthusiasts, as a sign of their love and thankfulness for all Larry had done for us in the Marriacqua Valley, put his coffin on their shoulders like a true soldier and bore him up the hill to his final resting place. We would always remember what Larry would have done to keep sports alive in Marriacqua. I pray that his soul may find rest eternal. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for West Kingstown.

HONOURABLE CONRAD SAYERS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give sincere condolences to the family of the late Ms. Edna Joslyn of Redemption Sharpes. I have come to know Comrade Joslyn over three decades ago and I have always been impressed with her forthrightness, her sense of duty and her sense of responsibility. She took ill and left us on the 2nd March. And Mr. Speaker, she left behind a legacy of tremendous support for the Unity Labour Party. Her voice was heard each day, sometimes several times per day expounding and explaining and clarifying on behalf of the Unity Labour Party and lauding the good works of the party and the Leadership of the Honourable Prime Minister. She worked in several lawyers' office as a job, and she worked within the constituency both as the president of the Women's Arm for Central Kingstown and as a constituency executive member among other things. She would be sadly missed by her family, her sons Andre and Ivo, her daughter-in-law and grandchildren. Indeed the entire Central Kingstown constituency. People of Goodwill will miss her. I am so happy, Mr. Speaker, that when I visited her, even though she could not have spoken at the time she showed a kind gesture of comradry by grabbing tightly to my hand, squeezing it for several long minutes. Mr. Speaker, by that I know she felt a sense of peace and goodwill as we exchanged that in our spirits. May she, Mr. Speaker, rest in peace.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, I would like to add to the condolences paid to the family of the late Lynda Abiaka. I too, have known Mrs. Abiaka for some time, and one thing that stood out with this lady was her sincere kindness. And she was kind to everyone that she was given an opportunity to show kindness to, Mr. Speaker. She was a sincere and dedicated Christian lady; very passionate about her dedication to Christ. I remembered, Mr. Speaker, on one visit to her home, I introduced her to Praise FM and for the several times when I visited her, she always had that station on, like she never listened to anything else. Mr. Speaker, she was a lady that was feminine in her sense of classiness and she was rugged in her sense of adaptability to any situation. As her son said she could ride a motor bike and she can drive a truck. One day she said to me, "Conrad, I need somebody to work in the backyard, I cannot get no suitable person". The next person she got, Mr. Speaker, failed her and she said, "I am going to do my work myself". She was found now pushing her lawnmower and doing her work.

But her dream and her passion, Mr. Speaker, was to have a comfortable home for the elderly, because indeed she spent a lot of her time caring for the elderly. And one person I am sure would miss her dearly is Mrs. Hamlett, Michael Hamlett's mother who had such a bond with her. One day Mrs. Hamlett said to me, I would miss Lynda so much. She said Lynda would take me to church and I remember one day she came from church and she said, "Mama I want to pick some coconut for you", and she said "Lynda you cannot pick coconut", and she said, "yes, give me the ladder". She climbed that ladder and she took the cutlass and she cut the coconut even if she had on her church clothes, and she said I would miss that lady. Mr. Speaker, that is why I had to stand here today and pay tribute to a great woman. I know that she would be missed by her son Andrew and Alexis and her husband Clifford who is a professor at the University in the Middle East, Professor of Physics, a very wonderful fellow, himself. May her soul rest in peace; Mr. Speaker, thank you.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Senator Leacock.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, my voice is a little hoarse, so you would bear with me. [Interjection] It is too early, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to join with the expression of condolence by the previous speakers but I wish to pause, Mr. Speaker, on the contributions and the passing of Mrs. Dougan out

of Calliaqua, both the Dougan's and the 'Doougans' have been very outstanding family in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Sometimes, we are told by the fruit you shall know them. I went to school around the time with Ken and the one just before him, I think he lives somewhere in Virginia, if I am not mistaken and Dr. Hughes Dougan who would have been my senior in Grammar School at that time and a better wicket keeper, middle order batsman than Mike Browne who I believe might have replaced him later on and he is doing so much yeomen work and of course, the brothers there in the Development Cooperation and of course, who would forget Caryle Dougan of the Dougan's family, who served in this Honourable House and was also an Attorney General in this country. I think there is no dispute that as a matriarch they were pillars of the Calliaqua/Villa community and one by one, that generation is moving on but I believe they would have left a legacy for a long, long time. And certainly their contributions will be captured in posterity.

Mr. Speaker, I did attend the funeral two or three weeks ago of Larry Bascombe and at that funeral the Honourable Prime Minister who was among those who paid tribute alluded to the fact that when Larry Bascombe wanted to get rid of me as president, he consulted him for advice and he exercised good wisdom at that request. I think in the other tributes we heard that several other state agencies might have been approached, including the Lottery to see my demise at football and Ashley Caine in his conclusion asked for me to give closure to the matter. Well I want to assist in the freeing of the consciences, Mr. Speaker, by saying that I have no regrets over the service and my association. I believe on balance Larry Bascombe had made a tremendous contribution to the democracy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. His work in the Marriaqua community and the greater St. Vincent and the Grenadines will stay for a very long time, and maybe I should emphasize that contribution to football. I know there are others who play a favourite tape recording of his which says, that at one time he held me up as Prime Minister but he has never seen a dictator as much as he has seen in me. But, we let go of those things. Those of us who are in public life have to see the bigger and better picture and I think it is important that Larry's contribution be applauded and be recognized; and let me say to Ashley, yes, there is closure. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Mr. Speaker, I rise to join in the condolences and I love to associate myself with those comments that have been made before particularly so on Lynda. She was a very faithful soldier, very faithful supporter of the Unity Labour Party and as parliamentary representative; the Honourable Conrad Sayers said she was the right hand of Mrs. Hamlett.

Also, Mrs. Dougan and my condolences go out to her sons, Hugh and Halley; Halley being the manager of National Properties and Hugh at one time was the Manager of Housing and Land Development Corporation and now works at Coreas; and also naturally Mrs. Joslyn who I was very close with and I extend condolences to her two sons, particularly Ivo who lives here in St. Vincent and works at the St. Vincent Cooperative Bank; we will surely miss her.

Mr. Speaker, I rise really to pay tribute to a gentleman whom we buried on Saturday from Cane Garden, (I think we are getting a little feedback on the microphone), Mr. Roy Ivanhoe Morris, he was married to Grace Marshall of the Marshall clan from Cane Garden and he was born in Jamaica in 1923 and came here to work as an Agricultural Extension Officer in 1946. He worked in Marriaqua, Belmont, Leeward, Campden Park and in those early days he had the responsibility for animal husbandry and forestry. When we say animal husbandry;

that is what you call it in modern day terms, Mr. Speaker, but what we really meant were those stud centres that we had. You would recall throughout the length and breadth and the glory days of agriculture, we had stud centres, throughout the length and breadth of this country. In fact, I as the son of an agricultural officer, lived very close to those stud centres in my formative years, and had a lot of experience on the way that you take care of animals and breed them and treat them and everything else and it paid off today.

He was also one of the pioneers in soil terracing, terracing hills to stop the land slippage that we had in the country. And in the early days, he spearheaded the German Gutter in Troumaca where there was almost a disaster with the village there and they put some big terraces there and grass the entire area to stop the slippage. He also managed in the 50's and 60's the Wallilabou and Richmond Estates and I recall as a boy going to the Grammar School, we then lived in the country, in San Souci, he and my father worked at the Agricultural Office in Kingstown and every afternoon after school we had to wait in the yard until daddy was ready to home and we developed a very close relationship, both families and even as I became an adult and later on entered politics to run in East Kingstown, he was a very good friend of mine and gave me full support throughout the entire period of my sojourn in that constituency. He retired in the late 70's and basically took it easy, and he served in the Lion's Club of St. Vincent for 35 years, he gave service to the Lion's Club. His kids Keith, who live in Canada, Jennifer Morris who is now at CRD in Canouan, and Brian who works for Sprott's for years and Ian who worked at CIBC for many years and is now in the Bahamas, in the petroleum business, he tells me that is what he is doing now. I attended the funeral on Saturday and I want to extend on behalf of my family, my father and my mother who were very close to them, my immediate family, the Unity Labour Party and the government, sincerest condolences to Grace and the kids and the extended family, Lennox John is married to her sister, and the rest of the Marshall's family. May he rest in peace, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honorable Leader of the Opposition; Member for East Kingstown.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I wish to join the other members in this House in offering condolences to the families of Larry Bascombe, Vincent Mc Lean, Edna Dougan and Lynda Abiaka, as well as Owen Morris. It seems that the list in this Parliament is getting longer and longer every time we come here to the pay obituaries.

Mr. Speaker I want to say a brief word or two about Larry Bascombe. I have always regarded him, as an individual who spoke his mind; it did not matter to him what you may have thought of him but he spoke his mind and expressed his own beliefs very strongly on the radio and otherwise and in that sense, Mr. Speaker, contributed to democracy in this country and its development. While I was speaking on the radio recently I had to mention that particular fact. Sometime ago when he was in the hospital, that is before this last hospitalization, I went to see him at the hospital and he made a statement which I cannot forget, he said to me that he had had a lot of pain in his life, of course associated with the accident which the Honourable Minister mentioned. And he said to me that he does not want to feel any more pain and if he finds himself in that position, any other time, he would prefer to leave this place. So it was obvious that he had very heavy pains during his life. And it had a tremendous effect on how he viewed life and a lot of other things. And I keep seeing him on the bed at the hospital making that statement to me.

A word on Vincent Mc Lean, he too as an activist in his community, has made very a very significant contribution to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. His sons, have all contributed in many ways, particularly in the area of sports; Nixon Mc Lean, in particular and he had a passion for naming his children after leaders of government, hence Nixon named after obviously President Nixon. But he did really make a contribution his community. And I believe the people in that area Victoria Village and around there are all missing him today. And I want to say to the family that we offer them our sincerest condolences.

Well, Mrs. Dougan of East St. George is a lady I have known for many, many, many years and there is one thing apart from the fact that she produced children who have made significant contributions to this country and continue to do so; she had a clear desire to give jokes at all times.

I remembered some years ago, Mr. Speaker, I gave her, her sister Mrs. Ruddicks and Mrs. Stephens, both of whom have passed on, a ride just simply from Calliaqua to their home in the Ratho Mill area and the amount of jokes and laughter in that vehicle, for that short distance has always remained with me, they found an opportunity to provide a joke or laugh at virtually everything. I could not believe the amount of jokes in that short distance of time and I have always kept that in my memory and she was one of the chief persons in that regard. May God bless her soul.

Lynda Abiaka, I knew a little of because of my wife and she did in fact visit our home on a couple of occasions but I was conscious of her kindness and willingness to help and also of her deep faith in God; she really was a Christian lady. And the comments made by other members here this morning are testimony to that.

With respect to Roy Morris, I have known him for a long time. I remembered some time back in the '50's my sister was invited to spend part of her school holidays with them at Wallilabou, so we drove her down there in the afternoon and about eight o'clock in the night, she was back, we wondered what had happened, the fact is she had never slept away from home in her life and could not handle the fact that she was not going to sleep in her own bed. And I remembered Mr. Morris bringing her back with a great deal of laughter and that gives an indication how long ago I have the known him. I know of his contribution to agriculture, and he did make a very significant contribution in that regard and may the Lord have mercy on his soul. Thank you, very much.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to join in the obituaries in relation to Vincent Mc Lean, Lynda Abiaka, Larry Bascombe, Edna Joslyn, Roy Morris, Edna Dougan, in fact, I knew all these persons and in the case of Larry Bascombe and Edna Joslyn, I spoke at their respective funerals. And I do not want to traverse the ground which has already been covered by all Honourable Members, and I adopt their kind sentiments as my own, and convey condolences to the immediate families and friends of all those persons to whom we have paid tribute here this morning.

Mr. Speaker, there is one person who as I was coming to the Parliament, I was informed by her grandson, Tyrone Burke that Granny Burke died last night into this morning at Gorse, she was 99 years old. She has missed the hundred mark. She was a remarkable woman. A lady who exercised quiet leadership in her

community; she was looked to for advice; she was a matriarch; and my family and the Burke families, they are close families. We hail from the same part of St. Vincent and I really want to convey to the entire Burke clan and the friends of Granny Burke my deepest condolences. I do so on my own behalf and on behalf of my government, my family and the constituency council of the Unity Labour Party. May their souls all rest in peace and may light perpetual shine upon them. I am obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Let me also express on behalf, from the Chair at least to the families of Vincent Mc Lean, Edna Dougan, Edna Joslyn, Lynda Abiaka, Roy Morris, Larry Bascombe, Granny Burke, and all those persons whose name have been mentioned here this morning, let me express to their various families, deepest sympathies on behalf of all the members of the House of Assembly here this morning. Thank you, very much.

CONGRATULATORY REMARKS

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, on behalf of the Government and People of St. Vincent and the Grenadines I would like to offer congratulations in this Honourable House, to Prime Minister Baldwin Spencer and the UPP ruling party in Antigua, on their recent electoral triumph. I have spoken to my friend Baldwin the day after the elections and congratulated him. I have also sent a message to Opposition Leader Lester Bird on his return to Parliament and on the creditably showing by the opposition.

Mr. Speaker, there are some who believe that every time an election takes place the government is going to lose. There is something which they call, “the wind of change”. As I have said before they have construed it as some concept akin to meteorology. But politics is very contextual and very different to the subject area of meteorology. And as we have seen some governments have fallen, some have stayed afloat and some have been strengthened; it depends on a host of factors, a veritable parallelogram of forces and they all become conjoined.

I think that the victory of PM Spencer and the UPP is very telling; given the economy meltdown that has occurred in Antigua consequent upon not only the international economic crisis but because of the collapse of the Stanford Empire has affected Antigua in a very direct way.

The challenges facing the Government and People of Antigua are immense and it is a victory which is accompanied with awesome responsibilities. We wish Government and People of Antigua is very well. We think they have the resilience to sail through these challenges, and to meet them successfully and we in the rest of the OECS and the CARICOM we are here to lend a helping hand as we all attempt to strengthen the integration movement so that we can deal more capably, more efficaciously, with the challenges which come to us, from outside. I am obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I rise also to offer my congratulations to the government in Antigua, on having been returned to office a few days ago and despite some of the difficulties associated with that election I think that congratulations are in order. Mr. Speaker, there is indeed going to be a challenge, a challenge that all of us face in the OECS and the rest of CARICOM in terms of the future of our economies. And I make the assumption that the Government of Antigua will as time progresses address the issues that confront that country, which to some extent is slightly different from some of our own but I know that task needs to be accomplished; and once again I offer my congratulations.

CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, may I just indicate something, it is not by way of congratulations but when someone who is close to you reaches the age of 90, it is a cause for celebration. My mother, Theresa Francis would be 90 on the 31st, next week, 31st March. She is of sturdy stock and for those who may wish to see me leave sooner rather than later, may take a hint from the genes. Mr. Speaker, I hope that she is listening on her radio at home and to hear that Leader of the Opposition shouted across, she might not have heard it, where he said that “she stronger then you” meaning she stronger than me, perhaps. But guava does not bear lime. [Interjection]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: He said young and old limes drop.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Young and old limes drop, yes, I am neither yet old, nor young I am still way up in the tree. And as you said guava does not bear lime, do you want to come up and pick this guava? It is difficult though. It is not on a low line branch. This guava is way up.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move the confirmation of the minutes of the sitting of this Honourable House held on 24th February, 2009.

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

**Question put and agreed to.
Minutes stand confirmed.**

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWERS

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Before I take you Honourable Leader of the Opposition, I just want to make a slight adjustment to the order; the Honourable Senator Julian Francis and Minister of Housing has asked that we take his two questions since he has some urgent matters to deal with and would like to leave the House at this time. So we will go to questions 13 and 14 and if you do not mind and then we [Interjection] He has three as well, let me see... Honourable...

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: This is what I was going to indicate. Question 3 is really ought properly to have been directed to me. I will answer question three. Mr. Speaker, in as much as I am on my feet, may I just simply indicate a procedural matter in relation to the students who are here one, I have been advised is from the Campden Park, which I believe is in the constituency of the Honourable Minister of Health and the other is the JP Eustace which I have been advised is in the constituency of the Honourable Minister of Urban Development. The tradition which has evolved in this House and I think it is a noble tradition that they will take the students, or cause for them to be taken to an appropriate restaurant of their choice. I say that so that they can stay around and Mr. Speaker, until the luncheon period so that I suspect;... I know they have either been going, generally speaking to Kentucky or... the Minister of Health may be interested for them to go not to Kentucky but to Sunshine; although Sunshine I have been advised is perhaps a little bit more expensive; but he will probably argue that it is healthier food. And in promoting healthier lifestyle, I am quite sure that he would not mind paying a little more but that is a matter for them. But only to affirm Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of this House, this noble tradition ought reasonably to be continued. Thank you.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 13 Honourable Daniel Cummings.

13. **HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** *I rise to ask Question No. 13 standing in my name of the Honourable Minister of Housing, Information Human Settlements, Physical Planning, Lands and Surveys.*

Some sixteen (16) families in Buddy Gutter have been uprooted from their homes to facilitate the electricity project in Lowmans Bay. Since then some have been directed to alternative locations at a substantial cost. Others have yet to be directed to a suitable alternative place.

- a. *Would the Ministry take urgent steps to ensure that persons living on the lots which have been sold to the displaced residents be removed to allow for free access to these lots;*
- b. *Would the displaced residents be given basic access roads to the lands they have to pay for; and*
- c. *Would any of these very poor and struggling displaced families be entitled to low income houses or other relief.*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Senator Francis.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Mr. Speaker, the choice of words could change the whole context and intention. The Honourable Senator chose to use the word, uprooted, we are uprooting the residents. I would say that they have to be relocated, Mr. Speaker, to provide for ongoing expansion and development in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. And the people understand that, so we should try to use the language that is more appropriate to the action being taken.

- a. **Would the Ministry take urgent steps to ensure that persons living on the lots which have been sold to the displaced residents be removed?**

Mr. Speaker, one would interpret this as all the lots that we are giving to the displaced residents are now occupied by other persons. Again, the formulation is with that intent. Mr. Speaker, I will read the response from the Ministry and I will read also from a Cabinet document that has been approved.

The process of reallocating the 21 families, he said 16, who have been affected by civil works at the Lowmans Bay Power Plant and the fuel storage centre, which has been left out of the Senator's question and all this is for expansion for the reduction of the cost of generating electricity; it is ongoing. Eighteen families have had their properties valued and have been compensated. They have since been resettled on surveyed lands located further in land away from the site. Recommendations would be made for an additional three persons to be resettled at the new site. The lots are being sold to these persons at a cost of \$1.75 per square foot. Lot sizes range from 3,809 sq feet, to 5,814 sq. feet. Therefore the cost of the lots is between \$6,665.75 and \$10,174. And this would answer the question more directly.

The area where the families has been relocated have been largely unoccupied only two persons were there before; one had built his house on the proposed road reservation and the other had squatted on a lot allocated to one of the 18 persons. These two persons have since been asked to relocated and have been provided with alternative lots.

- b. Would the displaced residents be given basic access roads to the lands they have to pay for; and (c) would any of these very poor and struggling displaced families be entitled to low income houses or other relief.**

Mr. Speaker, I want to read first from the document that we sent to Cabinet, which is the Cabinet memo that I have signed as Minister of Housing. The background information says:

The St. Vincent Electricity Services Limited in conjunction with Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Petro Caribe are constructing a fuel storage facility on a parcel of land it owned at Lowmans Bay;

That is the lands are in the name of VINLEC. They bought it, they paid for it.

For security and safety reasons it was agreed that residential occupation has to be restricted to within a certain range of the operation. When we were putting in the fuel the experts went in and they did a development plan and they gave us bands for security and safety reasons, so you will get a drawing of where the storage is going and you will have bands, about five bands giving you distances where it is safe. So you will have red, green, yellow as the case may be. They coloured them like that. And within that blast area just in case there was to be a blast that we should for safety reasons move these persons out of there. So as a result 18 families, who had constructed homes within the surrounding areas and this is in the squatting area, I mean, all these persons had gone in and squatted on the lands were identified as in the security risk and safety risk. Their houses were valued, their owners compensated and were rehoused for a period of six

months pending preparation of the alternative lots and building their new houses. So in the relocation we made sure that we provided the land for them at a \$1.75 per sq. foot and we know it would take time for them to build back a house so the government which you have grown accustomed to, similarly with the Stadium Site. When we had to relocate persons from the Stadium Site a similar exercise was carried out. Each house was photographed, valued and the persons compensated for their properties. And also we have done it at the airport site, and in all the cases there have been special rates granted to those persons who were so affected.

Mr. Speaker, I think it would be instructive for the names:

1. Kelroy Shackle
2. Felix Small
3. Brian Tony
4. Dexter Douglas
5. Kyron Wynn
6. Lorna Jack
7. Harold Sam
8. Shanika Mockette
9. Festina Pipe
10. Nidral Roberts and Agatha Roberts
11. Beverley Williams
12. Veronica Williams
13. Denroy and Kathleen Selby
14. Noel Danzine
15. Jenny Pierre
16. Marlon Young
17. Mishka Mathias
18. Lyndon Hazel

The composition, Mr. Speaker, to date, we have paid out \$161,825 and rental for six months totaled \$39,400, which totaled \$201,225.00. That is what we have paid out to date. And there is a list of the owners here, their properties and the valuations. I would not want to go into that aspect.

But the rest of the question dealt with provision of drains and roads. We have an estimate from the Housing and Land Development Cooperation to put roads to these lots would cost us \$1.837 million. In Cabinet yesterday the decision was taken that we will move immediately to get the road in place and we will not be spending all of this money at one time but we will be putting in drains and a rough finish on the access road, compacted road way to the lands. Now the lands that are being developed for Housing and the Senator seemed to have gotten a little bit confused between what we are providing for housing and what is happening with access to the lands.

Now the laws of this country state that the Chief Surveyor has the power, that if government needs to get to any Crown Land and there is private land separating Crown Lands and the only access to the Crown Lands is

through the private land, he can negotiate with the land owner or move to acquisition if the land owner cannot be contacted and if there is not mutual settlement and the usual acquisition process. So what has happened because this is question 14. But you see he has separated both issues, but I do not want to answer both questions at one time. I will give him the pleasure of reading the other one. But it is really the same subject matter that he has separated into two questions I suppose to impress his political leader that he does have the three questions required to submit. So access road will be given and preparations being made, you did not ask anything about utilities but I am telling you that utilities are also being put in.

c. Would any of these very poor and struggling displaced families be entitled to low income houses.

Mr. Speaker, the low income housing programme is not for this purpose. We have built houses at Langley Park, for persons affected by storms and hurricanes and by disasters, we got special monies out of Prime Minister Manning in Trinidad and we built houses at Langley Park and Byrea for these displaced persons. This is not the same here in Ottley Hall and Buddy Gutter. The low income houses are not sold on credit and they are not given out because Housing and Land Development Corporation has to stand on its own feet and government subsidies contributes to the subsidy to houses but the owners have to pay for the houses, so it is not in this... so these persons would not qualify to go to a bank, most of them, to get the money to borrow to pay us for a low income house, so it is not the intention to give them low income houses.

The 18 persons who were living lands at Lowmans had their property valued and compensated and they were also given six month rent. The amount paid to the families as I said is \$201,225 and in addition he says, he wants to know if there are other help the people can get. In addition to all the state mechanisms, the state mechanisms are opened to the residents such as social welfare and the material assistance programme for those who qualify and wish to avail themselves of those opportunities. I will delay the other answer until he has asked the second question, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Senator Cummings, question no. 14, then.

14. **HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** *I rise to ask Question No. 14 standing in my name of the Honourable Minister of Housing, Information Human Settlements, Physical Planning, Lands and Surveys.*

The Williams family is in possession of several acres of lands in Buddy Gutter, which it would appear; government is interested in using for housing. There is some concern that government has already used part of this land without agreement with the family.

- a. *Is the government in the process of making the lands available for public housing;*
- b. *If in the affirmative, what is the status of the negotiation for the use of the lands; and*
- c. *Is it a fact that part of the lands in question has already been subdivided by government for housing.*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Senator Francis, Minister for Housing.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased now to see that the Honourable Senator has found the correct word for the area not Muddy Gutter, but Buddy Gutter. You would recall that there was a certain period when he spoke of it as Muddy Gutter.

Mr. Speaker, I will just wait for the applause to die down and then I will continue, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Just to remind you that we have Court downstairs.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Yes, Mr. Speaker. The Williams' family said that they are in possession of several acres of land in Buddy Gutter, which it would appear, the government is interested. Well, Mr. Speaker, sometimes you ask question on a rumour and then (c) of the questions says, after he said it would appeared government is interested in using for housing, he then went on to ask: Is it a fact that part of the lands in question has already been subdivided by government for housing. So you know we go around and we pick up a piece of information here and we figure it is politically useful so we would formulate a question on it despite Buddy Gutter and Muddy Gutter, but... yes, Senator. (a) Is the government in the process of making the lands available for public housing; Mr. Speaker, we are not using any private lands in Buddy Gutter area in this exercise for housing and I will explain further.

So the part about us using, are we in the process of making the lands available for public housing, what he is referring to here now, which is really on the periphery of the first question, these lands that he is referring to will not be used for housing they will be used for access to the lot we have developed. And the Honourable Senator seemed to know who owns the lands. I will read from the Cabinet document because both matters went to Cabinet in the same document.

In addition, that is after having gotten approval to sell these people these lots, all the names I have called out, at a \$1.75, in addition, the department is recommending the acquisition of an additional parcel measuring 10,479 sq. feet as shown on Survey Plan A 665; so it may be instructive for the Honourable Senator to take the plan number and go the Lands and Surveys and verify the truthfulness of what I am saying.

This parcel is necessary to accommodate access to the surveyed lots. The Department's efforts to locate the owner of this parcel proves futile, so I will encourage the Honourable Senator that if he knows the Williams' family as he claims in his question, that in their interest he should take them to meet with the Chief Surveyor who will negotiate, with title of course. But in the interest of time because if you cannot find the owner of a land and you have tried all means possible and you cannot find them, the law allows the Chief Surveyor to recommend to Cabinet that the land be acquired. And this is what I did here as Minister of Tourism based on the recommendation and the information received from the Chief Surveyor and we said that we will move acquire the 10,479 sq. feet that will give us enough land to put the road to the developed lots and we will buy this land at \$1.75 a sq. foot. The same price we are selling to the persons who are buying the lands from the Government, we will acquire, because it is in the same area. We will acquire the land from the person at \$1.75. The practice is that is if you do not find the owner the money is put in the Treasury until a certain time that whenever, or if the owner disagrees, the money is put there in their name and if they do not agree with the price,

there is arbitration. That is the process. But we are acquiring the 10,479 sq. feet, so I should suggest to the Honourable Senator that he moves and take the people there with their title to show ownership and to discuss the acquisition or sale -- well it has already been acquired; it has already been approved for acquisition and the exercise is ongoing. Two notices in the gazette will give the government title to the lands.

Mr. Speaker, the development of this country in this time is a very challenging thing because we have to do serious adjustments to many things and when we talk of fuel storage in Campden Park, we are not talking any little thing; it is a \$16 million dollar project and the amount of fuel that will be stored there could create quite a danger to any person living in nearby areas.

So wherever this administration is carrying out a development project, we take into consideration the persons living there, we make sure as the Prime Minister formulates it, they are as in an equal position as they are now or better off; never in a worst position than they were at the time when we moved in for the development. I thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay we shall revert to our regular order. Question number 1 Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

1. **HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** *I rise to ask Question No. 1 standing in my name of the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries:*

Now that the legislation has been passed effectively dissolving the Banana Growers' Association and that the implementation of the Banana Industry Restructuring Exercise is in progress; could the Honourable Minister please state:

- a. *The total number of workers at the Banana Growers Association (BGA);*
- b. *How many of these workers will stay in the industry either as Fair Trade of the Banana Division in the Ministry of Agriculture;*
- c. *The number of workers to be severed and paid and the total cost involved; and*
- d. *The date of implementation of these changes.*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Mr. Speaker, in relation to the question before the Honourable House, the question...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: We are not hearing you quite well, I was asked by the stenographers that you speak into the mikes because they are not always getting everything you say and sometimes it poses difficulty for them when they have to transcribe what is being said. So you would make your adjustments across there for me please and kindly speak into the microphone.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Mr. Speaker, part one of the question, the total number of workers at the St. Vincent Banana Growers' Association (BGA); Mr. Speaker, the total number of employees present at the St. Vincent Banana Growers' Association at the stage of the dissolution is 49. That breakdown is as follows:

In the area of administration and finance there are 17 persons; 16 staff members, and a general manager. In the areas of operations and extension, there are 13 persons; 12 officers and one operation's manager. In the area of lease disease control there are 18 persons; there is a ground crew of 10 men, - 10 spray men; they are two drivers/supervisors, one truck driver; four conductors; and a lease spot coordinator. And equally there is also one pilot.

Part 2 questions how many of these workers will stay in the industry either as Fair Trade or within the Banana Division in the Ministry of Agriculture. Mr. Speaker, six (6) members of staff will be employed by WINFA Fair Trade; 31 employees from the operations extensions and lease spot control programme along with three persons from the administration and the pilot will be transferred to the Banana Division within the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries to form the Operational Division. Arrangements have been made Mr. Speaker, to place nine other persons within the Public Service and this is so because they themselves would have requested that preference and for the own professional development; this aspect is expected to be completed by April 30th 2009.

Part 3 questions the number of workers to be severed and paid and the total cost involved. Mr. Speaker, all workers will receive severance payment except the general manager; the general manager is on transfer to the St. Vincent Banana Growers' Association and equally nine of the twelve extension officers who are presently on staff are being paid by the government and assigned to the St. Vincent Banana Growers' Association; so the total estimated cost of severance is approximately \$2.2 million; the audit is currently being done to verify that amount.

And part 4 questions the date of implementation of these changes. WINFA Fair Trade, Mr. Speaker, will start its operations of the Parallel Grower Management System on the 2nd April, 2009. So those who are going to WINFA will go on or around the 2nd April, 2009. The Banana Division and all its operations will be fully transferred by the 15th of April, 2009 to the Ministry of Agriculture. And the projection for the full transition is targeted for the 30th April, 2009. I am much obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Question No. 2

2. **HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** *I rise to ask Question No. 2 standing in my name of the Honourable Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, National Security, Legal and Grenadines Affairs:*

Has the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance been informed by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago of its total exposure and therefore the extent of its guarantees with respect to CLICO and its related companies.

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

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, before I address the specificity of the specific question, the answer in relation to the specific question, I think it is important, that I put what is the current context. I want to read first of all a communiqué of a special meeting between the OECS, ECCU countries, Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbados to discuss the financial services regulations in the Eastern Caribbean, held in Barbados on March 4th 2009. This had been made public subsequent to our last meeting in the House when I gave also a further update. Because these events have developments on an ongoing basis I use the method of the press conference so to do. So I can inform citizens, residents, on this matter but in as much as the question has arisen here I take the opportunity to put the context as it has evolved.

The communiqué reads as follows:

The governments of Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, and the OECS countries met today to discuss the regional financial situation especially in respect of CL Financial and Stanford issues. The meeting was chaired by Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and including the Honourable Patrick Manning, Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago; the Honourable David Thompson, Prime Minister of Barbados; the Honourable Tillman Thomas, Prime Minister of Grenada; the Honourable Stephenson King, the Prime Minister of St. Lucia; the Honourable Roosevelt Skerrit, Prime Minister of the Commonwealth of Dominica; the Honourable Lowell Lewis, the Chief Minister of Montserrat; the Honourable Timothy Harris, the Minister of Finance of St. Kitts and Nevis; Mr. Witfield Harris Jr. the Financial Secretary of Antigua and Barbuda; Antigua was then in the throes of elections, so the Financial Secretary came. Mr. Karl Harrigan, Financial Consultant to the Government of Anguilla and Mr. Nicolas Devoux of the OECS Secretariat.

The meeting recognized that the current difficulties of CL Financial pose a systematic risk to the regional financial system and require a regional solution. Indeed, the recent developments demonstrate the vulnerability of all countries in the Caribbean to factors which they have no individual control and underscored the need for deeper and faster regional integration. Governments agreed to explore all options to ensure that CLICO and British American Insurance Companies remained going concerns and ensure they continued to service all their valued clients.

With this understanding governments agreed to establish a fund that will provide liquidity to reassure policyholders and boost public confidence in the financial system. In this regard, the CARICOM Petroleum Fund will be pursued as one source of financing. Further, a special task force of regulators comprising of all affected countries was established to continuously monitor this situation and make appropriate recommendations. The first task of this college of regulators will be to determine the full extent of the policyholder and depositor obligations and the adequacy of the statutory funds and statutory deposits. The first meeting of the special task force will be held in Trinidad next week. Governments also agreed to consider and review the prescribed assets in statutory funds with the view of augmenting the fund from other assets not currently allowed. The Government of Barbados briefed the meeting on the proposal to sell CLICO Life

International to a private entity which would adequately fund the statutory fund requirement and ensure that policyholders are protected. On this issue, Barbados and the OECS would continue to collaborate closely to ensure the protection of all CLICO policyholders and depositors in Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean. The meeting agreed that there were important lessons to be learnt from these challenges and the opportunity be taken to harmonize and strengthen the legal and regulatory framework for ensuring supervision in the Caribbean. This special task force of regulators will make appropriate recommendations in the shortest possible time.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, since then I have been in daily contact with all the relevant the persons. Indeed, yesterday I was in contact with Prime Ministers Manning and Thompson and the evening before with the Governor of the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago and everyday as the morning breaks the Governor of the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank and I speak with each other because it is necessary for him to do so in my own capacity as Chairman of the Joint Task Force between the OECS and Eastern Caribbean Central Bank which is addressing this and other issues connected to the fallout from the crisis in the international economy. And this is what broadly the current position is; and I will explain the specific issues shortly.

As the public in the Eastern Caribbean is aware CLICO and British American Insurance companies have experienced some difficulties which necessitated the intervention of the Government and the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, the Government of Barbados and the regulatory authorities in Bahamas, Belize and Guyana. This situation has led to several meetings at the highest levels in CARICOM and the OECS. Individual governments in the OECS have also been very closely involved with their Ministries of Finance and regulators. It was, in fact, the OECS countries which summoned the first regional meeting on this issue involving the Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, the countries which had a particular responsibility for these companies. I just read the communiqué from that meeting. The exposure of the OECS countries to CLICO and British American is very high and involves a wide range of individuals, firms and financial institutions who hold policies and annuities.

The scale of our exposure and the impact of these companies in CARICOM have made it clear that the only viable solution is a regional one. This has been acknowledged by all regional leaders in the clear understanding that failure to come up with a solution would be a serious setback to the integration arrangements. This therefore places great pressure on all the parties involved to come up with a workable and lasting solution. Apart from the meeting in Barbados, a meeting was also held in Trinidad and Tobago among the regional regulators to advance the process; (the college of regulators,) you would also hear out of the CARICOM meeting in Belize, it was accepted to widen that college of regulators from the OECS, Trinidad, Barbados to include other CARICOM countries. So we had taken the lead in that and that was confirmed by CARICOM.

The government and regulators have agreed on the following:

- 1. That the going concerns status of the companies should be maintained, so that the obligations of these companies to their clients can be met over time. Clearly, you are not going to be able to meet the obligations if you take individual decisions to put companies**

into liquidation, as some in the case of the Bahamas has been suggesting and you may have a judicial management which is an entirely different matter.

But, if you are going to address any issue in relation to liquidation, it becomes highly problematic, for several reasons actually. I mean just contemplate this, there are assets in the United States owned by CLICO, you have an injunction at the moment in Trinidad and Tobago which restrains those assets from being sold, lease or otherwise dealt with. But if you put any of those companies into liquidation, the creditors in the USA are going to come knocking and calling and they will take what they can and cherry pick from the better of the assets through that liquidation process and using their own legal system to help them. So, I raise that as a concern so that persons have to be careful when they are making public policies in this matter.

- 2. The second issue which has been agreed upon is that there is a need for liquidity to meet the immediate short term obligations of the companies to their clients. With respect to liquidity intense negotiations are now no ongoing, to access such resources from the Petroleum Fund and other sources which are being identified.**

Now, let me just pause here and say this: in the case of the CLICO Barbados and what we have here in St. Vincent, CLICO St. Vincent and the old Colonial Life which is not writing any new policy has not been writing for quite a while but that is being dealt with by CLICO Barbados. As you know, the Barbados Government had made \$10 million available to them and the Central Bank had given permission for it to be denominated in Eastern Caribbean dollars so that they will pay the Eastern Caribbean annuity holders or policyholders as they become mature because you must remember this an insurance company or a bank is not a warehouse, all the money is not stacked up in a vault and waiting for you to come, so you cannot really come before the maturing date; so you come at the date of maturity and I have been informed that \$12 million Barbadian which is in the CIB, CLICO Investment Bank is being repatriated from that bank to CLICO to further augment the liquidity situation in relation to the CLICO which operates in the Eastern Caribbean. In relation to Barbados they are addressing those monies if any becomes due from their statutory fund. With respect to liquidity as I said intensive negotiations are going on, and such resources from the Petroleum Fund and other sources are being identified.

Let me just pause also and talk about from the Trinidad end in this regard. Let me just finish reading this and then I will come back to the particular issue because I think it would have a greater coherence.

The OECS countries have organized two teams of negotiators at the ministerial and regulator levels to continue and escalate our efforts to come up with viable solutions, to go beyond the immediate problem and to ensure that we are not confronted with a kind of situation like this again. We have approached the World Bank, and the International Finance Cooperation for technical assistance to ensure that we can resolve this problem in the interest of our citizens who have been exposed to this issue. In this regard, we are appealing to all those who are exposed to continue to be patient, calm and resolute as we work through this very difficult and complex matter to restore normality to the insurance sector.

Now, the case of Trinidad and Tobago: the insurance law in Trinidad and Tobago I have been advised says this in a nutshell on the relevant issue raised and it is an old insurance law, relatively speaking, that only policyholders and annuitants ordinarily resident in Trinidad and Tobago will get the payments from the statutory fund. Clearly, there are monies outside of the statutory fund; so other policyholders like those from St. Vincent and the Grenadines in CLICO Trinidad will get their monies from the assets which are outside of the statutory fund and Trinidad and Tobago has held those assets. This is why Trinidad and Tobago has assessed that TT \$1.3 billion in the OECS countries for the CLICO Trinidad that they will take care of those from the assets which are available to them but which are outside of the statutory fund. [Interjection] No, no, they have cash assets and other sorts of assets to be realized but what will happen, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago, clearly it is not in their interest to dispose of them.

No, what I am saying is this but because the Central Bank has the resources they will simply hold those assets to realize them when the circumstances are more propitious and in the meantime to pay them. Yes, they will advance it, they will make the advances.

Now, I come to British American, the policies are prepared here, and the advice which we have received they are issued in Trinidad and Tobago, but it does not matter whether they are issued in Trinidad and Tobago or issued in the Bahamas, in a formal technical legal sense, because the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has acknowledged in the same way that it has acknowledged the liability for the CLICO policies which are outside of Trinidad and Tobago, they realized they have to make the payments in relation to the British American policies.

Now, British American here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines has insurance liabilities in St. Vincent and the Grenadines of \$190 million Eastern Caribbean but at the end of 2007 they have pledged in the statutory fund \$140 million. Remember this, given the state of the insurance law you only know the extent of the exposure of the liabilities fully four months after the end of a particular financial year when the audited statements are presented; so there is a time gap, so if you have additional liabilities you do not yet have the necessarily the sufficiency of the pledged assets but there are assets which British American owns in St. Vincent which are outside of the assets which are pledged in the statutory fund; so there are other assets which you can hold to.

Now, in the case of British American as I have said, the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has given the assurance that they would also treat with the policies as they become mature and due in the same way that they will treat those for CLICO Trinidad, that is to say, to provide the funds so that no one will be left short.

What is the position in relation to CMMB now? CMMB, the CLICO, the Caribbean Money Market Brokers, they have been taken over completely as a going concern by First Citizen Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, which is state owned bank, so the assets there are safe. The assets are safe, and the liabilities are being met. So, the \$12.81 million in CMMB deposits from St. Vincent and the Grenadines what is held by the institutions here, National Commercial Bank, National Insurance Services, Building and Loan and two credit unions, General Cooperative Credit Union and Teachers' Cooperative Credit Union, they are safe with the First Citizens Bank which is a state owned bank, because that is taken over as a going concern. That is why we want these enterprises to remain as going concerns, and for the liquidity to be taken care of, by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago. The suggestion is being made also that if, they are more demands in relation to the liquidity,

monies which are inside of the petroleum fund, that that can be made available on a short term basis. I really would prefer us not to have to take the money from the petroleum fund because that is good monies for us to use for further developmental purposes and to actually get the liquidity provision on the basis of the commitment from the Government of Trinidad and Tobago.

What is the actual situation here now in respect of the liabilities? The last time my staff double counted one matter and therefore increased the extent of the liabilities which I spoke about by \$47 million the error came where one staff member had put the CLICO liabilities, CLICO here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines that is to say with the CLICO Barbados, St. Vincent and the Grenadines at \$160 million. But it was actually \$113 million because they had double counted \$47 million which is with Colonial Life, so the Colonial Life \$47 million is inside of the \$113 million, and not additional to the \$113 million, so the actual total exposure rather than being \$401.61 million is \$354.61 million.

So I said let me make that correction, at the earliest opportunity that I have to do it. So where are we now; \$354.61 million but throughout the OECS, you have \$1.7 billion or there about, of which British American is roughly \$980 million and the annuities for British American is about \$680 million. Those are the last figures which I have been given.

Now, I want to read the answer which I was given to a specific question. And it is important for the Minister of Finance be kept up with all of these things and for the openness and transparency to give you. This is what the answer to the question, Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has not informed me of the extent of the exposure to CLICO and its related companies; however, through a Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of Trinidad and Tobago and Central Bank a decision was taken to guarantee the assets of the resident depositors and policyholders of CLICO, CIB, that is CLICO Investment Bank, CMMB and British American Insurance from the proceeds of the sale of the assets belonging to CL Financial Group, which would be applied to satisfy the Statutory Fund requirement of CLICO and British American because you see, the way they interpreted your question simply, is where you asked, has the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance been informed by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago of its exposure, that is to say the Government of Trinidad and Tobago exposure and therefore the extent of its guarantees with the respect to CLICO and its related companies. Now, they gave this answer, but I suspect this would not have been helpful to you, because what you are interested in, is what is happening in St. and Vincent and the Grenadines; but you see, they read it in the way in which you would have answered an examination question, because if you read it, I must inform you, that if the PM and Minister of Finance has been informed by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago of its exposure, that mean the Government of Trinidad and Tobago exposure; and therefore the extent of its guarantees with respect of CLICO and its related companies, and they were taken therefore in relation to Trinidad and Tobago, but I know that was not what you were asking, so this is why I took the answer and why I gave the policy positions behind and what we are doing.

Now, either today or next week Thursday, I happened to know that there is a document which is going before the Trinidad and Tobago Cabinet, quantifying a number of things which we have been talking about through

these meetings, and with the regulators and the many telephone calls which I have been making; and we are going to see, I have been advised, some liquidity made available through the sources which I have pointed out but clearly the Government of Trinidad and Tobago has to make the decision at the Cabinet. Why I urge calm and patience with everyone, to the best of my knowledge in St. Vincent there has been no policy or annuity which has become due which has not been dealt with, it may be delayed in being dealt with by two weeks or thereabouts, for instance, the National Insurance Services we have received payments, there was one which has been matured on the 5th March, of \$1.847 million, I called yesterday simply to inquire why it has not been paid as yet and they said to me that the money is coming next week, I got it from the highest level. So it may take a week longer, ten days longer but the monies is coming; of course, I am interested in that money because before since in December, all those policies for the NIS and the annuities which were maturing, I intended to put towards the \$25 million which I announced in the budget for financing of the programme to assist the private sector. Remember that programme I had announced in the budget. So I announced it so you have the sources of funding which are coming on stream in that manner, and I should announce in that regard that I had a meeting with the NIS and with the National Commercial Bank, all those involved last week and that is in train and that is coming along well.

This issue about a regional solution is absolutely critical. There are some people who may be panicking unnecessarily, when I say some people, some policy makers, and we have to be careful. You take for instance, I raised the issue of liquidation, you cannot panic in that way. You also cannot panic by saying that no new policies should be written, because the Government of Barbados has announced that CLICO is in negotiations with a private sector entity to purchase the CLICO Insurance business; it is not the first time an insurance business would be purchased by another entity, that happens all the time in the world of finance and commerce, but if you stop writing policies, it diminishes the value of what is to be purchased and therefore you bring about a result which you are most anxious to avoid and this is why you noticed that by the time CLICO issue has appeared, the people of this country and this Parliament will see, I came with a clear statement, I wrote it out so that everybody can study it. I brought updates because we are dealing with people's money, their annuities and their pension plans; the workers at VINLEC; the workers at the National Commercial Bank; other Private Sector entities who have their pension funds. This also, is an important consideration and there has not been any informed discussion on this and I raised it.

There are banks which are holding mortgages which have been insured by specific insurances with CLICO group of companies; CLICO or British American. Some of them have been insured by the Life Insurance Policy of the person who is taking the mortgage: the mortgager.

Now, if those policies were to become problematic; those insurance policies, it means that the banks would be exposed to the extent, that they have a mortgage albeit secured with real property: but the additional security in relation to the insurance will not be there. Well, if the security is not good; but we know that the banks in St Vincent and the Grenadines have not been like the banks in the United States; but the point is this, as you would expect as a policy maker we would have already been fashioning policies to deal with those kinds of issues to make sure that there is not any knock on effect to the bank.

And I want to assure this Honourable House and the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and you will see from the manner in which I have dealt with this thing that I have been studying this issue very carefully; receiving a lot of advice and I have been daily seeking to stay on top of it. It is a major policy issue and as you would, I am sure that Honourable Members would see that from the way in which I can speak of all these combined issues and their complexities that a great deal of thought has been gone into it by the Ministry of Finance here; including the Minister of Finance himself and I take the responsibility very seriously here and in my position as the Head of the Task Force for the ECCB, OECS countries. I am obliged. I think I have answered all the issues which are conceivable to be raised.

You may require clarification Honourable Leader of the Opposition and if you do, I want to say this immediately, if any Honourable Member hears anything on this matter and wishes any clarification, I would provide that clarification where I can and I am not talking wait until the House meets and I can get Miss Minture Rose who is the Regulator or I can get the Director General in Finance and Planning because we worked on this issue intimately on a daily basis. So, that we do not do like some other countries seek to function on the basis of rumours, fear and gossip, this thing is too important to be treated in that sort of a way. I am obliged.

Supplementary Question

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary questions.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, already the Prime Minister has agreed that the question as I phrased it has not been answered. He has given a significant amount of other information. The fundamental issue for a lot of people in St Vincent and the Grenadines is whether they can get back their money when they want it that is the fundamental issue; in terms of confidence in relation to this issue. Now, as I understand it some people have decided that they will take their losses in accordance with their contract and want their money now. In that instance, if they do not get their money, it raises the question of confidence. And I listened to you in your presentation and you did indicate they will be paid as investments matured. Now, that seems to me to be inconsistent with the desire of those who may want their money now and therefore opens the whole confidence question again.

So is it true that in any event, you have to wait until investment mature or will people pay you a portion now and a portion later? I think it is important that we have that clarified.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I have been advised that what is happening there are priorities in which persons have been paid. I began with the proposition and the Honourable Leader will appreciate this: an Insurance Company or Bank, they are not warehouses for money. When you pay your premiums, when you buy your annuities they do not remain in the Bank, because CLICO cannot give you 8 and 9% by just keeping it in a vault. They have to go and invest it to provide returns in excess of the 8 or 9%, which you are getting; in order for you to get your money.

Now, in normal times everybody simply waits until their policies mature. The odd person who may require their money before and will get it fairly easily because there is not a rush; but if everybody were to rush they obviously have to have a priority; because they will have to sell assets to provide the liquidity because all the money is not there in liquid. It is the same thing with the Bank. In the Bank of Antigua, there was a run on the Bank of Antigua for a few days, until we had it stabilized; with the Governor of the Central Bank taking certain steps but also we ourselves coming in: five other Banks and to help to stem the run on the Bank. But if you were to turn up everybody were to turn up and wanting in the Bank of Antigua their \$400 million worth of deposit they would not be able to get it right a way . There is no bank in the world where that is possible. So that what I ask for in this case is for us to keep these enterprises as a growing concern and when people have their policies and they become due; they get their money and then there are others as time goes by; those people say no, well, things are safe, there are still operations of growing concern and they want their money out earlier they will get it but it is not a reasonable thing to say that if everybody lines up to get his or her money that they are going to have the money to deliver because there would to be assets but assets will have to be liquidated in order to provide the cash.

What I assure people is that we are making the arrangements. We have the commitment from Trinidad and Tobago and from Barbados that the monies are there; I mean the Government of Barbados, the Prime Minister of Barbados for instance has given me certain assurances, so too has the Prime Minister in Trinidad and Tobago and the Governor of the Central Bank in Trinidad and Tobago. And the nature of those assurances, I am satisfied that the monies are being made available and will continue to be made available. All I am asking is that people look, just be calm and be patient about it and do not go in a rush because if you go in a rush you may well bring about a result which you yourself may wish to avoid

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: I have no argument with what you are saying. I am talking about persons who go there to the company, and say: I want my money now. I am not talking about people rushing; I am talking about individuals who go in now and say I want my money and then find that they cannot get it. They cannot get it now; they may have to get it six months down the bend. I think people should know that that is what can happen; otherwise it is going to undermine the confidence, because the assumption is that because Trinidad and Tobago has agreed to provide the necessary guarantees that money is available now.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Yes, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition has made the point, which I myself, I have made earlier that those whose monies become due where the maturity comes, everybody is getting their money. There will be cases in which persons, their annuities are not yet mature and they will want their money. They will have to, if they are not yet mature, they will naturally have to wait until all the monies become available from the liquidation of assets or the provision of the money from some other source. Because, let us take British American, let us take British American: \$680 million there about in annuities, Eastern Caribbean dollars; if persons turn up in their respective islands in the OECS for \$680 million tomorrow morning, the \$680 million will not be available.

So, the point is this, you will reasonably expect that out of that the \$680 million, there may be \$50 million, which people are going for and that would become easily available. Maybe, if you go for \$75 million given the extent of what would be provided but if you go for all of it, clearly it would not be available then, one would

have to wait. The important thing is for the insurance company to say look, when you come we will give you this money in six months time or we will pay you some now and give you the balance then because we have the following assets to be liquidated.

I must say that I have seen in St Vincent and the Grenadines, persons have been very responsible in dealing with this matter; largely because I think management of the various companies here have been very fort right with people, the Government has been very straight forward and the Leader of the Opposition and the Opposition generally. Because it is a matter upon which, wait it is easy for somebody to be irresponsible but the irresponsibility will bring you the thrill of a two day sense of triumph.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: But if we have to request through the Caribbean; what, the idea is that the United States too big to pay.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Yes, in a fundamental sense, in a fundamental sense.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: We debating this issue now? [Interjection]

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I must say this and I think to be fair to, Mr. Speaker, he has recognised the importance on this issue and to allow not necessarily a debate ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Three quarter of an hour.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: But for clarifications. But it is perhaps the most important thing on the Order Paper today. [Interjections]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Right. [Interjection] Okay. Thank you very much. Let me just make a comment. Sometimes I fear in the various comments that we might also be creating fear sometimes in minds by certain issues that we discuss on this thing in the ear of the public than really creating assurance by certain things that we may have advanced into. Question No. 3, Honourable ... am I right?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Yes.

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

3. **HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** *I rise to ask Question No. 3 standing in my name of the Honourable Minister of Housing, Informal Human Settlements, Physical Planning, Land and Surveys:-*

Of the lands identified for sale to support the construction of the Argyle International Airport, how much has been so far sold and the money accrued from these sales?

DR. THE HONOURABLE PRIME MINISTER: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I will read the answer as provided by National Properties:-

“The lands identified by the Government for sale to support the construction of Argyle International Airport are by agreement between the IADC (International Airport Development Company) and National Properties managed by National Properties. To date, National Properties have sold gross acreage on mainland St Vincent; of 19.05 acres which fetched \$7,129,396.00. And on Bequia, National Properties has so far sold net acreage of 29.37 acres, fetching \$19,316,918.90.

The need to draw attention to gross and net acreage arises from the fact that while the land sold on the mainland was sold as a parcel inclusive of roads; provision for roads, possible unusable land and a like, the land in Bequia was sold as separate lots in a developed sub-division net of directly unusable land. Taking cognizance of this qualification, it can be said therefore, that to date, National Properties has sold a total of 48.42 acres for a total of \$26 446,314.90.

Now, National Properties could indeed have sold much more land. It has not done so because it has no intention of selling off public lands in a ‘helter skelter’, ‘willy-nilly’ manner, despite the fact that we need the money for the Airport. So, National Properties have sought to put on the market, well ordered and well planned residential sub-divisions on lands more suited for residential purposes and reserved larger tracts unsuitable for substantial tourism or related development projects for negotiation with major developers.

While this approach is strong on the public interest it has not been so strong as it might be on selling off lands and raising funds quickly. To circumvent or to mitigate this problem or dilemma, National Properties has therefore, been using some of the lands as collateral to raise long term loans on which the IADC can draw on for funding the Airport; but which will be repaid later from a more structured sale of the same lands for socially worthwhile development projects.

The recent loan of \$42 million negotiated with the NIS and secured by 248 acres of prime development land is an example of this approach”.

So, we are selling but we are also borrowing money on the basis of the land and therefore, selling the land to just pay the bank as we go. And I think Senator Leacock is smiling and he loves the creativity.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I just want to make a point here, there is a Talk Show Host on a night, who has said that my wife and I have purchased state lands and we have done so wrongfully because we have bought lands which was not put up for anyone else to buy that they were bought in a sense under secret. I want to say that neither my wife nor I, nor any of my children has purchased any land from National Property and there is no land for National Property, which can be purchased other than land which is advertised there on the Net anybody can buy. I ought not to be precluded from purchasing lands if I do have the money to buy. The point is this, I have not done so, and the gentleman in question says that he has documents to prove that that is so. Well, I have

instructed my lawyers this morning to sue that person for defamation of character; do not judge me by your own standards. I am obliged. [Applause]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Before we take this next question, I understand that we have in the Stranger's Gallery a gentleman and perhaps his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Norris Bullock, who I understand was a former Mayor of Luton here in the Stranger's Gallery and we want to recognise them and I have not identified the person, if he can stand, oh, okay, thank you; we welcome you to Parliament.

FORMER MAYOR OF LUTON MR. NORRIS BULLOCK: Norris Bullock.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes. Okay. Thank you very much.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for the Green Party is always recognised in Parliament.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 4 Dr. the Honourable Goodwin Friday to ask the Honourable Minister of Tourism.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: *Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask Question No. 4 standing in my name, of the Honourable Minister of Tourism.*

4. *What is the status of the proposed Baliceaux Resort Development and, in particular, when is construction likely to begin?*

HONOURABLE GLEN BEACHE: Mr. Speaker, I think this question should not be to the Minister of Tourism but the Honourable Prime Minister, which NIPI falls directly under; National Investments Promotions.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister, you ...

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, the simple answer is this that the entity which has paid a deposit to the owners of Baliceaux, I have been advised that given the economic down turn they are having some difficulty raising all the necessary funds to begin the project and there is an attempt to have someone; another entity to be involved in this particular enterprise. I should point out that we have been very careful in our own interaction with the developer, the prospective developer on certain matters relating to the development of Baliceaux and Battowia. Battowia has a splendid Bird Sanctuary; a lot of people may not know this and whatever development is taking place has to take place in respect of the preservation of that Bird Sanctuary: in so far as it is humanly possible for it to be done while the development is on going.

Then of course, on Baliceaux itself a particular cognizant has to be taken of the Garifuna who died there and I must say the developers are very conscious of both of those things and especially so in the case of the Garifuna. I think the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines can perhaps also speak to Sir James and his family

so that he can be educated about some of the real practical difficulties in mobilising the investment for the development on these islands and of course in Sir James's case, Isle de Quatre. I am sure in addition to what I say he will be able to learn a lot from Sir James in this regard, if indeed he is on speaking terms with Sir James currently. [Laughter]

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

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: *I rise to ask Question No. 5 standing in my name of the Honourable Minister of Tourism:-*

5. *Given the great importance of the Walkway along Admiralty Bay (from the vicinity of Port Hole Restaurant to Mimosa House) as an access to the restaurants and other tourism related businesses around Admiralty Bay and given the general usefulness of the walkway to; tourists and local people alike:-*

Will the Honourable Minister please indicate what efforts if any will be taken by his government to repair and improve the Walkway, which was badly damaged last year by heavy surges caused by Hurricane Omar?

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask Question No. 5; standing in my name of the Honourable Minister of Tourism.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister for Tourism, question to be answered by the Prime Minister as well?

HONOURABLE GLEN BEACHE: Yes.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I am the Minister for Grenadine's Affairs, Mr. Speaker:-

"The effects of Hurricane Omar were similar to that of what has been called left handed Lenny in 1999 as it delivered a severe blow to our coastal infrastructure. This unusual phenomenon in conjunction with the growing intensity of the annual northerly swells which occur normally between October and February is having a terrible effect on our coast line. This perhaps is an omen which signals to our planning authorities to take another look at construction in coastal areas and the distances from which properties are constructed from the high water mark.

The work of Mr. Belmar that is to say; Mr. Herman Belmar and the Sand Watch Group of the Bequia Community High School: Wise Practices for Coping with Beach Erosion in St Vincent and the Grenadines".

This booklet which I will give a copy to the Honourable Member, for the Northern Grenadines, so that he can be acquainted with the work of Mr. Belmar through the UNESCO Schools Project.

“On Bequia, Hurricane Omar dumped debris on the coast from Rocky Bay to lower Bay and from Adam’s Bay to Little Bay and created extensive damage to most of the Jetties along the coast; along with other structures. The Port Authority and other private Jetty operators have done repairs to most of the Jetties and have also cleared the walkway in question from the Port Hole to Frangipani of the mountain of sand that blocked the entrance to these places. Some business operators along the waterfront must be commended for the several efforts made to do their own repairs. Most notable: Pam and Tom Stuart of the Portofino Bar and Restaurant. Unfortunately, the high swells, as recently as the weekend of March 14th have destroyed most of the repairs they have done. Rising sea levels and the global impact of climate change are here with us”.

When the waterfront was designed, Sir James to his credit saw this coming with the diminishing beach front, in front of the Frangipani. I know it is not popular these days among the NDP to give Sir James credit for anything; but I want to credit him that he had the foresight [interjection] I am talking about the NDP. I am talking about the NDP. I can only quote Frank Da Silva because he is the authoritative source from inside.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: You quoting Frank now?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Well, I am quoting him on this subject matter, not on all matters. I understand, Mr. Speaker, I have touched a corn. I have touched a sore point; because I understand a meeting was held at his home an NDP meeting of which Marcus De Freitas was taking minutes for your General Secretary, Allen Cruickshank, it was fundamentally an anti-Eustace meeting. You know an anti-Eustace meeting. The *fellas* are gunning for you; that is why you are afraid to hold the Convention. You are in Barrouallie you in ... [laughter]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, could you please [interjection]

HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: I just want the Honourable Prime Minister to answer my questions [laughter]. There are school children who are sitting there waiting for the Member from South Leeward to take them to lunch. I, myself, Mr. Speaker, you know, I am getting a little tired of hearing the Prime Minister talk all morning too. So, we want to get out of here; so just answer the question for me please, [laughter].

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Well, if you do not want to hear me talk; ask me less questions.

HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: I asked a question ...

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: No! Because you misdirected the question, you wanted me to say ... Mr. Speaker; he wanted me to say as was done in the NDP days in Government. The question is

misdirected and then you do not get an answer but I mean I am the Minister for Grenadines Affairs; this is why it concerns me.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes Honourable ...

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I can appreciate, Mr. Speaker that they were engaging me in cross talk trying to take me away from my script but I am a veteran, they are afraid of the banter [interjection]. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition is saying that he can take the banter but he wants my job; but in eight years since he is Leader he has never held his Convention on time and this year he is delaying it most of all. You should have held the one last year up to September but you have not held it.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: We had one last year.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Could we have the question?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: No! That was for the previous year [laughter]. Mr. Speaker ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You will take up that issue otherwise.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, if I may go back, Mr. Speaker that when the Waterfront was designed Sir James saw this coming. He had the foresight to see the diminishing beach front in front of Frangipani. So what did he do: he first of all constructed a seawall, to protect the family establishment. Then he constructed with government's funds a reinforced concrete walkway, between Tommy Cantinas and the Frangipani: ending abruptly at Frangipani's Jetty. The rest of the walkway was largely a quick fix.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: That is not [inaudible]

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: That is not decent of him?

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Of you. You are accusing him of misusing the public funds.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: No! Not at all, I am giving him credit for taking care of Frangipani [laughter]. I am giving him ... [laughter].

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is really disrespecting the former Prime Minister by insinuating that public funds were used for his Frangipani's business and he should take it back. I am serious about it.

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

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: On the contrary, I am saying that first of all; he constructed a seawall to protect the family establishment then he constructed with Government funds a reinforced concrete walkway between Tommy Cantinas and the Frangipani's ending abruptly at the Frangipani Jetty; because what he did he used his own funds to take care of Frangipani and then did something otherwise. On the contrary, I am giving him great credit.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I really do not see what the issue is. Is it ... are those things facts? It ends ...

HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: The Prime Minister knows; he goes down there all the time.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay. Honourable Prime Minister would you ...

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I am sticking to the facts, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Please stick to the facts.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I am doing that Mr. Speaker. I know they would wish to have amnesia on Sir James.

"Gabion's baskets were stacked along the shore; and I am talking about the quick fix a little bit further up. And in some instances a bit of concrete smeared over the top of the gabions with short intervals of real concrete where there was major destruction; like in front of the green boley and the old fig tree. It does not take a rocket scientist to tell us that the force of Omar and the high swells we are now experiencing will scatter the stones from the gabion baskets and destroy the non-reinforced concrete. We are aware that other parties who own coastal properties like our friends at Mac's Pizzeria would like to do something to stop the onslaught of the sea. It is absolutely important that the right analysis be done. It is necessary to conduct a proper study to determine what the best solution is.

Yes! Repairs to the walkways are necessary but the repairs must be undertaken following a proper assessment; scientific engineering assessment. One must determine the type of sea defense that would be most suitable, what distance from the shore it must be located, what angles it must follow and what environmental and aesthetically pleasing materials should be most appropriate.

Wave intervals, wave direction and long shore currents in the area must be clearly defined before any construction is undertaken. I repeat a scientific assessment is essential. One cannot afford to make the same error of other Caribbean countries; who allow developers to construct groins and seawalls in some areas, only to realise the cause of shift in the long shore currents

and the natural moving particles. This has resulted in enormous destruction on other areas, while protection is afforded to the immediate area”.

So, Mr. Speaker, we are aware of the problem and I have instructed the Ministry of Transport and Works in the office of the Chief Engineer to investigate and submit a report for us to have a proper plan. Mr. Speaker, I would say this is the same thing that I have done in respect of the erosion which has taken place at Georgetown where we intend to build the Rural Development facility and I would say it is a very expensive business. We have had one design which is an over design; we have a second design because these things are not matters which you can just do simply like that. And I really want to commend, in that regard Sir James’s own foresight, even in a situation where matters were not as bad as they are now, in respect of the protection what he himself had devised quite rightly for his own property but what the engineers had let him down in the other areas. I am obliged.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: You are good, you know. [Laughter]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Supplementary?

HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Yes. So, in other words Honourable Prime Minister, something substantial will be done and will be done soon?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Soonest.

HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Soon.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Soonest [laughter].

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 6.

HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: I will settle for ‘soon’, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You will settle for soon. Alright, He will settle for soon.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: *Question No. 6*

HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Mr. Speaker, this question is about the Northern Grenadines too. I do not know if the Honourable Prime Minister will answer it. This is a question to; I directed it to the Honourable ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Minister of Transport.

HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Minister of Transport and Works.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Yes. That is a Transport and Works question [interjections]. [Laughter]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No! No! It is different. It is about Bequia? [Interjection]

HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Yes.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No! No! It is totally different.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: It is about the Grenadines, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Because one is about the land and one is about the sea. [Interjection]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Could you ask the question for me please [interjection].

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: You people cannot be serious.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: We are serious.

HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask Question No. 6 ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Wait let me just ask a question. What are you interested in who answers the question or whether the question is answered.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Both, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Alright. Well; then ask the question.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: *Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask Question No. 6 standing in my name, of the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works.*

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

Does the government intend to pave the road at the Reservoir at Cemetery Hill, near to Tantie Pearl's Restaurant, which was cut and graded many years ago by the NDP government; but has since been unattended and has been deteriorating?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister for Transport and Works, Question No. 6.

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as far as I know, the road nearest to Tantie Merle; Tantie Pearl's Restaurant [laughter], I am sorry, is actually a concrete road.

What is used as a road, which runs immediately in front of the Cemetery Hill's Reservoir and exists in front of Tantie Pearl's, to the best of my knowledge was never meant to be an access road for public vehicles; but simply an access to the Reservoir. It actually was a dead end road to the Reservoir's Control Valves until an unauthorized developer bulldozed an access; linking it to the village on the other side.

It was never made into a village road for safety reasons, Mr. Speaker, traffic running in within inches of the main Control Valves and Discharged Pipes for the Reservoir was considered hazardous and this pathway also provided unimpeded access to the storage tank and catchment area by the public, which is undesirable. Mr. Speakers, perhaps it may be the cause why there was no flowing water from the Reservoir for a time; as a section of the 4" PVC discharge pipe under the very road that the Honourable Member is describing was broken and Mr. Herman Belmar has just sought the help of CWSC to do the repairs and I must dare say, Mr. Speaker, that these repairs were done just Tuesday of this week.

If this is to be a road by virtue of the ease of access for the people who live in the vicinity; then we will now have to have the Engineers of the Ministry of Transport and Works look at it and prepare the designs taking into consideration the sensitive nature of the existence of the Reservoir. And this would have to be done and discussed in conjunction with the Central Water and Sewerage Authority. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

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

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

7. *The Union Island Airport is essential to the development and the enhancement of tourism in the Southern Grenadines; yet it has been neglected and left to deteriorate (broken windows, dysfunctional toilets, potholes in runway et cetera) over the years. Would the Honourable Minister please state:-*
 - a. *what, if any is the recommendation made by the Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority concerning the problems at the abovementioned airport; and*
 - b. *how soon will these problems be rectified; as they impact negatively on the lives on the people in the Southern Grenadine.*

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, may I deal with the questions with the issues which are not so substantive first. The question of broken windows and dysfunctional toilets, I think those matters and the Honourable Member of the Southern Grenadines would know that there have been teams from the Ministry of Works which have dealt with those and also his friend Moses. There had been a problem with the type of louvers which they had put in and they are sorting that out. And the issue of the toilet is a matter of the past; because they have sorted that problem out.

If I may just say parenthetically, Mr. Speaker, I do not [interjection]. Okay. Well, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say this, the issue of whether a toilet is working at an Airport or not, really ought not to be a subject of a

question. I mean, I could simply be called and told by the member for the Southern Grenadines that a toilet ... When I arrived at the Office of the Prime Minister on the 30th March, on the Friday, the toilet was not working; what must I do: come and ask a question here as to why it was not working at the time? I just had them fixed the toilet and that is not a matter which is the fault of my predecessor, just a plumbing issue [interjection]. No! No! [Interjection] No! I am just [interjection] Yes! That is why I said [interjection] let me get the issues, which are not substantial out of the way.

Now, the Runway has had problems with its construction; I am talking the actual material which had been used, the way it had been repaired; because that is a runway which has been repaired several times since it had been constructed; as you are aware and repaired under the watch of this Government. The Civil Aviation Authorities quite correctly inspected all our Airports and said look “try and sort out this problem in the next thirty days that is by the end of May”. Even before they had said that as you know, we had put the money in the Estimates last year and that is before the Civil Aviation Authority had addressed any issue because we knew that we had to fix it.

We got one quotation. The Ministry of Works felt that the quotation was too high, so they proceeded to ask three other entities to give them quotations and to do so by the 24th March. Well, two of the entities did not respond and the one which did was \$2 million more than the one which was thought by the expert was too low; sorry that was too high. The cost basically for the Runway is about \$3.5 million and we are doing the coastal area. You did not ask about the coast but we noticed there are some sea erosions and once we are going on the ground, we are going to be doing it. You are talking about a \$4 million job and that is more money than what is in the Estimates. And we will fix it even though there is more money under that particular heading. We will have monies from other sources because as you rightly say it is a very important gateway.

In pretty much way the same way that we have upgraded Canouan and built a Jet Airport, which is a fantastic facility the best in St Vincent and the Grenadines and we are building the International Airport. So we are known to deal with air transport and we deal with LIAT. We really are not a Government to be lectured on these subjects; we have quite a record in that regard. So that the public servants ... down to this morning I was speaking to my Permanent Secretary, Mr. Pompey to get in addition to what was given to me what was the final update the latest information. I have been told that the entity which is going to do the contract will require two weeks to mobilise. I discussed with him the issue about what is happening at *Easterval* because we want to make sure that everything is in order; so we are not going to have it closed for the *Easterval* period.

As you are aware, the Twin Otters can come in and there are now four Twin Otters operating by SVG Air Purchase; three of them purchased by Mustique Company, one I have been advised is leased and the difficulty with particular species of Boeing Aircraft: but I want to advise earlier o’ clock that once the work has started, we probably have to close the Airport for about three days in order to be able to do the resurfacing quickly once and for all. So, it is going to be planned in a manner to have as little disruption as possible but I want to assure you we have it in hand. I have personally been in touch with the Chief Engineer, I am in touch with my Permanent Secretary on it, and I am in touch with the Director General of Finance and Planning; so I am covering the administrative, the technical and the financial issues. And they will be listening to me answering questions; so they will know the assurance that I have given to you. I am obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 8, Honourable Member of the Southern Grenadines.

HONOURABLE TERRANCE OLLIVIERRE: *Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask Question No. 8, of the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works.*

8. *Part of the wall fencing at the Canouan Government School has been undermined by weathering. It is leaning dangerously and it poses an immediate major problem to the students and general users of the playing field. Correspondence outlining this problem has been sent to the Ministry of Transport and Works and the Ministry of Education for some time now:-*

Will the Honourable Minister please give the assurance that this situation now being brought to his attention in the House of Assembly will be rectified as soon as possible.

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Mr. Speaker, the representative of the Ministry of Transport and Works on the island of Canouan has been requested to investigate and prepare the necessary Estimates to correct this problem at the soonest.

HONOURABLE MR SPEAKER: Is that it? No Supplementary?

HONOURABLE TERRANCE OLLIVIERRE: Mr. Speaker, I do understand the term soonest and I would rather have a time line, a timeframe or something along that way: but soonest I really do not understand.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: So, we could ban soonest as a Parliamentary language [laughter]

HONOURABLE TERRANCE OLLIVIERRE: I think so; I think here we should be dealing with timeline or timeframe: at least give some assurance when. Mr. Speaker, soonest for me and soonest for you might have a number of years and months in between there.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Alright. Okay Honourable Member. You have a supplementary? You do not have a supplementary? So, you are on Question 9? Alright; okay.

9. **HONOURABLE TERRANCE OLLIVIERRE:** *Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask Question No. 9 of the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works:-*

The Ashton Hard Court is the main venue for major sporting and cultural activities in Union Island. However, this facility is not appropriate to host local and regional events due to the fact that it is generally in a poor condition including lack of usable toilet facility.

Can the Honourable Minister please give the guarantee that the problem will be fixed for future sporting and cultural activities; particularly Easterval 2009.

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

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Mr. Speaker, I cannot give him a guarantee because sporting facilities except for the Victoria Park, comes under the National Sports Council and the Ministry under which the National Sports Council comes will have to deal with that matter. So, I am hoping that the Honourable Minister of National Mobilisation would be able to take this question into his hands and provide an answer.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Alright. You want to say something on that?

HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE: Okay. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker and thank you very much, Minister of Transport and Works. Mr. Speaker, I must preface this by expressing the concern that there seemed to be a number of misdirected questions from the other side. The Honourable Member for the Southern Grenadines asked me a question on the playing field at Clifton sometime ago and it is a little bit of a concern that he has not directed the question properly but it is a policy on this side Mr. Speaker that notwithstanding the misdirection of questions that we will make an effort to respond and respond fulsomely and substantively.

By way of introduction again, Mr. Speaker, I cannot help but note the obsession of the member of the Southern Grenadines with toilets and it is a messy subject and I think as the Leader of the House said a few minutes ago, matters such as these really ought not to detain Parliament and a simple phone call either to the Directorate of the Grenadines Affairs; or the National Sports Council will preempt a question like this coming to Parliament.

HONOURABLE TERRANCE OLLIVIERRE: That is not true [inaudible] it is not working.

HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE: No! No! You cannot direct them to me. Mr. Speaker, the National Sports Council in conjunction with my Ministry, the Ministry of Sports which has the responsibility for these matters has been planning and working assiduously since 2001; to upgrade sporting facilities throughout the entire country and in especially, in the Southern Grenadines. The two Hard Courts in Union Island, which are located in Ashton and Clifton, have had their fair share of attention with respect to the upgrading of those facilities. More so, the Ashton Hard Court, which has been repaired and improved three times since this administration took office in 2001 and Clifton Hard Court has also received attention. On each of the three occasions the National Sports Council has responded to request spearheaded by the then Edwin Snagg the Director of the Grenadines Affairs, working along side the management committee for sporting facilities on Union Island.

As recently as one year ago, March 2008, the Ashton Hard Court was repaired for the hosting of the 2008 *Easterval* Festivities. Repairs focused on the changing areas, seating of the spectators pavilion and the main entrance gate costing some \$13,000. A similar repair exercise, Mr. Speaker and Members had been carried out in 2005 in the sum of \$32,000, following extensive damage to the facility by Hurricane Ivan, which destroyed two of the huge lighting towers and severely damaged the spectator's pavilion, washrooms and changing rooms. Indeed, virtually a new pavilion had been recreated and the Bar area had been spruced up.

The facility was further enhanced by painting so that patrons could enjoy a reasonable high standard during the *Easterval* Festivities of that year. Mr. Speaker, let me say that this administration has increased the contributions to *Easterval* by some 300%, since the NDP time; the *Easterval* Festivities. So, we are not only

talking about the facility it- self we are talking about the festivity: the *Easterval* Festivity. So, we are putting funds, substantial funds and increased funds not only into the facility itself but into the cultural activity. And in 2002, the third time, Mr. Speaker, the Council implemented repairs to that Hard Court for hosting the *Easterval* to the tune of \$14,000.

Mr. Speaker, we have a problem with that facility. The NDP in its seventeen years ought to have done some rectification and correction of that problem. The Ashton Hard Court is basically in a swamp; in the low lying southern end of the island, where not only it has to deal with the swamp nature of the area; but is subject to the effects of the gale force winds, sea surges as a result of the location. So, the very location is a problem but this administration has been attempting to address it within the context of these deficiencies given the location.

Mr. Speaker, I should point out from the information that I have here that the *Easterval* Committee failed to honour its commitment to pay for the use of the facility and for the utility used including electricity last year and it is something that needs to be looked into. And there is a school of thought, Mr. Speaker that they ought to pay up these before work is done for this year but we are not holding that line, Mr. Speaker. The Management Committee has in fact commenced cleaning operations and will produce an Estimate so that the festival can take place this year. Mr. Speaker, let me just note that the National Sports Council is continuing its programme for not only the nation of St Vincent and the Grenadines but the Grenadines in particular.

We are improving the facilities and we will be hosting a number of championships on sporting facilities in the Southern Grenadines and indeed, we have been in direct contact and I have spoken to a representative of the Adonal Foyle Kerosene Lamps, Summer Basketball Programme because you know that is an annual major event and I have had direct discussion, myself and the representative from the United States on this and we are putting a lot of resources into it.

Mr. Speaker, the residents of Mayreau can look forward to a spanking new Hard Court facility that will be opened very soon. It will feature a new surface, change rooms, concession areas, washrooms, accommodation for the sale of tourism related items et cetera. And this will be an excellent competition when you are in the Southern Grenadines and this project; Mr. Speaker is funded by the Social Investment Fund, which we all know was set up by this administration.

So, Mr. Speaker, both in terms of the facility and in terms of the cultural activity, this government is paying a lot of attention. We have asked the Director of Grenadines Affairs to continue to liaise with the Management Committee and the National Sports Council to effect the preparation for this year's festival; because we will continue to support it; as well as the facility. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 10, to the Honourable Senator St. Clair Leacock.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker; I rise to ask Question No. 10, standing in my name and I ask this question of the Honourable Prime Minister.

10. **HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** *Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask Question No. 10 of the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, National Security, Legal and Grenadines Affairs to please indicate:-*

- a. *the year to year growth for the last ten years i.e. from 1998 to 2008.*
- b. *The year to year balance of trade figures for the same period.*
- c. *Which sectors have contributed positively and consistently to the growth and to the balance of trade; and*
- d. *Which, if any has impacted negatively and by what statistical amounts.*

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

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I am very pleased that this question has been asked by the Honourable Senator Leacock; so we can as always provide a lot of important information. There are some who write about these things and get their years wrong in the media, and try to write about them authoritatively, do not know how it can be done. I know by doing this you are seeking to impress among other things and you spoke with great passion about it because in the Stranger's Gallery is the Leader of the Green Party who I understand is going to contest the Central Kingstown Constituency, and that you are worried that you will be put into third place [laughter]; but that is ... [laughter] so, I will be careful as I go through this to see if you could move from third to second place. So, you can use this information properly. You are watching in the Stranger's Gallery to see if it is true.

Mr. Speaker, I would do the period from 1993 upwards; because Mr. Speaker, the reason for this is that I produced the back drop because 1993 was the time when the Banana Regime started to change and it is important to look at those sixteen years. I will be very quick. Growth Rate 1993: 1.79%, I am using real GDP growth; 1994: minus 2.91%; 1995: 8.28%; 1996: 1.17%; 1997: 3.13%; 1998: 5.75%; 1999: 3.6%; 2000: 2.01%.

Mr. Speaker, if one compares the performance between 1993 and 2000, under the NDP, the economy under performed compared with the rest of the member countries of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union. The average annual growth rate for the years 1993 to 2000; in St. Vincent and the Grenadines was 2.62%, whilst the rest of the ECCU recorded an annual average of 3.6%. I want to deal with 2001 to 2008. 2001: minus 0.9%; 2002: 3.18%; 2003: 2.80%; 2004: 6.8%; 2005: 2.58%; 2006: 7.58%; 2007: 6.97%; and the estimate for 2008 is 2.18% [interruption].

Mr. Speaker: during this period; 2001 and ... [inaudible question]. Estimate: 2.18%. During the period 2001 to 2008, the average was 4% as against 3.35% for the rest of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union. In other words in the last eight years under the ULP we out performed the ECCU [knocking of desk]. Mr. Speaker, indeed, if you take just the independent countries, the average for the six independent countries in the ECCU,

was 2.68%. It is the Anguilla's average of 9.03% which distorted the ECCU average: but if you take Anguilla out and you leave the others you will see that we would be at 4% average and the rest of the independent countries: the average for all the countries 2.68%.

Mr. Speaker, the comparable figure; because persons may be saying: well the growth rate, I mean we have to look at the real thing with the money in people's pocket; the per capita GDP: the GDP per head. Mr. Speaker, the GDP per head, I am going to give it at market prices in constant 1990 prices and it is important for the public to grasp these figures [interjection]. The GDP at market prices is equal to the sum of the Gross Value Added of all resident producers, plus taxes on imports and all non-deductible VAT or similar taxes less subsidies. The value of the total goods and services produced is expressed in numbers for a particular year. So, it is the totality of all the goods and services produced in the year.

And the statistics expressed in constant 1990 prices are derived by breaking current values down into a price component and quantity component. Estimates of constant prices are usually derived by deflating the current values to price indices or by extrapolating base year values by appropriate volume indices both are equivalent to expressing current period quantities at base period prices: the base period in 1990. So that we have to make sure we do things properly. In the year 2000, the GDP per capita; per head at market prices in constant prices, 1990 prices, the average for the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union was in 2000, \$10,469.00 EC and in 2008: \$13,342; the difference between both years is \$2,873. St Vincent and the Grenadines the number in 2000 was: \$6,498.00 per head and in 2008: \$9,726. We are dealing with constant, 1990 prices: so, you see a difference of \$3,228.

Mr. Speaker, if you were to make the comparisons you will see that in St. Vincent, the per capita GDP under the ULP increased per head by 50% and for the rest of the ECCU countries, there were Anguilla 50%, Antigua and Barbuda 30%, Dominica 17%, Grenada 9%, Montserrat -13%, St Kitts Nevis 22%, St Lucia 9%, St Vincent and the Grenadines 50%. So, I gave both sets of statistics for the sake of rounding it.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to the balance of trade we are dealing here with the visible trade. In 1998: total imports 134.045 million; imports 518.81 million; ex imports: the exports are 134.05 million and the imports in 1998 were 518.81 million giving you a balance on the visible trade of -384,773 million. In 2008: the total exports 140.961 million, imports: 1.008 billion, a balance on the visible trade of -\$867.16 million. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the difference of course, is made up by other inflows: the tourism inflows, the foreign investment inflows, remittances, foreign grants, so, that other monies make up the difference that is why the economists always say: the balance of payment always balances.

The sectors which have contributed positively and consistently to growth are the construction, transportation, communications, other services, banks and insurance sectors. And the sector on which there has been most negative impact is the agriculture sector. Mr. Speaker, I just want to say this having answered the question I believe that there is a rule in the House that if to the extent ... if I remember it correctly, Mr. Speaker, and you can advise on this that data which are available from official reports ought not to constitute the subject of a question.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes, there is that.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: So that I noticed this one perhaps slipped through and I had intended, Mr. Speaker, not in fact and to raise the issue and to have a ruling: but when I saw his enthusiasm as my friend and I saw his competitor in the Stranger's Gallery; I thought I ought to allow him the exposure, so that the question can be properly asked. I am obliged [laughter].

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 11, Honourable Senator Leacock.

11. **HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** *Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask Question No. 11 of the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works.*

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, I will continue that debate out of the Parliament, I see it is obviously not the kind of question the Honourable Prime Minister was happy to have. So, I will leave the supplementary and deal with it elsewhere. Question No. 11, Mr. Speaker, and this is asked of the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works.

It is sometime now since civil works on the Lodge Village/Dasent Cottage River have ceased. These works were supposed to lead to the construction of a bridge.

- a. *How much money was spent on this project?*
- b. *Is it officially abandoned; and*
- c. *Does the government still intend to link both villages by way of this or another bridge.*

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

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Mr. Speaker, the project in question according to the Roads Division was first put forward as one to accommodate pedestrians; however, the former Chief Engineer thought it would be a better and more useful project if we make it a motor able road and therefore to make it a capital project. In the meantime the Supervisors and Engineer for the Central Kingstown Constituency have stated that no work was done on the project in question, as it was never included on the work plan of the Roads Division; so if any work was done there, they never had it on their programme and they are not aware of it. And since, it was never on the work plan, Mr. Speaker; there is no costing to any work of any kind, if work was done on that same project [interjection]. And the project ... no costing yes; because they never had it on their work programme, so may be ...

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Are you saying that the work [inaudible]

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: No! I am telling you what the folks from the Works Division stated; they never had it on their work plan and they never authorised any work there. It was put forward to do a

pedestrian, as I said, crossing and then the former Chief thought it better to make it a motor able road and maybe inadvertently, some way along the line, there are times when you know constituent or persons of interest might want to do something, so I do not know if it is one of those things; but the project is not abandon. As a matter of fact, the Parliamentary representative Honourable Conrad Sayers at the Budget preparation for 2009 requested that the Ministry of Transport and Works prepare designs for the construction of a bridge to provide access for children attending the Jolly Ridge School and other persons. All right.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, this is clarification more than supplementary; because you mean, I asked how much money was spent. I was asking for confirmation whether or not the answer, I do not know; because he has not said how much money was spent thus far. I get the impression that we have gone back from a pedestrian; we moved from pedestrian to a motor able road and apparently the request now is to go back to a pedestrian road. Is that ...

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: But he answered you.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: No! No! All that has been answered is that the project has not been abandoned. It has not been indicated how much money was spent on the project.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you need to clarify the situation.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, let me explain myself, the Honourable Minister indicated that the project started as one for a pedestrian road and that it was changed to a ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You want to know how much money was spent.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: So, I want to know how much was spent on the project initially.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: And whether the continuation now is for a pedestrian or a motor able?

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: I never said that the project. I said that the project in question according to Roads Division was put forward as one to accommodate pedestrians. It was put forward nothing was ever done on the project. When it was put forward, the Chief Engineer at that time decided that it would be better if you make it a motor able road instead of a pedestrian crossing and then say a capital project would more fit this programme so then the question was asked of the Road Division: “any work started”? They said, not from their record, they have never had it on their work plan; I stated that here. So, since there was no work being done by the Ministry, there would not be a costing.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No money was spent.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: No! I mean, Mr. Speaker this is ridiculous there is civil work which was done there. Work was done whether by their division, some work was done. So, some costing has to be given for the money that has been spent [interjection] work was done. [Interjection]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I understand but he is not aware of that information.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: So, the answer is that he is not aware. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I will move on.

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Mr. Speaker, I said if work was done it might have been by a citizen or some other entity. I do not know: but our division has nothing. Our division has no records; [interjection] so if work was done ...

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Okay. Thank you very much [interjection].

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you Honourable Member.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, I ask Question No. 12, in my name, of the Honourable Prime Minister.

12. **HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** *Mr. Speaker, I rise to ask Question No. 12 of the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, National Security, Legal and Grenadines Affairs:-*

- a. *Please confirm whether there are written contracts, memoranda of agreements or understanding between the governments of Cuba, Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago respectively to assist with the building of the Argyle International Airport;*
- b. *If yes, why these documents are not yet brought to the attention of the Parliament;*
- c. *How can the Parliament exercise oversight of the Argyle International Airport in the absence of these agreements; and*
- d. *What is estimated to be the final guarantee of the Government of St Vincent and the Grenadines to the IADC.*

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

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, there is a ... [interjection].

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Are there any changes in the Estimates of the Airport; as a result of the delays or changes in design? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, in respect of this International Airport, which is the first time in the history of this country that anybody has attempted to build an International Airport. [Knocking of desk] Colonial Governments were here; the Joshua, Cato and Mitchell regimes in various permutations and nobody even attempted it. It has taken the creativity of the Unity Labour Party Administration [applause] to conceptualised, to fashion the financing and carrying out the implementation of a project which the World Bank, sorry, which the IMF recently in its statement consequent upon the Article (4) consultation affirmed that it is a project necessary and desirable for the development of St Vincent and the Grenadines. [Applause]

Where, hitherto the IMF probably was agnostic, it has now become a true believer in the International Airport Project but whether or not it was agnostic and now that it has become a true believer, well, they have come to the believe system maybe later and I am hoping that others who are not interested in the International Airport would move from an agnostic position on it and become a true believer and contribute sensibly to the discussion on the building of this most important and historic project. [Applause] Mr. Speaker, so clothed in majesty, nobility, meaning and purpose of this project that the chorus of an important hymn comes to mind:-

*“Oh! You ran the race
You have kept the faith
These words I long to hear my Saviour say
And when my life on earth is passed
There is just one thing dear Lord I ask
Do not let me leave behind an unfinished task”.*

Mr. Speaker that will be an anthem between now and the next elections: ‘Dear Lord, just one thing I ask; do not let me leave behind an unfinished task and the people are also there with it’. [Interjection] Well, you do not know hymns at all. [Laughter] You do not know hymns at all. [Laughter] You do not know one single hymn. You know, I watch you at church services; you mumble, you do not sing. [Interjection] You mumble, you do not sing. I do not know if all the years you went to Canada, the growing atheism in Canada has influenced you.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Let us get on with the debate.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: All I want to say, we are not going to leave behind an unfinished task. Okay. Mr. Speaker, there are Memoranda of Understanding between St Vincent and the Grenadines and Cuba and Venezuela concerning the International Airport at Argyle. There is none between St Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago. Trinidad and Tobago is one of those countries that have come to our aid magnificently: but have not put into effect any written agreement.

In August 2007, Trinidad and Tobago made a Grant of US \$10 million or EC \$27 million to the Government of St Vincent and the Grenadines to assist with any additional expenditure incurred during the earth work stage of the Argyle Airport project. Since the money is already paid over to us, I do not know whether the Opposition is asking to return it; because we do not have a written agreement. The written agreement is US \$10,000 million; it is in the Bank cash [interjection] \$10 million, sorry; US. The tireless work put in by this ULP administration to raise funds for the Argyle International Airport Project is now publicly and widely acknowledged.

Some would recall that in my speech of August 8th, 2005 in which I presented my Government's decision to build the Airport, I outlined many reasons why our country cannot afford to build this Airport on its own and why the support of friendly countries was vital to the successful completion of the project. I have since coined the term 'the coalition of the willing' for the group of friendly countries that is helping to finance the project, whether in cash or kind. In some cases we draw up and sign agreements and in other cases we get help without there being any formal agreements in place.

Cuba and Venezuela are among the first two countries to lend support to the Airport Project. Both President Fidel Castro of Cuba and President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela pledged their countries resources to assisting in the preliminary studies; airport designs and to complete the earth's work component of the project. The commitments are valued at EC \$279 million. Most would recall that during the period September 2005 to September 2006; fourteen engineers and technicians from Cuba and Venezuela came to St Vincent and the Grenadines to do the preliminary: the predesigned works which included:-

- a. Complete topographic surveys of the area earmarked for the Airport.**
- b. Testing of the rocks and soils within the zone and**
- c. wind studies to determine the best orientation of the main Runway and the need if any; for a shorter cross wind Runway.**

The results from these studies fed into the final designs that were done by a team of Cuban Engineers and handed over as gift to the Government of St Vincent and the Grenadines in December 2007. Mr. Speaker, if I may just pause to say this; one of the Scientist from Venezuela lovely lady who was from the area known as Valencia in Venezuela, who worked on this predesigned scientific work; unfortunately she died about a year eighteen months ago in a plane crash in Venezuela. And she is in our memory and in our debt.

One would recall also, Mr. Speaker, that beginning in May 2008, several pieces of heavy earth moving equipment promised by the Government of Venezuela for the earth works project began arriving in St. Vincent; in subsequent months other pieces came altogether numbering 37 pieces of heavy equipment and a variety of spares costing EC \$27 million. You may recall, Mr. Speaker, they said on the Opposition because we were to get the equipment late December 2007, early 2008 and because of the Referendum and Elections in Venezuela they were delayed in coming. The people of this country would remember the glee, which daily the Opposition was taunting us on the radio; "equipment is not coming; it is a lie: *dey* fooling people".

When the equipment came and we paraded them through the streets they say: “what they had to parade them through the streets *fa*; they block up traffic in town”. Had we let them come in, in the night from town to Argyle or on a Sunday when everybody is at church they would have said: “we slip *dem* up de; is two old pieces equipment, we send them like thief in the night; nothing is happening there”. When we presented them to the doubting Thomases, they began to cry fowl. Well, the people had to see the truth.

In July 2008, engineers and heavy equipment operators came from Cuba to work on the Airport Project. On August 13th, 2008 we commenced the earth works. At present earth works on the project are concentrated on the first kilometer of the Runway; the workers are cutting the hills and filling the valley. Earth works on the Runway will move into the second kilometer later this year. This year too we will prepare the area for the Terminal building and other land side facilities. The nature of the present relationship between St Vincent and the Grenadines and Cuba is such that the assistance from Cuba to us does not have to be reflected in any signed agreements.

Even so, since 2001 we have established a joint Commission that comprises senior officials from the various Ministries co-ordinated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in both countries. The joint Commission meets once per year to agree on the issues for collaboration between the two countries, at the end of this meeting a Memorandum is signed by the two countries setting out the areas of collaboration. One of the many issues included in the Memorandum is the level of support that Cuba will provide to the Airport Project in the coming year. The last such meeting was held here in St Vincent and an agreement was signed on the 21st November, 2007.

The IADC also has a signed contract with Quality Couriers International; the Cuban agency responsible for sending Cubans workers overseas on work assignments. This contract spells out the terms of engagement of the workers who are here now working on the Airport Project. The support from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the Government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines on the Argyle International Project among other areas of collaboration is contained in a joint communiqué signed on the 29th of June, 2005. This document is the result of my working visit to Venezuela by invitation of President Hugo Chavez Frias: besides Cuba, Venezuela, Trinidad and Tobago about which the question was asked; St. Vincent and the Grenadines has also signed Memorandum of Understanding with the Republics of China, Taiwan and Mexico in relations to the assistance of the Argyle International Project.

We have also received financial support from Austria, with which there is no signed agreements. In the case of Mexico, a joint communiqué was signed during the time of President Vicente Fox when I visited Mexico. More recently, at the end of my working visit to Mexico by the invitation of President Felipe Calderon another joint communiqué was signed on the 8th April, 2008. This most recent document reaffirms the assistance of the Government of Mexico; to St. Vincent and the Grenadines on the Argyle Airport Project, among several other areas of functional co-operation.

Taiwan has pledged substantial financial support to the Airport Project. In a Memorandum of Understanding signed on 7th June, 2006, the Government of Taiwan pledged a Grant of US \$15 million and a soft loan of US \$10 million to the Airport Project to finance the Terminal Building, Control Tower, Roads and Support

Systems; component of the Airport Project. On the 31st July, 2007 in another signed Memorandum of Understanding; Taiwan pledged a further \$5 million in Grant to this project, bringing its total financial contribution to this project US \$30 million.

Finally, on the 21st July, 2008 the Government of Taiwan reaffirms its commitment to the project and promised to give favourable consideration to providing additional funding if the circumstances so required.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I mean, I have been listening to the Prime Minister answer this question. Can we all in honesty, Mr. Speaker, indicate that the question has been answered? I asked nothing about Taiwan. I was specific in my request for information on Cuba, Venezuela and Trinidad and Tobago. There is a big question that goes on to ask whether these things will be presented to the Parliament because we are a serious people and Governments are continuity. We need to know as an opposition where we are on these matters and the Prime Minister is rambling on about all sorts of irrelevance not asked and skillfully ignored. And, Mr. Speaker, I expect in the chair; you will help to guide us.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: But would not you want to know who are involved?

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: No! I want to know what I asked. I want to know what I asked, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR SPEAKER: You are just interested in [inaudible] you asked about.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Because I know of the Taiwan's contribution and that they are written.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: That is why I did not ask.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Oh! Those are written.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: So, he really wasted out time, Mr. Speaker and that is what I am getting at Mr. Speaker.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I can understand that the Honourable Senator and the opposition that they do not want to hear anything about the agreements with Taiwan because in September 2005, his Leader acknowledged that he lied to the population. When he was in Sharpes, he said that he led a march ostensibly against poverty, a candle light march but it was really not about poverty, it was to show the Taiwanese President who was visiting here that they have support and that they must not give us any money for the Airport; because if they give us any money for the Airport that is the end of the NDP that is what he said in Sharpes and I have his speech in that regard.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Alright let ...

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: And Mr. Speaker, I am not rambling, I am very succinct and I am providing the answer; because other parts of the questions relate to providing the information additional, because he was asking about the extent of Government financing, the total overhaul financing and cost and so forth. So, I want the public to understand and this Honourable House, every single dimension. Mr. Speaker, if he did not want me to answer; do not ask a five part question. In fact given the answer which is required, the five parts could have been denied, because there are rules in relation to that [interjection]. I never had a nineteen part question.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, let us ...

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I had a one part question with nineteen pieces of roads to be fixed. [Laughter]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Well let ...

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: No! I had a one part question with nineteen pieces of roads to be fixed. I do not have amnesia you know. I remember you publicly, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Publicly acknowledged that he lied to the public.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: [Knocking of gavel on table] Let us get back to the issue, please and ...

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: He said so.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Where did he acknowledge that?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: At Sharpes.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: That he lied?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Yes! He said, "I have to make a confession".

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: That is not true.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: He said, "I have a confession to make".

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: [Knocking of Gavel on desk] Honourable Members [interjections] please, just a minute; let us not ... just a minute. Honourable Prime Minister could you just sit for me please.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Let us proceed with the business of Parliament as we have been doing so far. Now, I am going to make a serious ruling here at this point in time. In this document it says that questions should not be of an excessive length and I am going to here on look into every question that is being brought to this House.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: [Inaudible] I do not know what is excessive length.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Well, I will determine that.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: That is the problem because ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I will determine that; I will determine that. Honourable Prime Minister would you please answer the question

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I think the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines should practice law in the courts; rather than making the money only on sending Alien Landholding Licenses for me to approve.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: That is besides the question.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Let us get along [interruption] [knocking of gavel on desk]. Honourable Members, let us get along ...

DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: If you are in the courts, you will get a little discipline in relation to authority.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Let us proceed, I will determine these issues. I think I have the authority.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: While I am in the House I am here as a Member of Parliament; not a lawyer. My professional practice [inaudible]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: But you should not be addressing the Chair sitting [laughter]. Please practice, Sir, what you know.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Thank you very much. I am grateful for the invitation to stand and address the matter; because that is why I am in this House I came here because I was elected as a member of this House. My professional practice as a lawyer has nothing to do with the business of this House and the Prime Minister has a practice of bringing my professional practice and other persons into the business of this House, it ought not to be.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Fair enough. I understand what you are saying.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Thank you.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Senator.

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: Mr. Speaker, on a Point of Order, in this Honourable House, I have been chided by you repeatedly for saying someone has lied; is being unparliamentary language: but I sat here and I have heard it used repeatedly by the Prime Minister and you have done nothing about it.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Hold on, it is a completely different story. It is used in a completely different context. He said he was quoting the Leader of the Opposition who made a statement at Sharpes that he the Honourable Leader of the Opposition said he had lied. Well, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition did ...

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: Which is not correct, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Well, that is a different objection.

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: That is an interpretation, Mr. Speaker, he never said that.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay fine. Anyhow, let us drop this issue about these extraneous things and let us move on to answering the question. I still maintain a question is not a pretext for a debate and we really, you know sometimes; my grandmother would say you give an inch you take L and really have to pull this thing tight you know and get it.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I am finishing Part (a), though there are no sign contracts or MOUs with Austria, in November 2008 that country paid over to the IADC as a grant to the Government of St Vincent and the Grenadines US \$185,000 to assist with the purchase of three compactors needed for the airport project. There is no requirement, (this is the b part of the question) according to the rules of Parliament for contracts Memoranda of Agreements or Understandings to be brought formally to the Parliament, even so, any contracts or Memoranda of Understanding for the purpose of assisting with the Argyle Airport construction are presented by me as part of my regular update to Parliament on the progress of the Argyle International Airport Project and all that I have said here, I said repeatedly in this House and at Press Conferences idea as Ministerial Statements or in answer to questions.

c. How can the Parliament exercise oversight of the Argyle International Airport in the absence of these agreements.

Well I have said that I have given the information already over and over, but Mr. Speaker, the mechanisms of Parliament's oversight of the Argyle International Airport Project are no less than for any other projects undertaken by a wholly owned Government company. Good examples of Government companies are National Property's Limited and the National Commercial Bank. The Argyle International Airport Project is being managed by the International Airport Development Company Limited. A wholly owned Government company incorporated under the Local Company's Act of 1994. As a company, the IADC is required to lodge its

accounts with the Registrar of Companies. To date, IADC has lodged its accounts with the Registrar for the period up to December 2006 and will...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Hello,

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, we cannot have a stranger in the gallery shouting.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No, no, no, no,

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: He simply wants attention, this is...

HONOURABLE MAJOR ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: [Inaudible].

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: No...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Let us continue.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: He left, I did not order him out.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: To date, IADC has lodged its accounts at the Registrar of Company's for the period up to December 2006 and will by the end of April 2009, lodge its accounts for the year 2007 that are now being finalized by the external auditor. As is the practice with other Government's Companies and Statutory Bodies the IADC's audited accounts is also lodged with the Director of Audit and the Director of Audit makes reports to this Parliament. These accounts are therefore available and can be scrutinised by members of the public and by Parliament. Parliamentarians also have the privilege as is now being exercise now of asking questions on any aspects of the operation of the IADC. Furthermore, from time to time as the Minister responsible for the IADC, I provide regular updates to parliament on the progress of the airport project. In the history of this nation, there is hardly any other project about which so much information is readily available to the public as the Argyle International Airport Project.

Mr. Speaker, there are some who oppose it, want by virtue of an issue of mischief to try to see if they can derail or delay or cause some public confusion on this project. They will not be able to do so [applause].

d. What is estimated to be the final guarantee of the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to the IADC.

One may recalled that in my speech of August 8th 2005, I expounded on the creative approach to the financing of this project. Over the three years since, that basic approach on which I elaborated then is the same financing approach that is still being used today. There has been no variation. As explained in my speech the IADC was

vested with over 800 acres of crown lands which it was empower to sell to raise funds to pay for the properties of the Argyle site as well as meet other related project management expenditure. As I further explained and I have done on numerous occasions since then, as land sales take time, the IADC would use bridging finance to meet its immediate expenditure needs and then use the income from land sales to service those bridging loans. To date, the IADC has raised \$70 million in bridging loans, \$40 million from the NIS and \$30 million from the First Caribbean International Bank. In fact, the \$40 million made available by the NIS to IADC came directly to the IADC through National Properties Limited. The National Properties has purchased from IADC a 600 acre plot of land at Park Industry, Bequia for \$125 million. Part of this parcel was used by National Properties to secure the loan from the NIS. This loan is also secured by the Government, we secured it also by the Government Mr. Speaker, so that all the auditors would feel additionally an extra secure with the NIS accounts and it does not make any difference to the Public Sector debt because once it is a Public Sector Company which has contracted the debt, it is part of the Public Sector debt, so the guarantee by the Government is neither here nor there in terms of the increasing of the debt. The accounting is already there.

It is interesting to note that while the IADC was able to borrow \$30 million from the First Caribbean International Bank without any need for Government guarantee, the money borrowed by National Properties from the NIS for the benefit of the IADC, we made sure that we provided guarantee. Going forward in this uncertain global economic environment, I am sure that the level of prudence demonstrated by the NIS in dealing with its sister public organization is being mirrored in its lending decisions in relation to privately owned borrowers abroad and we are satisfied that the NIS is doing its work properly. It is expected that from time to time Government will be required to assist the IADC in raising bridging funds by way of guaranteeing its borrowings. So far, Government has guaranteed EC\$40 million of funds made available to the IADC but there are lands two hundred and something acres, 48 acres constituting the base for that security. It is unlikely that over the entire project life Government would be required to guarantee in excess of EC\$100 million. Importantly though, any guarantees provided by the Government would be for loans that are of a short term duration as the world economy recovers and as land sales pick up proceeds from IADC's land sale would be available to discharge any new bridging loans that the IADC raises and Government guarantees.

e. Are there any changes in the estimates of the airport as a result of delays or changes in design?

As the airport project progresses, understandably, there are going to be a number of variations of one kind or another from the original plan. Variations are a fact of life for even small projects, far more so a project as complex as the Argyle International Airport. Our most recent estimate of the airport project is EC\$589 million, it is important to note that this total includes a provisional amount of \$50 million for contingencies. In other words, we set aside this amount for unforeseen variations in designs and rise in cost during construction. During the latter half of 2008, heavy and prolonged rains affected the progress of earthworks and resulted in an unexpected large amount of time lost to rain. To recover the lost time, IADC took the decision to extend the hours of work from 10 to 12 hours daily and to increase the number of working days from 6 to 7 seven days per week, safe and except one Sunday each month as a rest day. This regimen would remain in place until we acquire additional equipment and can thereby bring the earth works back on schedule for its programme completion. Extension of the working hours will increase the cost of labour for this project.

The increase in the size of the area for the landside facilities, terminal building, parking lot etcetera to make it consistent with the master plan, the 25 year old master plan, master plan for 25 years down the road also has caused implications. The decision to increase the area by 30 acres allows for an orderly growth of the landside facilities over the long term as spelt out in the master plan that is now being finalised by the Professor DuVali from Mexico who was given to us by President Foxx and confirmed by President Coldorand. As a result of this design change, we would not only have to pay more for additional lands, but also have more earthworks and additional technical studies to do on the new area to be incorporated into the project, the additional 30 acres. These additional works would extend the project completion time by another three months. IADC is therefore now targeting a project completion date of the end of March 2012.

The extended hours of work, additional lands for the land side facilities and associated technical works are altogether estimated to costs EC\$12 million. This amount however is well within the amount budgeted as contingencies unforeseen for those components of the project and therefore does not lead to an increase in the overall cost of the project. To reiterate, the overall project cost is estimated at EC\$589 million. This amount includes an estimate of \$50 million for contingencies that is unforeseen events like the impact of rain and variations of designs that affect the project cost.

Mr. Speaker, you know people are..., those persons who are opposed to the airport not because they do not want the airport to be built, they feel that the building of the airport would make it difficult for them to realize, near impossible to realize their ambition to come to office, so they bad mouth it at every turn, on every radio station and every programme day and night, what they wanted us to do is that when Professor DuVali eminent expert in the field of airport construction said, "You can build the building where originally conceptualized their landside facilities". But in my view given the overall master plan for 25 years so that this would be bequeathed to our children and grandchildren for possible expansion and further development, it would costs a little bit more. You have to get some more lands and so on, another \$12 million perhaps in all, but within the \$50 million for unforeseen circumstances for a further three months. The same people who are making noise about this are persons when they have a house and one set of windows go in, they say no, I do not like those windows, they want to take them out and to get the proper windows from Trinidad. It may take 5 months, 6 months, no, that is okay, but a simple variation in relation to \$589 million project is an occasion for them to celebrate, to say, "ah, you see it going to cost more, I told you all this, it is going to take longer, it going never finish". I ask again as I finish with solemnity there is one thing Lord that I ask of you, do not let me leave any unfinished task behind including the International Airport [applause].

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You have a supplementary question Sir?

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister has indicated the costs of \$601 million to be the present cost of the airport.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: \$589 he said.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: No, but he said they have acquired 30 acres of land.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: It is including the \$50 million contingency right.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: So, \$12 million comes out of that \$50 million contingency so it is now \$601 million. There is \$589 million plus \$50 million contingency, am I correct? There is a \$589 million estimate with a \$50 million contingency and now out of that contingency which requires 30 acres to be acquired they have to spend \$12 million, am I not correct.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I am really surprise that you do not understand a contingency. I am really surprise. I cannot do better than I did [interjection] I cannot do better than I did. Mr. Speaker, he has asked me the question [interjection] Mr. Speaker, the \$50 million includes..., is a matter there for contingencies. This is a contingency which has arisen so the overall estimated cost is not going up beyond \$589 million. If in fact any occasion arises that it were to go up for any reason or for any increase in raw materials for some major storm and some of the work which we did we have to redo, we have to spend in a different way, I will come to the nation and explain it as I have always done, but I say this, this tasks would not be unfinished and those who are hoping that it will be, those who are hoping to come to Government with it being unfinished and turn it into a race track or to fly kite not plane, the people of this country will never allow it, never [applause].

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much, we have come to the end of question time, I think this a good time for us to take our luncheon suspension, but before we do, when we return we are going..., we will go into the Motion and then at some time during that we will have a break for a meeting that was..., that for which you have been given notice of the Whole House and the CRSC and then we will resume the rest of the House if necessary. Yes you said something? Yes Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that he House would be adjourned at some point in time in order to deal with the...,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes, to deal with the Constitutional Review Committee

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: with the Constitutional Review Committee.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes, yes.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: We have any idea; when that would be today [laughter].

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Well it all depends on how quickly we can get through our business. I do not see it going longer than an hour, hour and a half.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: So we are going through all of the business on the Order Paper and then have an adjournment.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No, no, no. We are going to break somewhere after the presentation and debate on..., the first debate that is..., the presenters' debate on the Motion, we will take a break there, go through this meeting and then we will continue the rest of the agenda.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: So, we will go to the meeting of the CRC and then the House will resume?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes, the House will resume and we have made preparation for that.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: We have made preparation for that.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: So, the coverage will continue?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No, no we will not have the life coverage of the CRC.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: And the reason for that Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: *Eh?*

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: The reason for that Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Well, we have never had life coverage of the CRC meetings, why do we want life coverage now?

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Because I thought it was a Committee of the Whole House.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes, but we never have life coverage of it.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: No, Committee of the Whole House, we have life coverage of the Committee of the Whole House all the time.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: We particularly said we would not have life coverage of that one, and that is how we have been proceeding all the time, why do we want to change it, I do not think there is any need to change it.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Other things are changing Mr. Speaker [laughter]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I do not think we should.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, may I just say something to assuage concerns of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition? We have been at the matter of Constitutional Reform since October 2002, when the Motion was first passed, yes. The CRSC was appointed in February 2003 and the consultations began in earnest. We have had several debates in this Honourable House in relation to final reports, revised final reports, Committee of the Whole House and the CRSC and drafting instructions have now been given. A drafting Committee has been appointed, the Chairman of the CRSC has indicated quite rightly that in his view in communication with the persons in the drafting committee of which he is a resource person that they need some clarification on about 4 or 5 issues, which are listed in the notice which has been circulated and they should not take a long time.

Mr. Speaker, we have been at this matter for 6 years. We are now where we are drafting. The draftspersons have said they can produce for us a draft by the end of April and Mr. Speaker, we intend to bring to this Honourable House on Thursday 28th May a Bill for the first reading of the Constitution. It will hopefully then be put to the people in November in a referendum. We will have the three months in June, July and August required by the Constitution for further discussions and further refinements with the public, with the Committee of the Whole House and the CRSC and the drafting persons would be available. In September we will have the second reading. If we get as I anticipate we will get two third's in the House, we then go to have a referendum with the two third's majority and when that two third's majority is obtained we come back into the House for a third reading of the Bill and then it becomes the law of the land on the date appointed in the Bill.

Now, we have members of the CRSC who are people who are working who have done a lot of work, they have suggested that since we are all present here today in this House and they do not anticipate that the issues would take more than perhaps an hour, hour and a half at the out margin; and we will do it at an hour maybe 5:30 when they are from their work and where they can participate in this exercise. It is not a trap of any kind, the Opposition if they want to stay they will stay, if they do not want to stay this is a free country, they may go, but the Meeting of the House [interjection] well, I am not being downright disrespectful, the meeting..., if you wish [interjection] but you have indicated already, Mr. Speaker if the Honourable Senator Leacock has some problems internally with the position of his party on this issue and wants to show some kind of a stridency or militancy, he may do so. I am just saying that you had said that you are not participating in the meeting of the House. I am on my feet.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: So am I.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No, Honourable Senator, come on.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: But Mr. Speaker, but you ruled before Mr. Speaker that if a Member stands the other one should give way. You rule these things.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No! No! No! No! No!

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: You keep changing the rules.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No! No! No! No! Senator, I have never made any such rulings. There are two ways you can stand. You can stand either to seek..., if you stand to seek clarification and the Member give way, fine, or [interjection] but he did not give way. You did not even seek for him to give way but you stood up. I do not even know why you are standing.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, let us go eat some food you hear because...,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I feel so, I feel so.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: So Mr. Speaker, the point I want to make, I have made an appeal to the Opposition and I make it again for them to stay with the process, but I had to make the point show that we are about a serious business. The Opposition at one stage has terminated their participation in the Committee of the Whole House that is a matter of record here in this House and publicly. So, I made the point in relation to what the Honourable Leader of the Opposition said to affirm that this is no trick to have them come to stay in the Committee of the Whole House. We do not function like that. I have appealed to them to stay, but if they do not stay, if they wish not to participate, well then this is a free and democratic country. There is nothing other than the words which have been said, there is no imputation, and no disrespect, absolutely none and the public who are listening would know that. So Mr. Speaker, I just wanted to clarify.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Prime Minister, would you give way?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I will give way.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, we had an intervention by the Honourable Leader a while ago. First of all, why the matter would not be broadcast that is of some concern, because hitherto all discussions debate consultations have been public, now we are getting at a stage...,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Senator, let me stop you. We never had a public discussion on any meeting of the CRC with the whole House, never, and we said that we would not, we decided on that.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: You are misunderstanding me Mr. Speaker, but maybe, let us go eat the food in truth.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: And I am saying that we are having a meeting...,

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Let us go eat the food.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Hold on, No! No! No! Do not hurry me out, I am hungry too, but do not hurry me out. I am saying that we are having a meeting, we are breaking for..., we are going to break this meeting of the House for certain convenience.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, may I with your permission? You see, what I am trying to get at Mr. Speaker, this is obviously serious business as the Prime Minister stated before, this whole Constitutional debate, this evening's exercise is a part of that, but it is contemptuous first of all for the CRC to be limiting in the expression of..., well they might give us an hour because you cannot..., they cannot speak for us they do not know how serious we would take the matters and then this condescending notion that if you want to come you could come and if you do not want come... it is not that. We intend to be here to represent the nation's business, they have put us into this House for a good reason.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: So you are going to be here for the meeting.?

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: We fully intend to be here.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: But you see these issues...,

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: And to express ourselves in the matter and representing the people who have asked us to be here.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: These issues Honourable Senator are issues on which we have previously debated and in some cases we did not have any final sort of conclusion to these issues. We are going to revisit them, you have a notice: an agenda of what we are going to do. These are issues that we sat as members of the Whole Committee of the House along with the CRC and discussed and we have not finalise on those. So we are saying that we are going to meet this afternoon because of the convenience of some persons and as a result of that we are going to revisit those issues and come to final conclusion on them. Why we want to bring to the public some disjointed discussion, why do we want to do that? So we are saying that we are not going to have a public discussion on that, because they probably would be lost.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, may I just say this? The Honourable Senator Leacock is somehow attempting to give the impression that he and other members of the Opposition is somehow being locked out from being in the House or in the debate. Quite the contrary, it is the Opposition which repeatedly stays away from the House and goes to hold mock parliaments and for five meetings last year consecutively, refused to come and do the peoples business. So, now when he affirms that they have been elected here to do the peoples business, I agree with him, only that they have been delinquent in that regard and I am urging them not to be delinquent any further [applause] and that is the point.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Could we have the suspension?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, before we move the motion for the suspension, I beg to move that under Standing Order 12 (5) that the proceedings of today's sitting be exempted from the provisions of the Standing Order hours of sitting.

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

Question put and agreed to.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House do stand suspended until 3:45 p.m., one and a half hours we can have for lunch.

Question put and agreed to.

House suspended at 2:10 p.m. (Luncheon)

Until 3:45 p.m.

House resumed at 4:15 p.m.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, during the luncheon suspension a matter was brought to my attention by the Chief Executive Officer of the International Financial Services Authority concerning an issue which involved in part Millennium Bank which I would like to inform the House as an important urgent matter of public importance. I will read the media release from the Securities and Exchange Commission in the United States and I would also make reference to the complaint which was filed in the Northern District of Texas, the Wichita Falls Division. I would give a summary which has been prepared by the International Financial Services Authority on the matter.

The release reads as follows:-

“March 26th, Washington DC, the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has obtained an emergency court order halting a \$68 million Ponzi Scheme involving the sale of a fictitious high-yield certificates of deposits (CD’s) by Caribbean-based Millennium Bank. The SEC alleges that the scheme targeted US investors and misleads them into believing they were putting their money in supposedly safe and secure CD’s that purportedly offered returns that were up to 321% higher than legitimate bank-issued CD’s. The SEC’s complaint alleges that William J. Wise of Raleigh, North Carolina and Kristi Hoegel of Napa California orchestrated the scheme through Millennium Bank, its Geneva, Switzerland-based parent United Trust of Switzerland and United States based affiliates UTFS (United Trust of Switzerland LLC) and Millennium Financial Group.

In addition to Wise and Kristi Hoegel and these entities the SEC has charged Jacqueline S. Hoegel who is the mother of Kristi Hoegel, Brijesh Chopra and Philippe Angeloni for their roles in the scheme. “As alleged in our complaint the defendants disguised their ponzi scheme as a legitimate offshore investment and made promises about exuberant returns that were just too good to be true”, said Rose Romero, Director of the SEC’s Forth Worth Regional Office. This case demonstrates that investors need to be especially cautious when placing money with entities that may be outside the reach of US Regulators.

According to the SEC’s complaint, at least \$68 million was raised from more than 375 investors since July 2004. Millennium Bank a licenced St. Vincent and the Grenadines Bank, solicited new investors and its CD program through blatant misrepresentations and glaring omissions in its online solicitations and in advertising campaigns targeting high net worth individuals for

example, in offering materials. Millennium Bank claimed that its parent United Trust of Switzerland S.A. provides Millennium Bank with over 75 years of banking experience, corresponding banking relationships, decades of knowledge in privacy and confidentiality as well as extensive training of our customer services professionals”.

In fact, the SEC alleges United Trust of Switzerland S.A. is not a Swiss-licensed bank or securities dealer. Potential investors visiting Millennium Bank’s Website also are falsely informed that Millennium Bank is not affected by the global financial crisis and has a 100% client satisfaction record going back close to ten years and has its own affiliate asset management company with highly season professionals who invest meticulously.

“The SEC alleges that the investor funds were not used for legitimate banking or investment activities. Instead to create the appearance of a legitimate offshore investment, investors purchasing the CD’s were instructed to deliver their investment checks to the Offshore Bank. The SEC alleges that the checks were then packaged and delivered to the United Trust of Switzerland LLC’s office in Napa, California where the checks were electronically deposited by a remote deposit machine into a United Trust of Switzerland LLC Account. This account which is held at a US Financial Institution also received millions of dollars of funds via wire transfer. From that account, the SEC alleges that the defendants misappropriated a vast majority of investors’ monies to enrich themselves and to pay personal expenses while making relatively small ponzi payments to investors”.

Judge Reed O’Connor, in the US District Court for the Northern District of Texas granted the SEC’s request for an asset freeze and emergency release for investors.

“The SEC charges that the defendants violated the anti-fraud provisions of the Securities Act of 1933 and the Securities Exchange Act of 1934. The SEC’s complaint also alleges that the defendants have violated the registration provisions of the Securities Act. The complaint seeks permanent injunctions, disgorgement together with prejudgment interest and financial penalties. Additionally, the SEC’s complaint names four individuals and four entities as relief defendants: Lynn P. Wise the wife of William Wise, Ryan D. Hoegel, Daryl C. Hoegel the husband of Jacqueline Hoegel, Laurie H. Walton of Raliegh in the US North Carolina, United Trust of Switzerland LLC, Sterling I.S. LLC, Matrix Administration LLC and Jasmine Administration LLC. All four entities are based in Las Vegas. The SEC’s enforcement action seeks an order compelling them to return funds and assets traceable to the Millennium Bank fraud”.

Now, on the complaint the relevant paragraphs which I shall quote to which this media release relates, it says this, I think paragraphs 3, 4, and 5 are important in this regard.

“Defendants to create the appearance of a legitimate offshore investment, instruct investments to make checks payable to United Trust of Switzerland LLC, to purchase the so called certificate of deposits CD’s and mail the checks to the Millennium Bank in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Once received, the checks are packaged and delivered via Federal Express or regular mail to

United Trust of Switzerland LLC's Office in Napa, California where they are all electronically deposited by a remote deposit machine into a single United Trust of Switzerland LLC bank account at Washington Mutual, JP Morgan Trace Bank, known as Wamou, the so-called Wamou account. Investors wired funds are deposited into a Wamou account.

Paragraph 4, bank records established that of the known \$68 million investor funds that were deposited in the Wamou account, the vast majority of these funds were misappropriated by the defendants who enriched themselves and paid their personal expenses funnel them to relief defendants for no apparent consideration or purpose, made small payments to investors and satisfied investors liquidation request with recent deposits of new investors, none of the investor funds were use for any investment purpose whatsoever, in other words, a classic ponzi scheme, the peri-made scheme. 5, the scheme is ongoing and investor funds are at risks. Millennium Bank continues to solicit new investors through blatant misrepresentations and glaring omissions in its online solicitations and in advertising campaigns targeting high network individuals”.

So in summary, they say that they had investors make the check out to United Trust of Switzerland. They mailed the checks to St. Vincent Millennium Bank, once the checks were received here, the checks were then packaged and delivered by Federal Express or regular mail to the United Trust of Switzerland office in Napa, California where they were then deposited electronically by remote deposit machine into a bank account of Washington Mutual JP Morgan Trace, which is a reputable financial institutions and that is where the \$68 million was put over the period of time inside of the Washington Mutual JP Morgan Trace Account.

Now, what is the situation in the history here of Millennium Bank? Millennium Bank was duly licenced as an International Bank on July 19th 2000. The bank sole shareholder is the United Trust of Switzerland (UTS) with the ultimate beneficial owner Mr. Eric Healy, a Canadian citizen. The bank's current Directors are Philippe Angeloni, Mr. Brijesh Chopra, Mr. Williams Wise and Mr. Mark La Frambossie. In 2003 the International Financial Services Authority of St. Vincent and the Grenadines then the Offshore Finance Authority, placed the bank under controllership for various breaches of the International Banks Act including:

- 1. The Bank was undercapitalized contrary to section 10(a) (b) of the International Banks Act.*
- 2. The Bank was carrying on business in a reckless manner detrimental to the public interest including the depositors interest, contrary to section 18(1) (e) of the International Banks Act.*
- 3. The Bank was without a resident director contrary to section 17(1).*
- 4. The Bank was deemed insolvent that is: unable to meet its obligations under sections 18(1) (d).*
- 5. The Bank licenced was also revoked by the authority in 2004 due to the conventions of the banks Act of 1996.*

In fact, the way the licence was revoked a recommendation was made to me and I effected as Minister of Finance the approval of the recommendation for the revocation, but on July 16th, 2004 the bank licences were reinstated upon appeal by Millennium Bank to the High Court due to a technical legal point. The findings of the authority which was based on an auditors report was held as the auditor did not possess the necessary formal qualifications to make these judgements. However, even though the bank's licence was reinstated certain actions were imposed by the court in reinstating the licence including continued controllership. The authority monitored the controllership and the authority deemed it necessary to change controllers in 2005 and 2006 based on the authority's requirements to have greater progress for the bank.

In April 2007 the bank was taken out of controllership as the authority found that satisfactory progress was made. In October 2008 that is last October, an on site examination of the bank was conducted by the authority and certain directions and recommendations given to the bank including to redo the business plan, reduce interest rates, update personal questionnaires of the beneficial owner and directors and repay a related party loan. During the on site examination the authority requested a copy of the registration of UTS (United Trust of Switzerland) and one was provided. The bank was given certain lines in which to take remedial measures and has thus far complied with the recommendations made; this is up to when this was sent to me last month. A further request was made today the 18th February, 2009 this is what the reporter send to me then.

For the bank to provide further verification of the registration of UTS and to provide an explanation for not reducing the interest rates as recommended, however the bank had been previously given the time frame of February 27th, 2009 in order to submit a new business plan. The authority was therefore giving the bank the opportunity to revise its interest rates until this time before taking any regulatory action further. Well the update which has been provided to me today is as follows:

- 1. Following the on site examination of Millennium Bank in October 2008 the authority had been closely monitoring certain directives given to the bank to ensure that the bank was in compliance with the law as it relates to the International Banks Act of 2004 and the Proceeds of Crime and Money Laundering Prevention Act 2001.*
- 2. On February 20th, 2009 the authority appointed an independent auditor so that it could confirm by the most transparent and independent means the practices of the bank.*

There was however an objection to the auditor appointed and as a result another auditor was being sourced and was about to be appointed from Barbados. Since February 2009 the authority has been in direct communication with the United States Securities Commission on an investigation undertaken by the commission and has been cooperating with that investigation as far as permitted by the law of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the authority is presently assisting the US Commission in its investigation and shall continue to do so.

Today March 26th the US Securities Commission obtain court orders freezing the assets of Millennium Bank Incorporated and several named defendants including the Directors of the bank William Wise, Phillippe Angeloni, Brijesh Chopra and the parent company, United Trust of Switzerland and appointing a receiver to identify and preserve the said assets in St. Vincent and the Grenadines IFSA (the International Financial Service

Authority) has today appointed receivers for both the Millennium Banking Corporation and United Trust Limited. United Trust Limited is a licensed international bank operating in St. Vincent, however, there have been ownership issues with the bank and the bank has been going through a transitional ownership stage where unsatisfactory progress has been made in obtaining a new owner. Coupled with this is the fact that a Director of the bank is also a Director of Millennium Bank Limited who is a named defendant in the proceedings taken by the US Securities Commission. The action by the authority is taken to immediately preempt any dissipation of assets or destruction of records and to assist with the US Securities Commission with their investigations.

The funds alleged to be defrauded from investors did not pass through Millennium Bank in St. Vincent and the Grenadines nor our National Commercial Bank, it is believed that domestic banks in the US were used to deposit funds from investors in the name of United Trust of Switzerland and then payments made to the defendants. I should point out that the balance sheet for Millennium Bank here in St. Vincent as of the 30th September, 2008 expressed in US dollars the total liabilities and equity \$4,977,671 that increase from 2007 \$4,250,169 so that you see that in the bank here it is relatively small monies. I want to say that the documents which have been read to me:

- a. *The report which was given to me on the 18th February as Minister and the update dated today were provided by the Chief Executive Officer of IFSA.*

I thought that it was important that I bring this matter to the attention of the Parliament and thus the country. [Interjection] no, it is being asked if there is any exposure for anybody in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the answer is no because it is an Offshore Bank, it does not take deposits from people here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines [Interjection] employment wise, but not deposits by investors here. So the bank itself here from the figures does not worth a great deal, but the arrangements were between United Trust of Switzerland and the LLC in the United States, the American Affiliates and the American Banks. But I want to reiterate that we have been working very closely as you will notice over the last several weeks with this Securities and Exchange Commission of the United States Government.

I want to say also that the IFSA had briefed the IMF team which had come in to do assessments in relation to the issue of International Financial Institutions that they had briefed them thoroughly on the situation in relation to Millennium Bank. I am obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Senator Forde

HONOURABLE SENATOR FORDE: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move the following Motion standing in my name.

WHEREAS the Unity Labour Party emphasized in its Manifesto for the 2001 General Elections that, “housing is a basic human need”, and accordingly elaborated its housing policy of providing, or ensuring the provision of, affordable housing of an acceptable quality to all Vincentians.

AND WHEREAS since 2001 the ULP Administration has implemented a veritable Housing Revolution through the following initiative, among others:

- (i) Restructuring and modernizing the state-owned Housing and Land Development Corporation (HLDC) as the principal vehicle through which the nation's housing policy is fashioned and implemented.
- (ii) Turning "Dead Property into Live Property" through the legal transfer by way of deeds for persons in occupation of state-owned lands at very low prices.
- (iii) Passing the possessory Titles Act to simplify certain land transfers in the private sector for those in "adverse possession" in excess of 12 years.
- (iv) Putting together a coordinated and well-staffed Ministry encompassing Housing and Lands, Surveys, Physical Planning, and Information, Human Settlements to elaborate and implement housing policy more efficaciously in conjunction with HLDC and the private sector.
- (v) Building hundreds of low-income houses at several places including Petit Bordel, Peter's Hope, Ottley Hall, Green Hill, Diamond, Brighton, Sans Souci and Colonarie.
- (vi) Building a middle-income housing project at Clare Valley.
- (vii) Commencing shortly a three-hundred "No Income Housing" Programme at several sites all over St. Vincent and the Grenadines, financed by the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.
- (viii) Building houses at several places including Rose Hall, Langley Park and Byera (Manning Village) for persons whose houses were destroyed or severely damaged by storms and hurricanes.
- (ix) Increasing significantly the distribution of building materials to the poor.
- (x) Enhancing the tax benefits available for companies engaged in the construction of homes.
- (xi) Providing 100-percent mortgages through the state-owned National Commercial Bank for all public servants, teachers, nurses, policemen/women, to the extent of some \$50 million since October 2001.
- (xii) Supporting the secondary mortgage market in the sub-region.
- (xiii) Elaborating a Building Code and strengthening the Planning Laws on housing.

- (xiv) Sorting out the NDP disaster at the Colonial Homes Project at Diamond and Gibson Corner, by way of the Justice Joseph Commission of Enquiry and follow-up action at a cost in excess of \$8 million.
- (xv) Devising special loan programmes through the NCB for housing repairs.
- (xvi) Ensuring that the HLDC, the construction industry, and the Technical College work closely with each other to enhance quality training for technical construction employers.
- (xvii) Engaging regionally through the Heart Trust of Jamaica the training and certification of skilled tradespersons so as to facilitate, among other things, the freedom of movement of skilled artisans within CARICOM.
- (xviii) Providing water, electricity, roads, surveying, and land-titling to several informal human settlements.
- (xix) Implementing a strict aliens land-holding licence policy to ensure that the patrimony of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is not alienated willy-nilly to foreigners.
- (xx) Providing much more opportunity for tertiary education to train young Vincentians in all fields which touch upon housing construction including architecture, land surveying, engineering, construction management, and quantity surveying.
- (xxi) Assisting private entrepreneurs in sourcing building materials of quality at the lowest possible prices.
- (xxii) Taking the lead in the sub-region to push for a more coordinated and scientific approach to the construction sector.

AND WHEREAS the ULP government is seeking ever more opportunities to enhance in practice its many-sided housing policy.

BE IT RESOLVED that this Honourable House endorse the housing policy of the ULP government and its several laudable initiatives and urge the government to continue steadfastly its magnificent work in the area of housing for the benefit of Vincentians as a whole.

HONOURABLE RENE BAPTISTE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the motion.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Motion having been moved and seconded, the Motion is now for debate. Honourable Senator, you have at least one hour in which to debate your Motion.

HONOURABLE ROCHELLE FORDE: Thank you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise with excitement to move this Motion on the Housing Policy of this ULP Administration. Mr. Speaker, when I think of the strides that have been made in housing in such remarkable time, the words of Robert F Kennedy come to mind when he said, there are those who look at things the way they are and ask why, I dream of things that never were and ask why not. Mr. Speaker, the success of the housing policy of this Government is this administration's ability to attain the why not [applause].

Mr. Speaker, when one has the platform of good governance from which to speak, amplified by policies which exude success such as that of housing, one is entitled to pat one's own back. But Mr. Speaker, we became even more sophisticated last month when the 17 low-income houses were handed over at Clare Valley and through the expressions of gratitude Mr. Speaker which were poured on this administration our backs were patted for us. Mr. Speaker, it brought tears to my eyes to see Mrs. Cynthia Breton one of our retired citizens as she did a little dance and went up to collect the keys to her home Mr. Speaker. Congratulations to this administration as all persons irrespective of their age can be assured of housing under this ULP Government [applause].

Mr. Speaker, the state-owned Housing and Land Development Corporation is the implementing arm of the Housing Policy for our Government and Mr. Speaker, it is not a secret, the HLDC suffered prior to our administration taking office from a well known and uncanny past characterized as one report puts it by mismanagement, extensive levels of political interference, theft, poor record keeping, unsigned contracts and general payment delinquency adversely affecting the efficiency and effectiveness of those operations and which plunged the Corporation into serious financial difficulties.

Mr. Speaker, happily under this administration those are things of the past. There is a dedicated Board of Directors and the Corporation is managed by a most efficient team under the stewardship of Mr. Slater also known as "McGeiva" who along with those before him under our administration have managed to clean up the HLDC and their work speaks volumes. Mr. Speaker, the HLDC was shut down under the NDP administration. Can you imagine shutting down a Corporation which clearly has the potential and the ability to perform so well? Mr. Speaker, our Government revived the HLDC, put proper management and strategies in place and we are seeing the great things that the HLDC can do. Congratulations to the Board of Directors of the HLDC, the Management and Staff and Mr. Speaker, while I am commenting on the HLDC, I wish it to be publicly told that the staff in great part is a young one and they are performing remarkably well Mr. Speaker [applause]. This is another example of the confidence that our Government has in its young people and they are not disappointing us [applause].

Mr. Speaker, in the space of six years, 409 houses have been built by this administration and of that figure of 409; 398 have been low-income houses and Mr. Speaker, they have been built in areas such as Petit Bordel, Peter's Hope, Ottley Hall, Green Hill, Diamond, Brighton, Sans Souci, Colonarie and Clare Valley. Mr. Speaker, 398 low-income houses in six years. On average Mr. Speaker, let us put it into proper prospective that is 66 houses per year and I am only referring to low-income houses Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, where else has it been seen where a country of similar economic standing and the challenges which we face, have we seen this done anywhere else Mr. Speaker? The long term plan is to build 1000 low-income houses, but the rate at which

these houses are being constructed and the demand for these houses, it may require that our Government revisit these figures Mr. Speaker.

And just by way of information as of February 2009 there were 2400 applications for low-income houses and Mr. Speaker, those are waiting list figures. I am advised that on a daily basis applications come in to the HLDC. So when the NDP naysayers attempt to say that these houses are small and they are matchbox houses that are complete nonsense. Telephone booth to booth, can you imagine that Mr. Speaker? I say, show me what you did for housing in the 17 years of your administration. Mr. Speaker, not a single house, not a Housing Policy, Mr. Speaker, all other housing projects which were done, were done under labour Governments Mr. Speaker and if I may be permitted to drag the memory of this Honourable House, when I presented the Motion on the Education Revolution, I showed to this House that in 17 years nearly two decades Mr. Speaker, no new school was built by the NDP administration from conception to conclusion.

Mr. Speaker, can you imagine that? Nothing for housing, nothing for education in 17 years. Mr. Speaker, in my mind those were the efforts to stifle and suffocate a nation and its people. Cruelty and wickedness at its best, not an ounce of a social conscience, but Mr. Speaker, Vincentians love their houses and they love the assistance that is being provided through our administration. They want more. The houses are comfortably space and we are proud of our housing initiate. What a completely glorious project [applause].

Mr. Speaker, this Government has commenced with the no income housing project where three hundred no income homes will be built with the assistance of our ever present friends, the Government and people of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Mr. Speaker, what a gift? But you know it must really be an indigestion causing exercise for the NDP to think about the next general elections. How do you contend with all the successes under this administration, especially such a new concept as the no income houses? Mr. Speaker that is a political belly hurting Mr. Speaker, no where in the history of the Caribbean has there been such a phenomenon, no where, what a wonderful effort of our Government [applause].

Mr. Speaker, these no income houses would be provided to persons whose monthly salary is \$750 or less, so from 0 to 750 income, I am sorry. And in many instances Mr. Speaker, these would be provided free of costs in others at a very nominal costs. This is the true embodiment of housing for all Mr. Speaker. And we must always keep things in proper prospective. Just because they are going to be provided to our citizens free or at a very low price does not mean that they will be poorly constructed, no, certainly not. These houses may be smaller, but as is the usual style of our administration, small does not mean that they will be poorly done Mr. Speaker. They will be done and built with the same care and efficiency and to the relevant building standards. Each citizen in St. Vincent and the Grenadines is equal and this Government ensures that they are treated equally [applause].

And then Mr. Speaker, there is the policy of turning dead property into life property where persons who have been in occupation of state-owned lands would be afforded or have been afforded the opportunity to actually purchase these lands and at very, very low prices. Sometimes at 0.40 cents a square foot, even 0.10 cents I am advised. And Mr. Speaker, ours is not a Government that encourages the occupation of state lands, but where persons have been in such occupation for an extended period of time and have built their homes thereon, we

must strike a balance and to that extent where it is possible to facilitate these persons we have also so done. To date over 405 persons have received such title to their land or in the process of paying for same. Mr. Speaker, these people can comfortably rest at nights knowing that they occupy their space legally [applause].

Mr. Speaker, this type of assistance to persons of our nation at such low rates have never been done before in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Mr. Speaker, I am not referring to high Government officials purchasing prime Grenadines land at 0.40 and 0.45 cents a square foot, that is not what I am referring to. I am talking about providing land for truly deserving and needy citizens Mr. Speaker. And we must always Mr. Speaker, put things in their proper perspective as I have said before. We are doing all these things at a stage when we are really rebuilding our economy. This is not a time as when the Banana Industry was striving and at its best as the NDP had, no, the ULP administration has never had the benefit of that sort of an economy to use, but we are still doing phenomenal things for our people in these less than favourable economic times [applause] Mr. Speaker that is government for the people [applause]

HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR: That is the point that is the point.

HONOURABLE ROCHELLE FORDE: And very shortly Mr. Speaker, we will see the middle income housing project in full swing. There have already been 11 of these houses that have been built and from all reports the families are happy. In the very near future, 30 more of these houses will be..., the construction of 30 more of these houses will commence at Clare Valley. Again Mr. Speaker, the middle income housing project is just about to get into full swing but by way of information there are already in excess of 250 applications for these middle income houses and Mr. Speaker, naturally when persons see these houses under construction the application pool will probably burst at its seams.

Then Mr. Speaker, there is the assistance given to persons who have lost their homes by natural disasters, hurricanes etc. 30 of these houses have been so provided in areas such as Rose Hall, Langley Park, Byera at Manning Village. Mr. Speaker, the remarkable feature of these houses is that in many of the instances the persons will receive these houses free of charge or they may just be required to pay the legal fees for the preparation of the deeds, or just to pay a nominal figure. Mr. Speaker, those persons who were not financially able to rebuild and who would have thought that they had lost all hope, found hope through this administration and we are taking care of them. Mr. Speaker, several of the persons have said, praise God for the disaster, because they are now in better houses than they were prior to the disaster Mr. Speaker. Certainly Mr. Speaker that is not the end of the story this Government has made available more building supplies to the poor through the Social Welfare and Development Agencies and even through the office of the Prime Minister Mr. Speaker. Our Government will assist as many persons in need as we possibly can.

Then there is also the boost of the Possessory Title Act. Mr. Speaker, for years many persons got title by way of a statutory declaration, but this was of little to no use when approaching a lending institution. The Possessory Title Act has now given more weight and significance to title obtained by adverse possession. These deeds are now looked upon with just as much cogency and weight as the regular deeds of conveyance. Mr. Speaker, the concept of adverse possession has been around since time immemorial. It is sad, but not surprising at all that the NDP administration never saw it fit to give to such citizens a firm title by a legislative

process, sad, but certainly not surprising. Thankfully, as is the usual case with this Government, we have done what the NDP administration did not have the vision or the backbone to do and our people are certainly happy for our efforts.

Mr. Speaker, it is only under this administration that Informal Human Settlements have been made a priority and are actually integrated in the Ministry of Housing. Mr. Speaker, the first set of targeted areas which would receive improvements of utilities, roads, surveying, land titling include Glen, Reucher Bay, Largo Height, Trigger Ridge, Buddy Gutter, Owia, Charles Village and Keartons. Mr. Speaker, the work has already commenced and I am advised that in this first target group over 750 families will benefit upon its conclusion and there are other areas which will be targeted in the second and third phases accordingly. Mr. Speaker, never before has such detailed consideration been given to Informal Human Settlements. When a persons home is given some attention and respect that person entire outlook on life changes.

Mr. Speaker, if you live in depressed conditions, your attitude will reflect just that, but this administration is determine to shine its light enthusiasm on every single citizen of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and we are already seeing the changes. At every possible opportunity, the ULP administration looks for areas to educate our people and housing is no exception.

Mr. Speaker, from 2001 our Government has put emphasis on providing opportunities for tertiary level education and specifically, in the construction area. So, when we have a look at the statistics from 2001 Mr. Speaker, by way of assistance by this ULP administration 11 persons have pursued studies in Agriculture, 15 in Land Surveying, 2 in Quantity Surveying, 5 in Construction Management and 62 in Engineering a total of 95 persons Mr. Speaker, in the construction related areas. Mr. Speaker, those are statistics to be proud of.

We remember oh too well, when assistance for tertiary education totaled 5 in a good year Mr. Speaker. And I am not talking in a specific area; I am talking all subject areas, law, medicine, management. Mr. Speaker, it must have been the strategy of that administration that a people starved of education is a people easily manipulated 2001 probably was a complete shock to them I am sure, but at least now I know that they are completely prepared and ready for the onslaught of the agony of defeat that they will again suffer in 2010 and 2011 [applause].

Mr. Speaker, there is also the work done at the Technical College where subject areas such as building construction, electronic maintenance and repair, electrical installation, mechanical technology are being offered and these fully complement the construction industry. There is also as facilitated through our Government, a closer linkage between the Technical College and the Private Sector and there are also links between the HLDC and the Technical College as they eagerly look forward to get their graduates Mr. Speaker, the best of the best.

Further still, there is accreditation through the Heart Trust of Jamaica which is facilitated by the Ministry of Education and Mr. Speaker, this allows for certification of skilled tradespersons. Mr. Speaker, these programmes provide among other things, short term and long term training opportunities for instructors, teachers and assessors. Mr. Speaker, for the first time ever our country is seeing assessors in the industry. And from 2004 Mr. Speaker, these are the figures. There are 6 certified assessors in electrical installation, 4 in

masonry, 6 in plumbing and pipe fitting, 10 in carpentry and Mr. Speaker, these assessors are not sitting idly by, a number of persons have been certified. 92 in electrical installation, 22 in plumbing and pipe fitting, 8 in masonry, 26 in carpentry, 1 in tiling, 2 in painting and this is done at various levels.

Further Mr. Speaker, this week there are 32 persons who are undergoing assessments in carpentry and masonry. More than that... and yes madam Minister of Education, clap your Ministry because they are doing great things [applause], more than that there are 400 additional persons that the Ministry is hoping to assess. Mr. Speaker, with certification come the ability to move from country to country within CARICOM and work there, this is the work and the vision of our Government. We are ensuring that in the event you cannot work in St. Vincent and the Grenadines for whatever reason you can take your skill elsewhere and Mr. Speaker, we know that the training that Vincentians are exposed to within whatever area in St. Vincent is of the highest quality.

We see the situation with our nurses, Mr. Speaker; we cannot produce enough nurses for the Caribbean. That is the long and short of the story. So, there is no doubt in my mind that if persons cannot find work here, they are then certified, they can go elsewhere and send home the money to build our country [applause] and to pay for their houses Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, owning a house is very important to a Vincentian and over the years, yes, like everything else, there have been problems and deficiencies. But this Government does not ignore the problems and sweep it under the carpet and hope that it will go away like others have done. Certainly not, we aggressively look for solutions and make improvements and do all that we can and must do to ensure that our nation survives. We are a proud set of people, we are proud of our administration and hats off to the ULP in the area of housing [applause]

Mr. Speaker, if we are building houses, we must ensure that they are done to certain standards and it is no surprise that is the modus operandi of our Government, we do things in a proper manner and so in that spirit we saw the amendment to the Town and Country Planning Act which allowed for the inclusion of the building code which Mr. Speaker, is already implemented and there are just minor areas that are being fined tuned.

Mr. Speaker, not only are we building houses and equipping our people with the relevant skills to build proper houses, but this Government through its efforts and policies and in conjunction with the NCB has provided a hundred percent mortgage financing for Civil Servants [applause]. Mr. Speaker, this is another area of empowering our people and the people have responded well to their commitments. Mr. Speaker, I am advised that there have been in excess of three hundred of these mortgages and only 5 have been delinquent. Mr. Speaker, that is commendable. That is a delinquency rate of just about 1.6%. This Government has placed confidence in its civil servants and again they have not disappointed.

Further Mr. Speaker, yes, there is more; this Government has offered incentives to companies involved in building homes. We have seen the reduction in taxes for companies and over a time as promised by our Prime Minister, there will be reductions Mr. Speaker. Most specifically, there is special taxation relief on the profits made from house construction, what an incentive for building companies. Additionally, our Government has

assisted construction companies and private entrepreneurs in sourcing quality lower price building materials through Mexico and Cuba, our Government is taking care of each and everyone of its citizens.

Mr. Speaker, everyone wants a piece of our paradise and that is fully understandable. St. Vincent is the closet thing to heaven on earth [laughter], but the sale of lands to non-nationals is now a carefully assessed and guarded process. No longer are the days that an alien land holding application will be granted in a couple of weeks Mr. Speaker, certainly not. Today, in order to own a piece of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, one must go through a rigorous screening process before the application is granted. Regionally Mr. Speaker, our Government continues to play its lead role and this is evident by its support for the Eastern Caribbean Home Mortgage Bank. Mr. Speaker, the work of that institution has helped to create liquidity in the banking sector regionally and whereas some may caution about the secondary mortgage market in light of what is happening financially world wide, from all reports, I am advised that the Eastern Caribbean Home Mortgage Bank is doing well and has not been significantly impacted Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am not in any way being naïve about this. I am not suggesting that the disasters which are being faced economically world wide cannot happen here, I am certainly not saying that, what I am saying is that the regulatory bodies are very thorough and systematic and I have full confidence in our Caribbean Institution. We in the Unity Labour Party do not fashion or base our policies on what would America say. As it is clear Mr. Speaker, some may argue that it may even profit the economic giants to take a page or two from our management skills books [applause]. Further, Mr. Speaker, the Eastern Caribbean Home Mortgage Bank also offers assistance by way of training to our bankers regionally with specific emphasis on underwriters Mr. Speaker, and this training equips our officials to better prepare mortgage portfolios for further consideration.

Mr. Speaker, our country is taking the lead in construction standards in the region and we recently facilitated a conference on construction and more conferences of the like will come. Mr. Speaker, our Government is talking the talk and walking the walk [applause]. Mr. Speaker, we are exercising confidence in our people. It is this Government that has instilled in Vincentians a sense of pride in themselves, and in the nation and housing is just another dimension of this policy. What a magnificent performance. Even our Caribbean brothers and sisters, our neighbours have commissioned teams to understudy our housing policy, Mr. Speaker, that within itself speaks volumes and we have become accustomed to these request as the same was done under our education revolution. Good leadership, good policy, good governance, but Mr. Speaker, I wish to spend a few moments on the report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Colonial Homes and Gibson Corner matters: the Justice Joseph Commission of Inquiry.

Mr. Speaker, this report is one that every single Vincentian should read, but I caution that any Vincentian who considers himself or herself to be even a little bit patriotic should be mentally prepared before they read this report and ensure that they have at their side a hot cup of ginger tea, because when you read what the NDP administration allowed to happen to the people and this nation, you are going to be left with a complete sense of bad feelings. Mr. Speaker, total and complete act of wickedness and I apologise to the Minister of Health, a better formulation would probably be that one is engulf by nausea, but Mr. Speaker, it may sound better, but saying pretty does not make the actions of the NDP administration any less hideous complete wickedness Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, let me deal first with Gibson Corner. As soon as the report begins at page 4 paragraphs 3 and 4 Mr. Speaker, and with your permission I do not want to be accused of distorting the report in any way, with your permission Mr. Speaker, I will like to quote directly from the report. It says, "The Corporation sold lands to persons to build homes at Gibson Corner. On the 26th October 1998 following very heavy rainfall there was slippage of land at Gibson Corner and the number of properties sustained damaged, some eighty nine persons at Gibson Corner were affected". It has been admitted that the Corporation knew that the land at Gibson Corner was unstable and susceptible to slides, but the Corporation did not share this information with potential purchasers of land [oh].

Mr. Speaker, the report continues that in February 1990 on the request of the HLDC Mr. Richard Robertson a Geologist produced a report on landslide potential. So, Mr. Speaker, bear in mind [interjection] yes! Yes! Bear in mind that this report, [interjection] no! No! That does not surprise me, this report on land slide potential was prepared some eight years before the actual slippage and Mr. Speaker, again by way of direct quote at page 5 it says: "Mr. Robertson concluded that the land at Gibson Corner is unstable and has potential for future slippage, the Corporation did not inform the purchasers of land of that conclusion".

Mr. Speaker, at page 11 the report states: "In addition to Gibson Corner being unstable and having the potential for further slippage, Mr. Robertson stated that residential buildings generally increase the amount of ground water as well as concentrating overland flow, as such, residential construction places greater pressure on the land and increases the potential for landslide". Mr. Speaker, this is obvious. If the land is already unstable and you put a house on it, it is more than likely going to make the possibility of slippage more real, but Mr. Speaker, what is very, very interesting is the evidence of the former Minister of Finance who was at the time the Honourable Arnhim Eustace and Mr. Speaker, again of all the times that I want to quote directly Mr. Speaker is now, do not want to get it wrong. At page 10 paragraph 3 it states: "Former Minister of Finances evidence was that that land was bought from the Corporation, a Government institution that before it was sold to the residence, the Corporation was aware of the possibility of slippage of the land at Gibson Corner". Mr. Speaker, the HLDC knew that the land would slip; the Government knew that the land would slip. Mr. Speaker, what manner of compassionless being could have held secretively this information to one's chest being fully aware of the perilous possibility of loss of human life, could man to man really be so unjust? Mr. Speaker, this is a serious Commission.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: All right, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition is moving on a point of order, he would state his point of order please.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: I just want to raise a point of order that my statement there is misrepresented. The decision in relation to the report done by the gentleman who did the work on the slippage was eight years before I became the Minister of Finance and I became aware of that after the slippage and that is why I said it during the Commission. I was not aware of that when the slide took place. I became aware as Minister of Finance after the slippage.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: All right.

HONOURABLE ROCHELLE FORDE: Mr. Speaker, I am grateful, because naturally I would not have been involved in the Government at that time, but it really does not change the crooks of the matter Mr. Speaker, the point is this, the HLDC commissioned the opinion of the Geologist, the HLDC has admitted, it is a part of the Government Mr. Speaker, so eight years before the land slipped, the Government was aware Mr. Speaker. Whether or not..., I take the point fully if the Honourable Member is saying he was not at the time the Minister of Finance, I take that point Mr. Speaker and I hasten to say that that is not what I said, but I am grateful for the information and the guidance.

But Mr. Speaker, the point is this that was a serious Commission under the watch of a retired High Court Judge of excellent credentials. Mr. Speaker, there is no politics in that report, just the bare facts as unsavory and disturbing as they may be. Mr. Speaker, when you elect a Government, you place in the hands of your Government your security as a nation, as a people, as an individual. Mr. Speaker, the Government is the parent, the nation is the child. Can you imagine deliberately and intentionally putting your child at such risks? And the NDP wants to return to office in this country? Mr. Speaker, the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines would never, ever, ever allow that to happen, never [applause].

And Mr. Speaker, I would like now to turn your attention to the Colonial Homes mess. From the outset, owning one's home is a sign of independence and Vincentians are proud independent minded people. So to entertain a project where one of the partner's name is colonial which suggest bondage and slavery, is a time to which no Vincentian ever wishes to return and that within itself should have sent the warning signals off in the heads of the Government.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR: Absence of mind.

HONOURABLE ROCHELLE FORDE: And just as the Colonial Masters robbed and pillaged our Caribbean, so too did Colonial Homes 1994 swindle the Government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The only real difference here Mr. Speaker, is that the NDP Government ought to have known better and ought to have been more astute in their arrangements with a non-national company.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR: Yes! Yes! Colonial is the past.

HONOURABLE ROCHELLE FORDE: You are feeling hot in here [laughter] I am sorry Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, no, it is to get upset about. I am not in any way offended Mr. Speaker, because as long as you have a sense of a social conscience, what I am saying will disturb you Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, so lax were the arrangements with this non-national company that the joint venture company as set up between the non-national company Colonial Homes 1994 and the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, a company that was called "Colonial Homes SVG Limited", Mr. Speaker, the by-laws of that company allowed a non-national chairman and a non-national director to execute a mortgage without the knowledge or participation of the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR: Truly colonial.

HONOURABLE ROCHELLE FORDE: I mean, Mr. Speaker, I cannot even begin to comment on that Mr. Speaker and this is exactly what was done. It certainly did, it certainly existed. Mr. Speaker, that is why I encourage people to read this report, it is not anything difficult to read, it is easy to understand, but difficult to comprehend the work of the Government at the time and the thinking of the Government at the time.

Mr. Speaker, at page 29 of the said report Madam Commissioner stated: “The evidence was that Government officials had no knowledge of the mortgage on the land at Diamond”. It goes on, “True, the deed is registered in the Registry of the High Court and is therefore a public document, and despite this, I consider that it was a well kept secret”.

Mr. Speaker, you could imagine that a non-national company come in to my country and trick me here? Mr. Speaker, that is absurd. This is a party that wants to return to govern the people of this nation? Not St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Their performance was an atrocity at best. Mr. Speaker, this carelessness of the NDP administration resulted in a situation where the Government in an effort to save its lands at Diamond had to repay a mortgage with no benefit at all to the Government. Mr. Speaker, it is clear that no proper checks were done on this non-national company, the foreign counterpart to the joint venture arrangement. Here again the NDP administration showed its complete and utter lack of interests for good and proper housing for the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Mr. Speaker, the words of Madam Commissioner Joseph, Justice Joseph at page 29 aptly summarise the less than professional approach. Her Ladyship Justice Joseph stated: “ I think that the lesson to be learnt from this arrangement with the Colonial Homes 1994 is that it is critical for Government to ascertain the financial integrity of an entity before entering into a joint venture partnership with that entity”.

Mr. Speaker, can you imagine that in the 1990’s the NDP administration did not see it fit to conduct a proper due diligence on a company before putting our people and its scarce resources at risks? Mr. Speaker, this is a complete and utter shame and disgrace. Mr. Speaker, if this report was not so serious and an innocent bystander was to read it not knowing that it is the report on the work of a Government, one may have been left thinking that this was a script for a production by Hairoun Theatre, Mr. Speaker, a comedy of errors at best.

Mr. Speaker, it took over \$8 million to sort out these disasters and I mean the Colonial Homes and the Gibson Corner disasters and again Mr. Speaker, I say we must keep things in proper context. Mr. Speaker, \$8 million today could have built 230 low-income houses. Yes, Mr. Speaker... Mr. Speaker, the train wrecks of projects that were the Colonial Homes and Gibson Corner fiascos and which could have been worst if it hadn’t been halted are too frightening to speak any further of. Just to say though that these prove good examples to show the stark contrast between a Government serious about housing and one that is not [applause] to show the difference between a Government dedicated to its people [applause] and one that was not and clearly Mr. Speaker, we see the difference between a Government with a vision and a plan and one blinded completely by developmental cataract.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have 15 minutes.

HONOURABLE ROCHELLE FORDE: I am obliged Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I am just about rapping up. I know you are worried about the heat. Mr. Speaker, this Government is doing a remarkable job of governing.

The work in housing stands out among its many fine accomplishments and in the coming months and years Vincentians will have even more to be proud of.

Mr. Speaker, we are to be pleased with our administration and the work in housing is to be commended. I therefore wish this Motion easy passage through this Honourable House. I am obliged [applause].

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much. At this point in keeping with our earlier agreement statement, we are going to have the suspension at this time to accommodate that meeting that we spoke about between the CRSC and the Committee of the Whole House. Honourable Members, therefore the House stands suspended until at the end of that meeting. House stands suspended.

**Question put and agreed to.
House suspended at 5:30 p.m.
To accommodate the CRSC meeting.
House Resumed at : 8:30 p.m.**

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I want to give the undertaking that we will put aside Parliamentary time for the continue of the debate on the Housing Motion and I will just like to move the first reading of the Bills of Exchange (Amendment) Bill, 2009 and then we can take the adjournment. So perhaps Madam Clerk will lead us.

1. BILLS OF EXCHANGE (AMENDMENT) BILL 2009

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to amend the Bills of Exchange Act 2009 be read a first time.

This Bill, the Bills of Exchange (Amendment) Bill 2009 seeks to amend the Bills of Exchange Act to provide for matters relating to the presentment of cheques; to extend to cheques that are not indorsed and similar instruments the protection which a paying bank at present enjoys in respect of indorsed cheques and other instruments; and for other purposes.

HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the Motion.

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

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: We will do the second reading of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Honourable Members, the question is that a Bill for an Act to provide for the incorporation of the Seventh-day Adventist Church of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and for matters incidental thereto and connected therewith be read a second time.

**Question put and agreed to.
Bill read a second time.**

ADJOURNMENT

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, in the month of May it is our intention to have two meetings of this Honourable House, the next one on the 7th May and a meeting on the 28th May, 2009. Hopefully the meeting on the 28th May we will have the first reading of the Constitution Bill.

Accordingly Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House do stand adjourned to Thursday May 7th at 10:00 a.m.

HONOURABLE MICHAEL BROWNE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to second the Motion.

**Question put and agreed to.
House stand adjourned at 8:40 p.m.
until 7th May, 2009 at 10:00 a.m.**