

No. 3

Tuesday

Third Session

10th January, 2012

Ninth Parliament

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

ADVANCE COPY

OFFICIAL REPORT

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THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FIRST MEETING, THIRD SESSION OF THE NINTH PARLIAMENT OF SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES CONSTITUTED AS SET OUT IN SCHEDULE 2 TO THE SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES ORDER, 1979.

THIRD SITTING

10th JANUARY, 2012

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

The Honourable House of Assembly met at 9:12 a.m. in the Assembly Chamber, Court House, Kingstown.

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER IN THE CHAIR

Honourable Hendrick Alexander

Present

MEMBERS OF CABINET

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

Member for North Central Windward

Attorney General
Honourable Judith Jones-Morgan

Minister of Education/ Deputy
Prime Minister
Honourable Girlyn Miguel

Member for Marriaqua

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

Member for East St. George

Minister of Agriculture, Forestry
and Fisheries and Rural Transformation
Honourable Montgomery Daniel
Minister of Tourism and Industry
Honourable Saboto Caesar

Member for North Windward

Member for South Central Windward

Minister of Health, Wellness and
The Environment
Honourable Cecil McKie

Member for West St. George

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

Member for Central Leeward

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

Member for South Windward

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade
And Consumer Affairs
Honourable Dr. Douglas Slater

Government Senator

Minister of Transport and Works, Urban
Development and Local Government
Honourable Julian Francis

Government Senator

Parliamentary Secretary in the Office
Of the Prime Minister
Honourable Elvis Charles

Government Senator

Honourable David Browne

Government Senator/ Deputy Speaker

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE

Honourable Arnhim Eustace
Leader of the Opposition

Member for East Kingstown

Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday

Honourable Terrance Ollivierre

Honourable St. Claire Leacock

Honourable Daniel Cummings

Honourable Roland Matthews

Honourable Nigel Stephenson

Honourable Vynnette Frederick

Honourable Anesia Baptiste

Member for Northern Grenadines

Member for Southern Grenadines

Member for Central Kingstown

Member for West Kingstown

Member for North Leeward

Member for South Leeward

Opposition Senator

Opposition Senator

ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

TUESDAY 10TH JANUARY, 2012

PRAYERS

HONOURABLE HENDRICK ALEXANDER, MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, read the prayers of the House.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, before I move for the suspension of the Standing Orders in relation to Hours of Sitting, please permit me, Mr. Speaker, to just indicate formally a correction on page 91 of the budget speech. I think Honourable Members would have seen the typographical error which is there. The last paragraph, is important to note that valuation method to produce the list does not determine the tax assessed. It is the rate applied is important to note that the valuation method to produce the list does not determine tax assessed. It is the rates applied to the list that will do so. We therefore propose to levy the new property tax at a rate of (it has 0.8) but obviously because it is 15 percent on the..., the neutral figure is 0.07 it should read 0.08 which would be just under 15 percent over the neutral figure. Several Honourable Members would have seen it including the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and knew it was a typographical, but I just want to raise it formally eh, Mr. Speaker, so that...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: The correction is noted.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that under Standing Order 12(5) that the proceedings of this sitting be exempted from the provisions of the Standing Order hours of Sitting.

Question put and agreed to.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, just before we begin our debate this morning, sometimes you know I am greeted very often with statements by people, oh you know you are going to have problems on your back and all that kind of thing today and very often it is a very uncomfortable..., it brings a very uncomfortable feeling because I know that Parliamentarians/Politicians are not beef, they are normal human beings like everybody else, of course subject to their various emotions and things of that nature, but I guess people would say these things because they think that there must be some form of contention during sittings like these. But I do not think there has to be. I believe that we can do our debate in a very civilised manner, we would have, of course, respect for each other, allow each other to make their presentation, but I am expecting if something is incorrect and must it be corrected that it has to be done and there is a procedure for so doing and I expect that we will apply those procedures as we go along. It is not the intention of this Chair to countenance any form disrespect and it is hopeful that we would conduct ourselves in this debate as we ought to and be mindful (I do not have the full text here) of that portion I think it is 2 Timothy one of those, whatever

thing is true, whatever is honest, whatever is fair, what is of good report we need to think on those things. So let us as..., the Leader of the Opposition he has four hours to make his presentation, he does not have to use it if he does not feel he needs it, but that is the time allotted to him and so; therefore, we would..., I hope that we can have or hold our debate in a very civil manner and as I say, there is procedure for dealing with matters that are not factually correct and so on. So we could apply those. Thank you very much.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to make my contribution to the debate and budget 2012. Mr. Speaker, I have been a Member of this Parliament since 1998. In the next few months I would have served the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and particularly those in East Kingstown for 14 consecutive years. Prior to that time, Mr. Speaker, I was a civil servant for about 10 years rising to the level of Permanent Secretary and subsequently as fiscal advisor to the Government for a further four years making a total, Mr. Speaker, of 28 years in direct service to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

For another 17 years, Mr. Speaker, I worked as a regional public servant at the Caribbean Development Bank beginning as an Administrative Officer and spending my last eight years there as Director of projects. The department which prepared all of the CDBs projects in every Caribbean country from Belize in the North to Guyana in the South including of course our country St. Vincent and the Grenadines. CDB is today and has been for many years the largest lender to St. Vincent and the Grenadines. As at 30th September 2011, CDB has disbursed some \$333.4 million to St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, in 1985 I was seconded by the CDB the United Nations Development Programme which assigned me to the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines as Director General of Finance to review and make changes to the fiscal/financial situation in this nation. Many of the changes implemented at that time today are still part of the financial and fiscal infrastructure of this country. You know in a sense, Mr. Speaker, I did not have been here at all, because I have been offered jobs at a more international level a great personal gain, but I wanted to be here. I wanted to be in my country St. Vincent and the Grenadines as so many other people wished to do and have done, to make my contribution.

Mr. Speaker, this has given me a total of 45 years of service in economic and financial matters for the Caribbean Region and particularly to my homeland. Given that experience, Mr. Speaker, I may even boast that I am far none the most qualified person in this honourable House of Parliament to analyse and comment on the economic health of St. Vincent and the Grenadines [applause].

Mr. Speaker, I do not regard this as an easy feat given the considerable economic and financial acumen even on this side of the House. So when I say today, Mr. Speaker, when I speak in this Honourable House today, Mr. Speaker, on the presentation made by the Honourable Prime Minister on the Budget I say, we are at an unprecedented moment in our economic development. Those who wish to take what I say lightly may do so, but what I say is based, Mr. Speaker, on many years of experience in matters of this sort.

Our nation led by a Prime Minister Gonsalves and his administration, ULP administration, has ended its fourth consecutive year of negative growth in the economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. The International

Monetary Fund has ranked St. Vincent and the Grenadines as last in terms of growth, growth in the GDP among all the nations of Latin America and the Caribbean for 2011. The IMF says that ours is the only economy of 32 economies that comprise Latin America and the Caribbean to get smaller each year for the past four years and the only one they projected as having negative growth for the year 2011 out of those 32 countries.

There are a lot of talks about revolution, but our economy, to me is the amazing shrinking economy of the geographical south and as we listened yesterday, Mr. Speaker, to the budget address which should have given us hope for positive growth in our economy, we heard several hours of excuses for failure. Mr. Speaker, what we really have before us is a budget just like last year's, with estimates just like last year's, but worst of all, Mr. Speaker, given that the fiscal situation in this country will continue to deteriorate under the mismanagement of the ULP.

I hear talk about national debt reduction, but I know, Mr. Speaker, and I will provide some figures for that later on in this presentation, that many have lost jobs, both in the public and in the private sector. I know, Mr. Speaker, that Government continues to keep a number of retirees whose job descriptions are not very clear to me, Mr. Speaker, but who consume a fair amount of the financial resources of this country, while there are many of our young people remaining unemployed.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes I wonder at the lack of sensitivity displayed and I include in this lack of sensitivity, Mr. Speaker, the recent trip of the Prime Minister during the Christmas, New Year period to Bethlehem and elsewhere, while many people were here seeking to get their pay before Christmas.

Mr. Speaker, I am not against travel, I am not against travel at all, it is important that a certain amount of travel be done to promote the interests of our country and of our people, but the kind of economic performance that we have shown and at Christmas time when many who have worked could not get all of their wages or what is due to them, it was insensitive and totally unnecessary, it could have been done at another time.

This is supposed to be the season, Mr. Speaker, of good will so all men, but certainly a good will to all people. They put us here and they put us here to serve and look after their interests. Mr. Speaker, I have looked over the years in this Parliament at a number of happening which have taken place here and we do not really get any redress you know I remember for instance the special audits which were done in the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture where the resources of this country were mishandled not in the interest of the people of this country and all those, Mr. Speaker, have contributed to a situation in this country where we have more and more fiscal difficulties. It is wrong, Mr. Speaker, for someone to buy materials for Government through a company in which they have interests Mr. Speaker, and sell them at exorbitant prices to the Ministry in which they work; we have items costing in some instances, Mr. Speaker \$20 or \$30 that were sold for \$1000 and more to the Ministry of Agriculture and we have given information on that before. We have instances of waste and growing corruption in our society. We have people like they only want to eat Kentucky, utilising resources of this country and what has happened to them, Mr. Speaker, what has happened to them? They are paying no price, but you have others who have made comments on matters. Like our own Senator Baptiste, but she had to go. Action was taken against her and she had to go.

Mr. Speaker, let us look in some of the general terms now because there is a lot of details that we need to look at during the course of this presentation, but I will try and minimize it because very often our people, because of their own personal circumstances are not in a position to..., and because of lack of information they are not in a position to fully analyse a lot of what we say sometimes in this House of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, cash deficits are increasing, Mr. Speaker, to unsustainable levels in this economy, unsustainable levels. Our balance of payments continue to worsen, unemployment, I know within a recent document they put it in the 30 percent range that is for in the IMF statistics, but it is a significant amount of underemployment also. Mr. Speaker, all this is taking place under the watch of the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines who is the Minister of Finance of this country.

We see statements from international institutions indicating that banks are wary to lend, w-a-r-y, wary, not weary [interjection] that might be true also but I ain't dealing with that. Banks are wary to lend and that lending was flat for 2011. Non-performing loans in our banks at the level of 7.5 percent that is the Commercial Banks and in non-bank financial institutions like Credit Unions, 8 percent or more and there is one institution where the situation is worse. The private sector, Mr. Speaker, is still owed by the Government and when you think of that, Mr. Speaker, you think about its impact on investment by the private sector and therefore its impact on jobs.

Crimes against the person and property are increasing and there are a lot of other crimes, murder and so forth, but I do not (and I will repeat this where) attribute crimes related to murder and so on when the Government..., that is a matter which stands before all of us, because we have a responsibility, Mr. Speaker, as a nation or various groups, parents, teachers, churches, all of us parliamentarians have a role to play where that type of crime is concerned.

In some instances you are still having troubles at the hospital with supplies for patients. It was the representative for West Kingstown, Mr. Cummings who [said] earlier that there were difficulties for us in this regard. He was laughed at, at the time until he pulled out his letter, but Mr. Speaker, all these are issues and when I listened to the presentation yesterday, Mr. Speaker, when I listened to the presentation yesterday I heard descriptions which do not address any of these. Thousands of Vincentians are unable to adequately provide for themselves and I think the figure used by the Prime Minister in terms of public assistance and assistance via the NIS run into some \$12,800 or so forth.

They cannot adequately provide for themselves, resulting in a great demand for public assistance. I have no doubt that the demand is genuine, because when you have levels of growth that we have had in the past few years more and more people come on the breadline. The Prime Minister makes the most in his presentations about that fact that you increase the amounts and so on. I do not have a problem with that, what I wanted to say is how come we have so many. If employment was going up, would we have had so many people requiring public assistance? That is the part I want answer, what is being done to put the economy in a position where there is significant job creation and I am of the view that the more creation will happen that is obvious, the less likely we are to have large numbers of persons on public assistance. So I do not begrudge anybody getting public assistance, but I believe that the Government has a responsibility to create the environments in our

country, creating environment which allows the economy to grow and I am not talking about jobless growth, I am talking about genuine growth which is so important for all of us.

Mr. Speaker, during the Christmas season and the months leading up to it many people's water was cut off. Electricity bills could not be met by many and they were cut off also you know. The problem with water is so basic and yesterday we heard reference to an increase in the water rates. I understand the financial..., I understand Mr. Speaker, the financial requirements of the Water Authority. I do not have a problem with that, I understand that. What I have a problem with though is that we find funds for a lot of other things which are less worthy.

They have some parents still, a number of them who say they are not able to pay for the transportation of their children to schools especially from the rural areas and those who get into Grammar School and High School and Convent and so on in Town, and I believe every Member of this Parliament, every Member of this Parliament in some way or the other would have tried in their personal capacity with their own resources or resources that they can garner from another source to try and help a number of those students who are in that position, but the fact remains that they are in that position. And only a growing economy and creative, and that is the word we hear a lot about, only creative actions, creative policies, creative thinking could change that, maybe that is so, but in all the economy has to grow.

Mr. Speaker, I think you know, not think, I know that everyone of the Members of this Parliament are concerned about the people of this country and the development of this country. We may have differences of opinion as to how that can be achieved, how we can increase the levels of employment because we need a lot of jobs here if we are to avoid a lot of the difficulties that we now face and the impact of those on the fiscal situation in our country.

Mr. Speaker, we hear about the NCB and where it is gone, you hear all kinds of stories, the really is, is that it was in trouble, the Government had to sell it and the Caribbean Development Bank provided a loan to reduce the Government debt and statutory bodies debt in the CDB as a condition of selling the bank. I do not want anybody now to try and fool me and talk about creative thinking. The fact remains that the bank is no longer owned in its majority by Vincentians. The fact is that we had to borrow and we (not the bank) have to repay the \$100 million and then the bank was sold for \$42 million, 51 percent of it. So do not try and give me anything about smart move and so on. You are not fooling me with that. I accept you know, I accept that the interest rates at the CDB are lower than the interest rates at those institutions and even the Central Government was more than that and therefore the interest would decline and that is also reflected in the estimates in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. So do not give me this story about it is a creative way of dealing with this thing. It ain't so, the bank was in trouble, it would have collapsed if it was not sold and therefore you sought a way to sell it, but we paid a price of \$100 million in loans to do that. That is what happened.

Mr. Speaker, you know nowadays we do not talk a great deal about victimization you know, but it is there, it is happening all the time. You know when I contrast those fine words "together now" I just have to laugh [interjection] I hear that too and NMU now. Mr. Speaker, I notice the irony, a certain irony I notice, some people on my right side at the moment like to deal and refer to institution that the IMF was schizophrenic while telling Vincentians that we are going to have growth of .8 percent, .8 percent in 2011 but telling the IMF..., and

I have the letter here and I reading it today, and telling the IMF we ain't going to have no growth this year it would be negative, but I will read that letter today, because we have to come clean, Mr. Speaker, we in this Parliament have to come clean with the people of this country.

Mr. Speaker, we hear about state of the NIS. I did not know it, the extent of the decline in its profitability until I saw the staff report of the IMF and I ain't get it from no black angel, I got it from site, the IMF own site and Mr. Speaker, while I expected there would be a fall in profit because of the forays, the investment forays amounted to some \$62 million from the British American/CLICO, it still struck me that the net income or profit of the NIS has fallen from \$27 million in 2008 to a mere \$5.6 million in 2010. You know that is the institution which all of us including those on this side of the House report in terms of ensuring as we can that it does well.

I was Chairman of the NIS years ago, I was Minister of Finance responsible for the NIS years ago and I have a lot of familiarity with what it means for the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in terms of their retirement. What it means for the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, whether it is for payments for funerals and other grants. What it means in terms of survivors benefit, what it means in terms of those persons who are on special programmes and getting assistance, very important institution. But we cannot allow it to go under, we cannot allow it to go under and yesterday I saw the 'googly' bowled by the Prime Minister, but he did not want to touch it. But you know Vivian Richards is on the other side [laughter] and he played the ball, but I am going to come back to that ten years later today you know, because it is an important aspect of the fiscal consolidation requirements of this country.

I hear, Mr. Speaker, that the Prime Minister has in his Estimates in under his Ministry a need for another car. I want to say this about it you know that is another indication to lack of sensitivity at this time. Former Prime Minister Mitchell had a car for 14 years; he put in \$56,000 in the Estimates...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: [Cell phone rings] hello that person with that cell phone, could you please leave? Officer, could you escort the person outside? This is matter we have addressed time and time...

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, that car was passed on to me when I became Prime Minister and I had the grant duty once at Government House of having to get out and push it after attending an official function. I believe the policemen who were there at the time were little embarrassed yet when provision is made for \$56,000 or some figure at that nature, to get a new car for the Prime Minister all hell brake loose in this country. Well this one Mr. Prime Minister I am saying to you, it is not acceptable. There is sufficient provision already and I noticed also that a mountain is being discussed even with the fund in terms of reducing expenditure is getting rid of some of the vehicles. So I do not think you should bother with that one Mr. Prime Minister. There are many more important priorities for the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, I do not really want to get into the leak in the Prime Minister's house, but I do not know what that is. All I know that it is expensive and I would hope that those who have done those estimates know what they are doing. Mr. Speaker, I am mentioning these things today you know because in one way or the other, they have all contributed to the present state of our economy. If you rip off the Ministry by selling goods to them the additional funds you paid could have been used for something else [applause] and I will keep mentioning them,

Mr. Speaker, because the condition that we find ourselves in today also and I heard the Prime Minister calling yesterday in terms of public servants, for some attention to be paid to the matters of this sort.

Couple years ago we were on the cusp of economic takeoff, but I did not know it was a takeoff into negative growth. Round that out afterwards, I misread what is being said. A harvest to come, I did not understand what that was; I say plenty jobs but I ain't hear no harvest yet. All of this is under the watch of the current Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves.

Mr. Speaker, much has been said and much has been made by the Prime Minister of the global economic crisis and he is right. It just had a very negative effect on our economy and those of other countries in the region and outside of the region. We also know that countries much larger than ours, their economy is much larger than ours have gone through and are going through unending difficulties including places like Greece, Iceland, United States, Ireland, many on the brink of collapse. You know even the United Kingdom has found it necessary to take some austerity measures, the question is, what was all this mean for us? I do not believe that we are anywhere near the state of Greece and countries of that sort, but I believe we are heading there, I believe we are heading there, because I saw nothing yesterday in the budget that gives me hope that there would be fiscal consolidation and growth in the St. Vincent and the Grenadines economy and I am going to deal with that substantially, Mr. Speaker, later on in this presentation. Yet strangely, Mr. Speaker, ships in rough waters all across Latin America and the Caribbean have found their way to port except the SS St. Vincent and the Grenadines, because one can point to the fact that they have returned to growth in 2011, because some only had two years, some one year and some three years of negative growth. Only Jamaica and St. Vincent and the Grenadines had three years consecutive of negative growth and only St. Vincent had four, hum.

The Prime Minister tells you the seas are rough out there on the international scene and our ship SS St. Vincent and the Grenadines remains adrift, tossed about. The main reason, Mr. Speaker, is as simple as the analogy, the captain cannot steer. He cannot find grid north on an economic map. St. Vincent is worse in terms of growth because the captain cannot steer, the seas are rough for captain Gonsalves. Mr. Speaker, given the fact that the others are making their steps and had began to achieve some growth including a number our countries, it seems that the seas are only too rough for Dr. Gonsalves, not for Tillman Thomas in Grenada because they start to grow, not for a Freundel Stuart of Barbados they grow, not for Denzil Douglas of St. Kitts Nevis, grow, not for Kamla Persad-Bissessar they grow, not for Roosevelt Skerrit of Dominica they grow too, not for Dean Barrow of Belize, they grow. It was not for Bharrat Jagdeo who probably grew the most and even for Stephenson King, St. Lucia, grew. Not for Hubert Ingraham because the Bahamas grew. Mr. Speaker, the captain may give hours upon hours of excuses, but the fact remain ours is the only ship sinking. Captain the ship is sinking. Mr. Speaker, I have touched on all those issues because I believe in the end they are germane to the whole issue of fiscal consolidation in our country and economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, at the last sitting of this Parliament we dealt with the Estimates for St. Vincent and the Grenadines and if my memory is not failing a significant number of members on the other side of the House did not debate the Estimates. They did not see it fit to come to the public of this country and give description and explanation of what is supposed to happen in relation to their own Ministry, by contrast, except for representative

Cummings for West Kingstown who was in Trinidad receiving medical attention. All the Members on this side of the House addressed the Estimates.

Mr. Speaker, that is one of the things why we are here, we are here to say to our people this is what we are proposing to do and this is what we expect the outcome will be, this is the outcome last year and we expect to change this year. You want to tell me that even as the ship sinks you could not wait for permission from the captain to grab the bucket and bail out water? Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious issue you know. You have a range of competent people over there who hold ministerial portfolios or who would not even debate the Estimates of expenditure under the specific portfolios which they have responsibility for. I hope, Mr. Speaker, that we would have no issue with that in this budget debate.

The budget is too important an instrument of our development to have those responsible not speak on the areas for which they have been given responsibility and I expect, Mr. Speaker, that during the course of this week you will be having some late hours here because I expect that all people, all Members of Parliament, elected Members that they will speak, we owe it, we owe it to our constituents, we owe it to the nation and there is no excuse for that, there is no excuse for that.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn my attention to some aspects of the budget address yesterday. I believe you know, Mr. Speaker, that we ..., we they had a tape recorder and compared the budget address of yesterday we would find what you call a lot of repetition of things that you heard for the last ten years. It was anecdotal and report with the same empty phrases [interjection] I am coming to you just now you know [laughter] I cannot leave you out. I left you out in East Kingstown already I cannot leave you out that will be unfair, a repeat with the same empty phrases and taglines we have heard a million times before.

Mr. Speaker, the length of the presentation had an inverse relationship to the quality of its content and whatever bit of value one could have found in string of words put together that value diminished rapidly as the presentation progressed. I did not calculate the time, but I know it was significantly longer than usual. A bit torturous for those persons in the public gallery and I daresay to some Members of this House.

Mr. Speaker, the budget presentation look disquiet a lot of things in various ministries in great details. It tells you how many staff the Ministry of Agriculture had, how many programmes of the professional to the Ministry were involved in, yet he had a massive decline in Agriculture. Mr. Speaker, in St. Vincent and the Grenadines today whether we want to accept it or not, whether we like it or not, Mr. Speaker, people are worse off. I hear the figures of unemployment that the Prime Minister attempted to give yesterday and I would not accept one word of it because I have figures from the same NIS.

Mr. Speaker, I have yet to come to grips with what is there in the budget to consolidate our fiscal situation, what is there to promote economic growth? Eh? All of our sectors are having difficulty and the Prime Minister indicated yesterday that earlier during the year there was some improvement in the Tourism, but there is a dismal performance in Agriculture. I find it so difficult, Mr. Speaker, and maybe my brain must be getting mobile or agile. I find it difficult to really clearly understand what the priorities are for growth. You are not going to tell me that the Ministry of Agriculture will suddenly jump up from next week. They have been there all the time for years and suddenly become more efficient. What is strange over there?

Mr. Speaker, I recognize that tourism has emerged as our leading sector and I will support any serious measures aimed at improving that sector and likewise with Agriculture. I believe both are very critical to our economic development for growth and also for support the security. You know in previous presentations here have always alluded to the need for the tourism sector to get as much as is needed for their worth, even when former tourism minister Baptiste was in this Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, these are difficult times, very, very difficult time, I recognize that. I know that the task that the Prime Minister has to undertake is a humongous one, but I also know that he caused a lot of the problems that are there now that we have to fix and I noted some of that before and you cannot fix them by ducking. He said there is need for bold action and I agreed there is need for bold action but I ain't see nothing bold in the budget.

Mr. Speaker, I did not hear anything of the countercyclical approach, maybe we ain't have no money to conduct any countercyclical approach and I understand that countercyclical approach to mean that when we are anticipating growth, we did not get it. We should not be witnessing these things in country celebrating 32 years of Independence. Mr. Speaker, you know I do not know how many people know this, but I have a document here which I am prepared to make a document of the House and this document comes from the International Monetary Fund Fiscal Department. Headed, St. Vincent and the Grenadines Option for Expenditure Base Fiscal Consolidation, the Prime Minister ain't tell us about this you know, buy they have about this kind of work option for fiscal consolidation and when you look, Mr. Speaker, at the budget cover, 2012 budget address, job creation, economic growth, financial stablisation, fiscal rebalancing (whatever that means) and social equity at the time of continued global economic concerns, but they asked for work to be done, Mr. Speaker.

In this document called "Options for Expenditure Base Fiscal Consolidation. I think it is wise to enquire into these things, I think it is wise to do so, but at the same time, Mr. Speaker, we have to decide if and when to bite the bullet. And Mr. Speaker, when I look at that document there are things in there which the Government and all the staff know about and I believe that the Government is uncomfortable, politically uncomfortable, I could understand why. I believe the Government is politically uncomfortable in relation to implementing any of these stuff here [interjection] you heard what said? I said, the Government is uncomfortable, I am not saying anything about prescriptions, it is the Government who asked them..... let me tell you some of the things that were suggested. Any Government has to make this decision; I cannot tell them what decision to make.

The IMF had suggested several options including (this is the fiscal report Expenditure Base Consolidation) stating the salary structure that means they only grant automatic increment where the Government doing that. When you look at the estimates the Government is doing that in this year but I believe that was there for about three years. What I want to know from the Prime Minister is whether he was committed to that for three years. What discussions has he had with the public service in relation to that and I am not talking about the three percent that is owing, but what is there in the estimates to date there is a \$7 million extra in the estimates under wages and salaries... and that is what this says, but it does not say anything for the other two years. Is the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines committed to [interjection] oh you have committed year by year, so that is one of the proposals, not an advice, because I do not want people to be fooled.

Mr. Speaker, reducing allowances and benefits to introduce performance management systems and interestingly and I want the public servants to listen to this, which is what I referred to earlier. The IMF also proposed a

freeze on the wages of Government established workers for a period of three years up to 2015. Mr. Speaker, I believe quite frankly that you are going to have this thing done incrementally. As a matter of fact, the Minister was just saying so. I do not believe for one moment that the 3 percent which is owed to the public servants would be paid anytime in 2012 unless we have some sort of economic miracle and there is no provision made for it anyhow in the estimates of expenditure.

The Trade Unions, Mr. Speaker, in this country, almost every time they have had their wages legislated and I believe it is very important because our public servants are not stupid, I believe it is very important, Mr. Speaker, that you discuss these things frankly and openly with the public servants. This is our country. We recognize economic difficulty, we have to take actions to deal with those difficulties, but you cannot take action because it is foolishness to tell me that maybe by June you could get the three percent that is not going to happen. So sit down and discuss the matter frankly with the public servants. You may find, Mr. Speaker, that they recognize the issue, they are Vincentians too. A wage freeze is better than going home you know. Sit down frankly with the public service and discuss the issue and that is all I ask, sit down and discuss with them, point out the issues with relation to fiscal consolidation in the country.

Mr. Speaker, I believe however, that the ULP Government has committed itself to that three year freeze already to the IMF. I am saying, meet with the public servants and explain exactly what the situation is, they have a continuing and deep interest in their own wellbeing and they also as patriots have an interest in the wellbeing of the country because if the country is not doing well, they are not going to do well either. Mr. Speaker, this is an extremely important issue on the point of fiscal consolidation for our country. What we do not have, Mr. Speaker, we do not have the resources and you have to find ways to deal with it, Mr. Speaker, otherwise come next year, you in a worse mess. You would be in a worse mess next year, Mr. Speaker. You want to have negative growth next year too? We cannot afford that as a country we cannot afford that. The people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines cannot afford that that is reality that is reality.

Mr. Speaker, when is the point you know that sometimes people have to say use the word schizophrenia you know because you know some of the things we have to do, the Government know, I am sure the Prime Minister is very familiar with this document and I believe he take out a piece of it but he do not want to say so, which is bad politics, but it is not good economics. Mr. Speaker, I am drawing to the attention of the public that this document exists, it was asked for by the Government and I am looking at the Estimates and doing my own interpretation based on this document, [interjection] not gold, it is a piece of document that the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines commissioned [interjection] I done know you do not understand this you know [interjection] no, no, I said there are many people with skills in this Parliament.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members please do not..., Honourable Leader of the Opposition, please do not incite Honourable Members.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Do not incite?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: I did not realize I was inciting anybody sir.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes sir, you are.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Do not worry about that man, do not worry about that. Mr. Speaker, I am asking the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to meet with the public service and work out some arrangements. I do not mean the kind of meeting that you just had where you are telling people that they will be getting their three percent in June if the economy improves. The economy cannot be better in any significant way by June. Let us not fool ourselves or try to fool the public, the process of the development..., and the Prime Minister knows it, the process to the development is not an easy one. The question of bringing an economy from negative growth for four years into positive growth is not an easy task and often it cause us pain, but there comes a time..., you know, Mr. Speaker, I remember you know some years ago being part of a mission from the CDB going to speak to the Cabinet of Barbados on the question of fiscal consolidation, because they have gotten themselves in the same sort of position that we are in now. The mission was headed by Sir Neville Nicholls; I was then Director of Projects to the bank. I participated fully in that meeting and the Government of Barbados were faced with the option of devaluing their currency or cutting their expenditure on the current budget.

They took the option of cutting wages, not freezing them, but four years later when the economy had improved they gave back the public servants that which they took out. They had the option of doing nothing, but they recognized that if they did nothing, Mr. Speaker, that later on the actions that you have to take will be much more difficult. [Interjection] I am not recommending, I know you want to play that game, if I was recommending I would say so. Why would I recommend that? If I want to recommend it I would recommend it if I wanted to, I do not see the need now. I believe savings can be made without having to cut wages but the more we continue as you duck yesterday in this Parliament, the more we will likely to have a situation where that happens and you will take the full blame for it too. Mr. Speaker, I am appealing to the Minister of Finance to increase his efforts in discussing these things more frankly to the public servants so they do their work and do the things that you would like them to do.

Mr. Speaker, I want to go back to a document which is published on the website with the fund when this country, when this Government went to get a rapid credit facility to try and deal with the problems arising out of Hurricane Tomas. The Government made it's case for funding from the IMF and that went to the board of the IMF since February 28th and that was a result of a lot of the problems that were arising including the problems of the international economic crisis and the Government was seeking from the IMF a facility to help bridge some of the finances we have mainly that. Under the rapid credit facility the funds on February 28th 2010 approved, to use the exact words, a rapid credit facility of SDRs \$2.075 million and a number of conditions tie to that financing which this country was not told about. All of these recommendations which were made, the Government has been working to implement these recommendations. I have seen some evidence of that both in terms of statements and some actions which the Government has taken. I said 2010, it should be 2011.

Mr. Speaker, many of them are not hard. There was need, Mr. Speaker, and the Government committed themselves to that, that was not difficult to do, they need to improve tax compliance, there as leakages to this..., they have to try and plug the leakages. I have no problem with that, but then that needs to be done. Anyway

you established a large taxpayer unit. Some people may know that a large taxpayer unit has been established. I do not know, generally speaking, how much of that the public knows but that will cover the 77 companies that pay 83 percent of VAT and Corporate Income Tax and Payee Collection. This is what that unit is about. It includes 77 companies in St. Vincent and the Grenadines that pay 83 percent of VAT, Corporate Income Taxes and Payee Collection. So we are going to look at those more closely, take actions as necessary in relation to them.

Yesterday the Prime Minister announced in his budget debate that some \$25 million owed on the VAT. Broaden the collection of property taxes that was also agreed since that time that the Government would broaden the collection of property taxes. You did not know about that at that time, you know of some work was being done, but the Government has already agreed with fund on that, but they are going to broaden the collection of property tax, they are going to streamline exemptions. You know very often a lot of institutions right to Cabinet that they want concessions and so on and very often the Cabinet does approve that has happened to Governments over the years. There is nothing unique about it in the present situation and that call has been made before, a fifth one contains the wage bill.

The Government agreed to that condition long time ago. I want to make that clear, the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, a document arising of the Board decision of the 28th February 2011 had already agreed to contain the wage bill, no wage increases until the fiscal condition improves. How many people knew that? How many people knew in February last year that the Government already agreed to contain the wage bill until the fiscal condition improves? But that was agreed with the fund, that was agreed with the fund till the fiscal condition and then you will see the result say that. In talking with the unions now they say, well they ain't have the three percent right now when the condition improves, I will do it. Yes, all I am saying it is done long time and we should have known in this country [interjection] you ain't taking me off of this you know.

Mr. Speaker, the Government of St. Vincent should have told the public about this. It is a very serious issue. It may be politically unpalatable, but it is part of what they had agreed to as a condition of this loan and then, Mr. Speaker, streamlining spending on goods and services, they had that in the budget too. The point I am making, Mr. Speaker, that the Government had agreed on these things already with the International Monetary Fund.

Hear some of the justification. Ending October 2010, St. Vincent and the Grenadines was hit by Hurricane Tomas resulting in significant damage estimated at about five percent of the Gross Domestic Product of this country. The country received financial assistance pledges of around US\$23.7 million of which \$13.7 million was for immediate emergency assistance and \$10 million for reconstruction projects over the next three years or so. About 90 percent of the US that is \$11 million had been disbursed by May 2011 that is dealing with what happened up there with Tomas, and this helped to mitigate the impact also of the adverse global situation, but what that did you know, Mr. Speaker, it used up 70 percent of our quota at the IMF. It is now noteworthy that we only have 30 percent access on our IMF quote, so it was used for a very good purpose. I have no problem with it, I have a problem in that we do not know, I do not even know how many Members on the other side know [interjection] you could call it ignorance.

Mr. Speaker, I know George Bush cannot see me you know. Mr. Speaker, all I am saying in relation to this, this is important, critical, fiscal information and it will have its own consequence. It will have its own consequences

to all of us. Mr. Speaker, I want to read, Mr. Speaker, a letter sent to the International Monetary Fund, Acting Managing Director, Mr. John Lipsky and signed by the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and dated, Mr. Speaker 27th June 2011.

“In mid April 2011, St. Vincent and the Grenadines suffered from torrential rains that caused flash flooding and landslides and severely damaged infrastructure, agriculture and the residential housing tops. Our initial estimate suggests that the overall damage is in the order of US\$25.5 million with 3.6 percent gross domestic product, although the cost of reconstruction and rehabilitation is expected to be much larger.

Furthermore, the recent natural disaster has set back the reconstruction that had just started to take hold after Hurricane Tomas which has hit the island in October last year and derailed our efforts of reactivating the economy.”

I want the public to listen to this you know.

“As a result real GDP growth in 2011 is now expected to decline for a fourth consecutive year. Real GDP,”

[Interjection] it happened me ain't fooling with that, it happened [interjection] eh, so what you are suggesting, you fool them to get money. Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister knew since then that he was not going to get no growth in 2011 and this .8 to 1 percent he tells you about was a fiction, Mr. Speaker, while inflation is projected to increase, reflecting the pass through from high international food and fuel prices, well I agree with that, because that is in fact what was happening. The deterioration of the export sector Tourism and Agriculture although based on the information given yesterday by the Prime Minister there was some improvement in that half of the relation story and the necessary construction related import would put pressure on the Balance of payments which we know is bad.

The Prime Minister goes on to deal with other matters which are not really germane to our discussion here [interjection] well if you want me to read the whole letter just that it is a bit too long, I will read it and I will go through all the points [interjection] I am all right, I am all right with it. It is a lovely letter it is only that you did not tell the public that you know that we have negative growth in 2011. You say it here. Your immediate post floods needs were met with grants from donors eh, I telling them now, I telling the public now by reading the document. Well I know it was not going, I know the growing economy was not growing, the immediate post flood needs were met with grants from donors including the CDB and redirecting already allocated spending. However, we still need significant resources for building what was destroyed as well as to address the social needs of those affected by the floods and the landslides. And it goes on to explain that it had already received pledges from several donors and identified about EC\$8 million out of a total of \$19 million required in 2011 of funding and grants on concessional loans recover tabulated costs.

Next paragraph, on the fiscal front we expect a temporary widening of the fiscal deficit in 2011. Fiscal deficit is the express for widen in 2011, although we plan to keep the primary deficit including grants below two percent of GDP which ain't going to happen, to ensure that we can meet the needs of those affected while safeguarding our fiscal position we are taking several steps. In one of the policies outlined in our letter of February 15th, this is further confirmation that the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines saying that those items in that letter he is committed too. That is further confirmation in the very same letter, is has committed himself and the

country to that. And let me read it back. We are taking several steps in line with the policies outlined in our February 15th letter. We have already set up and operationalised the large taxpayer units, he started to say what he done already to make the conditions in the IMF letter and have made significant strides in broadening the coverage of property taxes, he say we are on the way to increase the property taxes which we had in the budget yesterday. This assures you all things have been agreed with the IMF already and you ain't know, you did not know. You plan to make the last taxpayer unit operational by September this year, or it would have been September 2011 by increasing its auditing capacity and providing legal support for enforcing compliance knowing what he has done already in terms of meeting the conditions.

On the expenditure side you have deferred..., let me read this you know carefully what the trade union is saying, all yo say I must read the whole letter, I am reading the whole letter. On the expenditure side you have deferred the budgeted three percent wage increase until the fiscal position improves, but you tell them around June you are going to put it, you cannot do that. You will not be in a position to do that in June 2012. You have deferred the budgeted three percent wage increase. You are also making progress on several other fronts conducting energy audits in Government buildings, auctioning vehicles, auctioning vehicles to streamline spending on goods and services. Working in the action plan on public finance management and operationalising the oversight committee on state-owned enterprises. As we grapple with the two recent natural disasters which [hit] us at the time when we are already dealing with the adverse impact of the global slow down and high commodity prices, we recognize the urgent need to build sufficient buffers to withstand such shocks in the future.

Mr. Speaker, all of these are part of the conditions to build a buffer against absorbing its stocks you have to have a surplus, you have to have a surplus, eh, you have to have a surplus. All I am saying, tell the public what you are going to do that is what I am talking about. Let them know as Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, I have taken this decision and I have the information on which I am basing my decision.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have been repeating yourself on that issue and I am just...,

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, I was not going to read all of this you know. I have been asked by the Prime Minister and others to read this.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Well do not fall for any trap.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: No I am not falling for any trap.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Right.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: The matters are important.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay. All right.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: But I did not intend to read this whole letter.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: All right.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: I am glad you do not want me to be the trap, Mr. Speaker. The Prime Minister goes on, Mr. Speaker, in this context we are targeting primary surpluses in the range of 1½ to 2 percent of GDP over the medium term. This will keep debt at the downward trajectory and create fiscal space to counter future struggle, it ain't going to happen in no short term. You ain't having no fiscal surplus, you ain't have in 2012 maybe 2013 [interjection] I know, I going to deal with the structure adjustment programme later on you know, who said they had one? Eh? But there are conditions, conditions which you are stating to the IMF that you are working on. Is you tell me read the letter you know, so what you are complaining about. Why you did not tell the public about this? Why you did not tell the public about this all the time so that they know? You wrote it.

Mr. Speaker, in order to achieve this while continuing to protect spending for the poor and vulnerable we will continue to implement a combination of revenue enhancing, which is taxes, revenue enhancing and expenditure saving measures which is controls in expenditure, reducing expenditures. You are telling the public that? [Interjection] true, where they are? The only thing that happens is that you introduce market based property tax. So you ain't paying the three percent, so you ain't paying the three percent [interjection] but the three percent is not provided for in the Estimates. So we you are going to do a special warrant for the three percent? The fact remains the Prime Minister has committed himself to a number of things which he does not want released to the public that is what it is. All I am saying is let the people know, especially the unions. Put them in your confidence, eh, put them in your confidence. [Interjection] you know what station I listen to, you are just trying to sidetrack me.

Let me go on, Mr. Speaker, to tell you how he just following what he has agreed with the IMF after the property taxes started next year, because remember this was written in 2011, he goes on, "explore the scope for raising excise duties on selected products," well we had that in the budget yesterday. So you are doing what they asked you to do. You are doing what they asked you to do to some extent. You are meeting those conditions already.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: [Inaudible]

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Office of what Government that is already in there, that is in there. It is he who writes this to the IMF you know. This is written to the IMF in case you ain't understand that.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker strikes the gavel.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: And they want of course which is natural to improve compliance. On the spending side [interjection] it ain't no gold man, it is a piece of paper committing the Government, on the spending side....,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, please, please. Honourable Leader of the Opposition, please stop reacting to the Honourable Members, your time is going.

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: That is not the point, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You do not tell me what is the point.

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: [Inaudible]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No, you cannot tell me what is the point.

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: [Inaudible]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I am saying you do not tell me what is the point.

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: I could tell you what I believe.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I am saying you do not tell me what is the point.

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: I said you are supposed to keep them silent and you are not doing it.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I said you do not tell me what to do. I know what will happen.

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: I am an elected speaker here.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I am saying I know what will happen.

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: I am elected as a speaker here. If you want you could put me out.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes, I will do that if you coming in that kind of thing.

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Yes, the Speaker, you are supposed to talk to them.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, for...

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: You have ahouse yesterday nobody interrupted.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: That is not correct.

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Nobody interrupted yesterday.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, would you please, if you continue this way I will ask you to leave. If you continue in that vein, you are not supposed to be arguing here with me. I am dealing with the matter, allow me to do it and you are always taking over issues that do not really fully concern you.

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: When it is overbearing.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: That do not concern you. Yesterday you were asking for extra time when the person who needs the extra time has not done so.

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Please sit, I do not want to hear you.

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: You do not want to hear me.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No, no.

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Well then I do not want to listen to you either.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Well I know what to do.

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Well all of us know what to do.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I know what to do, I know what to do. Honourable Leader of the Opposition could you kindly continue your debate?

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: On the spending side we plan to continue to implement public finance management reform to improve the efficiency of spending and undertake civil service and pension reforms based on the recommendations of the study which is expected to be completed by the end of the year. But I could only have concluded, Mr. Speaker, that the study ain't finish because the Prime Minister duck NIS and Pension Reforms completely and said that he will deal with that in his next budget, a year from now, while the fiscal situation in this country continues to decline another year without action. You heard him say the state of the fund, the state of the NIS declined in profits and they tell you when you run out of funds to cover expenses you do not look for long delays in that for another year that is not the way that is handled. This is people's pensions for life that are involved here.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I am grateful that he has given way if not I would have risen on a point of order. Mr. Speaker, I made the point absolutely clear yesterday that the actuary report which we require to address a number of issues concerning both civil service pensions and also the NIS, we require the actuary report and the actuary report cannot properly be completed unless there are certain body of data which is available from the census. We had the fire, the data was burnt so we have to do over the census. I mean I stated that and I also stated that I have to talk to the public servants and everybody in relation to this important reform. I mean I do not understand why I should have done it before when I do not have all the data. So please, let us be reasonable.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: Mr. Speaker, let me move on, I am not changing one word I said. Mr. Speaker, the letter goes on, against this background the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines requests emergency financing from the IMF amounting to SDRs \$1.245 million that is US\$2 million, equivalent to 15 percent of quota under the rapid credit facility, partly as a result [of] delays between prejudice from other donors and actual disbursements we are facing short term financing constraints. So the funds not flowing at that time as smoothly as you would have liked and hence part of the reason for getting this funding.

The IMF assistance will help meet the urgent foreign exchange needs stemming from the disaster and thereby ease pressure on our Balance of Payments. It is hoped that the International Financial Community will support our efforts to restore economic growth and repair and rehabilitate our severely damaged social and economic infrastructure. We continue to seek grants and concessional resources to help meet these needs, while avoiding non-concessional borrowing, we look forward to an early approval of financial assistance by the IMF.

The Government intends to continue to maintain a close policy dialogue with the fund in an effort to strengthen St. Vincent and the Grenadines Balance of Payments situation, refrain from measures and policies that would compound the Balance of Payment difficulties and maintain macroeconomic stability. In this context we plan to discuss further with the fund at the time of the forthcoming Article 4 mission, policies that they will help to build long term resilience to shock. I ain't see any of them in here. The Government does not intend to impose new or intensify existing restrictions on the making of payments and transfer for current international transaction. It does not intend to introduce new or existing trade restrictions for Balance of Payments purposes or entering into bilateral agreements which are inconsistent with Article 8 of the funds Articles of agreement. I think the Government has always done that so I do not really have a problem with that.

The point in all this, Mr. Speaker, is how much does the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines know about the commitments that this Government has already made to the International Monetary Fund and how long they were made and why we were not told about them. There has to be broad acceptance including by the public service of all these issues so they could understand the nature and state of the finances of this country. That is all I am saying you know.

Mr. Speaker, you know even before that the Prime Minister wrote another letter you know. This one has a lot of the same things, yes basically the same things. This one was written also to the famous Mr. Dominique Strauss-Kahn, all of us know his name, the managing Director of the IMF who resigned. But essentially it is saying the same thing [interjection] I know, I know.

Mr. Speaker, in St. Vincent and the Grenadines you know [interjection] eh? It shows that you are making commitments for which you are not telling them about, that is what it shows. I do not have any problem with you making commitments you know, but let the country know when they are going to impinge on their wellbeing. That is what I am talking about, let the people know.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn my attention now, Mr. Speaker, to certain specifics after which I will go into a discussion on the Estimates and after that say something on the question of crime, Agriculture, Tourism and the fiscal measures that have been outlined in the Prime Minister's address. Mr. Speaker, I should point out at this time, but I should have said it at the beginning each of our Members on this side of the House will speak definitively on the areas which they have a shadow responsibility for and everybody will speak.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say something about our economic performance and I recognise at the outset, Mr. Speaker, that we have had two recent natural disasters, unlike all other countries we are negatively impacted by the world economic and financial situation, especially our tourism would have been adversely affected by what is happening internationally as those economies struggle with their own situations.

Mr. Speaker, a lot of weight is put on what has happened internationally and in a sense that is very understandable. I have no problem with it. A lot is said about the natural disasters, I understand that too, but, Mr. Speaker, there is other components. It is what policies have we adopted to return our country to growth. Why have all the other countries in the Caribbean and Latin America returned to growth except St. Vincent and the Grenadines that is what concerns me and that is a result of inefficient management. The captain cannot steer.

Mr. Speaker, in the early years, I am accepting the natural disasters and so on, no problem, in the early years with the ULP administration they adopted more prudent fiscal policies, especially in the last first three to five years of their term in office. But those policies were essentially a continuation of what the NDP has done in 17 years and during that period he has his growth rate for ULP Government, was about 5 percent. I want to point that out. The average growth rate under the ULP administration is the first three to five years, well first one to five years was about 5 percent which is a good rate of growth, but was based on policies of prudence. They did not deviate from the policies that had been followed by the previous administration at any time during that period and they had growth. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, tax reform commissioners report of the OECS points to the fact and there was a Vincentian on that Commission, Simms Martin, that tax report points to the fact that for the 20 years, the 17 years of NDP plus three years of ULP a surplus on the current account was 5.28 percent of Gross Domestic Product in this country. For a 20 year period 17 years of NDP and three years of ULP we ran a surplus on the current account every year and that surplus was 5.28 percent increase, most of the time since that you are running deficit on the current budget, deficit on the current budget.

And if you look at it in terms of cash deficit it is even worse because when you talk about the current account deficit you do not count the money you pay on the principal of the loan that still has to be paid from your cash. So when you hear the IMF and others talk about primary and current account deficit they are not counting amortization which is the principal repayment on our debt, on each of our loans and if you look in these Estimates here you will find that it is somewhere in the order of \$60 to \$70 million, I will get to the figure. But that is not counted, so when you add that and you are already in deficit you are in trouble, because you have to spend the cash and to spend cash you either have to raise it via taxes or borrow it.

So for those 20 years we had a current surplus and I pointed that out in 2005 in this Parliament here when we discussed the budget that the Government is shifting and reducing its control on expenditure and it will put us in trouble, well we are in the trouble now. I say that year after year in this House, it will put us in trouble and that is what brings the IMF to talk to us. We did not have any problem of that type before. As a matter of fact the tax commission report called on other countries in the region to follow the example in St. Vincent and the Grenadines in terms of how we are managing our fiscal affairs in this country. We have to let all that slip. The Prime Minister he postpone that for a while with his countercyclical policy. Well the countercyclical has now come to no policy at all because we have only negative growth and I want people to understand some of this.

People sometimes do not follow these things. Maybe we do not explain them properly. You got to blame yourself in a sense for that because if you have a surplus on your current budget, let us say you have \$10 million surplus in your current budget, you can use money from that to do local projects. You do not have to borrow, you can use it if you are borrowing internationally for big projects and they put in \$20 million and you have to put \$2 million you can take the \$2 million from the \$10 million you do not have to borrow it. When instead we do not have any we have a minus there, we have nothing to put to the project.

I listened to the Prime Minister the other day, yesterday, you know in relation to the Community College they have to put \$3 million they ain't have it to put. There is no current surplus there from which they can draw. So they either have to put something else aside or borrow again and this is a fundamental issue for our country at this time, fundamental, because you know when you look at the capital budget you always see this project is

financed only by revenue or this project is financed by external loans and local revenue, but if you have no local revenue how you are going to do it. You got to borrow it to put in your share which increases the national debt which you do not want to do and we have to understand these things. I weary talk about that and we are in that position today, we have no current surplus to contribute to our capital programme.

And the other thing you know some of the institutions will finance 90 percent of a project, some will finance 80 percent, some of them will finance 70 percent. If you do not have the 30 percent to put you have to borrow it you know and that is why it is important in terms of fiscal consolidation to put yourself in a position where over a time you have a current surplus. You have a more fancy name now for primary surplus but it is the same thing and I am saying if you look at the period from 2005 the ULP began to change their policies to a more expansionary fiscal policy leading to increasing deficits even on the current account. So that as natural disasters and other adverse international circumstances occurred this country has no financial buffer. We do not have any money of our own to put to deal with the problems arising immensely out of these issues because we have no current surplus. That is economics 101.

So all of that has affected us and left us with this negative growth performance. As a matter of fact Mr. Speaker, the IMF goal projection is minus .4 of 1 percent for 2011 could well be worse because that was done before we had the problems arising out of the Black Sigatoka and the slow down in our exports at the end of the year. So expect when the final review is done we will find that the growth performance is even worse and that is how we are coming into 2012.

Mr. Speaker, inflation has also increased, but that is mainly due to higher international prices for food and fuel which is really imported. You do not have much control over that, but the rate is up to 2.8 percent as compared with .5 percent at the end of the previous year, but the general inflation rate has only moved away with .5 but with respect to this area it is up by 2.8 percent. As far as the fiscal year 2011 is concerned actual revenue and grants fell by \$22.5 million below the projected, while total expenditure exceeded revenue and grants by \$38.4 million that is why we cannot have a surplus. The expenditure is growing faster than the revenue and therefore we end up with a sizeable negative primary balance about say \$15 million twice the amount that has been projected before of \$7.3 million and well below the projection of \$26 million.

Net domestic borrowings at \$33.7 million was twice the amount of \$16.9 million that was projected, quite a big sum why is that so, so when you are doing the projects you do not have no money to put in them or when you meet in certain levels of current expenditure you have no money to put in them, so you went and you borrow and therefore you exceed the amount you projected. We have a bit of a peculiar situation, Mr. Speaker, arising in 2011 a current account balance, this is in terms of our Balance of Payment now, in layman's terms the difference between the things we import what we earn from them and those that we export, the money we earn from those. Their balance is expected to narrow this year. You know it has been widening for some time now where our imports were far higher than our exports, so because of the increased prices of some of our imports it is expected that the value of the import will go down and that will reduce our deficit on the Balance of Payments.

But in addition to that, Mr. Speaker, it was felt that our exports would go up and will contribute to the narrowing of the balance, but that was before the Black sigatoka and; therefore, instead we can find ourselves

when the final figures are down that the deficit on the Balance of Payments might not narrow because when this projection was done it was assumed that in the second half of the year we will be earning much more from our bananas and when we listen to some of the data provided by our Prime Minister yesterday in terms of agricultural production and so on we did not seem to do very well with about 15 percent declined. So we do not see much of a contribution of those to the export. So it is possible that while this projection had been done because of circumstances arising out of Black Sigatoka we may have a reduction in export as well as the reduction on import, but the reduction on exports was not taken into account when this was done.

Mr. Speaker, Foreign Direct Investment. You have had some Foreign Direct Investment over the last few years in Buccama, there is work going on in Canouan and I do not know of any other major projects, but Foreign Direct Investment is a critical component. Of any strategy that we use to improve the performance of our economy and I am hoping, Mr. Speaker, that we will in fact be able to attract foreign investment at a better level than we have had in the recent past. I do not know of any specific projects, maybe the Prime Minister knows, but if they are not ready now then they are likely to impact on us in the year 2012 but maybe in 2013.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned earlier today loans to the private sector and I am really hoping, Mr. Speaker, that when you look at the situation overall in our country, I see some members in the private sector in the gallery. I sincerely hope, Mr. Speaker, that when we look at the overall economic and financial situations that we are going to be instilling some confidence, increased confidence by the private sector and their part in our economic..., but we must not do to owe them plenty money, we must also pay what we owe and I notice yesterday in the fiscal measures that some effort is made to provide some additional incentives to the private sector in terms of cost of doing business particularly in the area of electricity consumption. I do not have any difficulty with that at all, because we are not in a position to compete with other..., some of the other countries in this area where the cost of fuel is much cheaper. The amounts may not look large whether you may assume that it was done in the context of what the VINLEC could afford and the private sector will determine whether the incentives so granted are sufficient to push them towards further investment in the economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

But on the other side, Mr. Speaker, on the other side of the performance to have the question of the monies which are owed, because of the problems associated with British American/CLICO, because there are private sector businesses and individuals who are..., and I do not have the details. I heard the Prime Minister say yesterday in relation to the special annuities that there are about 11,000 people in the OECS who are affected in that regard. That is something I will come to a little later.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to some aspects of the staff appraisal of St. Vincent's performance, staff appraisal done by the International Monetary Fund. As usual as one would expect and he is right this staff appraisal takes account of the damage done by the two..., the rains as well as the Hurricane Tomas and of course the international financial situation. Now I want to read Mr. Speaker a section right at the beginning in terms of the context in which the economy is being examined and I want to quote specifically from the staff report of the fund. It says here,

“St. Vincent and the Grenadines was hit by two natural disasters in the last 12 months.”

Remember this staff report was done in 2011,” in addition to being adversely affected by continued slowdown in the global economy, following robust growth of 5 percent per annum and during the years 2002 – 2007 the global slowdown and the rise in food and fuel prices resulted in a significant contraction of economic activities.” In 2008 real growth, real GDP growth contracted by .6 percent, probably by a contraction of 2.3 percent in 2009 and then you had the hurricanes coming in between there and the weather and then you had a further decline in 2010 by 1.8. So they give you some indication for the first three years and they say by 2007 public debt had risen to 55 percent of GDP compared with 43.3 percent of GDP in 1996 with increased expenditure pressures and the declining GDP in the wake of the global slowdown the structural primary deficit worsened from 2.3 percent of GDP in 2008 to 3.7 percent of GDP in 2010. That is the deficit I was talking about earlier which prevents us from having enough money to put our local contribution to our projects, 3.7 percent of GDP in 2010.

Well GDP was anticipated some of \$1.8 billion, 3 percent of that ain't penny you know, 3.7 percent of \$1.8 or so billion is not a little bit of money, I am afraid to calculate it, that is the primary deficit 2010 a very serious issue and that is why there is this call for fiscal consolidation because you have to remove that deficit and contrast that like reducing a surplus in the next year or two. Otherwise we will continue to be in the condition that we are today. We have to do something about the primary deficit and that is why I say it is important that the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines sit down with those involved and come to some conclusions. This is no joke, Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious matter that should be solved by this Government. If we cannot do it, Mr. Speaker, we will continue in a trajectory that carries us always close to zero or negative growth.

Don't care what we do about some of the other areas that would be a drag, we would always tend to push our dead burden up because we have to borrow for basics which should be covered by local revenue. I have seen this, Mr. Speaker, in other countries. I have had the opportunity to work in Belize and that kind of situation, I have worked in Grenada and that kind of situation, I have worked in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and that kind of situation, I have worked in Barbados and that kind of situation, Mr. Speaker, and I know what it could lead to and I am urging the Government to take this matter with the uttermost seriousness.

The IMF goes on and I heard the Prime Minister announcing that the public debt is going down and has gone down a little, but remember these figure here to date is his own and it says this, Mr. Speaker, I quote again,

“Public debt has risen and the scope for countercyclical fiscal policy is transparent.”

That is the policy that has been adopted, countercyclical, you are going against the tide, you have problems on your revenue but you are still going, you are going against the tide that is what it means. But then that leads to further debts. Unlike many developing countries which enter the crisis with strong public finances, this is the world economic crisis; St. Vincent and the Grenadines has been running deficits for several years and by 2007 public debt has risen to 55 percent of GDP compared with 43.3 percent in 1996 with increased expenditure pressures and a declining GDP in the wake of the global slowdown and structural primary deficit worsened to 4.3 percent of GDP in 2008 to 3.7 that says the power of the Government. The Government has to look at this.

The efforts I saw yesterday in the Budget do not give me much hope. So what you had is the Article 4 consultation, had discussion on policies to deal with this matter. What are the main two sources of growth? Our two main sources of growth right now are Tourism and Foreign Direct Related Construction, not agriculture, the two main sources of growth and those, especially Tourism as far as I am concerned, are constrained by what is happening internationally and our efforts to improve visitor arrivals would take the long term stay-over which it does and so forth are going to be very critical.

The Prime Minister announced yesterday that they may have to make a small cut in the allocation to the Tourism Authority and he expects more from less, he expects more from less. I hope that those in the Tourism Authority are now going to bend their backs and get more from less. Same way he is asking the staff of the Ministry of Agriculture to do, get more from less, but Tourism has a specific problem with the question of the issues surrounding the market from which we, our tourist and the state of the economy of those country and I think the Government recognizes that.

Mr. Speaker, the IMF goes on to say and they say, it is an external disbursements were significantly lower that is the disbursements from loans that we borrow from abroad, external disbursements were significantly lower than projected due partly to the delays in project implementation and also due to slow flows of assistance and he say that calls, hot, in the country's capital expenditure. It ain't no risk free. If you borrow money to do a project, then the money takes longer to come then you cannot consider the project or you cannot do it at the pace that you want to do it and therefore the disbursement on the project goes down. All this is part of the crisis that we face.

You had to increase public assistance in order to look after the needs of the poor and some priority had to be given to that, some priority had to be given to it because it is a lot of people who are still on public assistance. Monetary aggregates, Mr. Speaker, I want to read these here because I do not want anybody say I making it up and I do not want you to accuse me of reading so, I know that is a thing people like to do sometimes, not you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, for 2011 the growth in loans, the growth in loans to the private sector to carry out their various businesses it is described by the IMF as flat, no increase because of course bank worried and that is why I believe that some of the measures proposed in the fiscal proposal particularly those which aims at reducing the costs of doing business could have some impact on that. They may see some of their clients in a better position depending on the amount, but will depend on each industry or each business, whether it be commercial enterprise or an industrial enterprise depends on the extent of the impact. I do not know what the extent of the impact is because I do not have the consumption of the various enterprises in terms of..., but I am assuming that what it is aimed at.

Mr. Speaker, I have already given the figures on non-performing loans earlier in this presentation and it is going to be very important, Mr. Speaker, to have those reduce and that brings me, Mr. Speaker, to something that the Prime Minister mentioned yesterday that has to do with the Financial Services Authority I think they named it and its establishment and its operationalising earlier this year 2012. I want to be real you know, I am 100 percent behind the goal of the Financial Services. I say so, Mr. Speaker, because we have an institution, the Central Bank, which supervises the 47 or so Commercial Banks in the OECS. We have an institution, the

Offshore Finance Authority or Financial Services, IFSA, which supervises the offshore sector's business, companies, IBCs process and now in order to bring under some scrutiny and supervision we need to deal with the non-bank financial institutes, because they are no longer penny banks, they are institutions which deal with the large sums of money and actions on their part can have negative effect on the economy.

Already we know that a lot of our Credit Unions are exposed to British American/ CLICO are going to have some problems getting back their money. We already know that we have provided loan losses in their accounts which mean that they are going to show a lower net income so members are going to get less. We know all these things. What is proposed is that we take all the offshore institutions and all these non-bank financial institutions, insurance, credit unions, building and loans society and so on and they put all of them in one large institution and that one institution will do the supervision of all those entities. We voted against it in the Parliament. Our reason for voting against it, Mr. Speaker, has nothing to do with its objectives, it had to do with whether we believe that within the present state of the offshore finance institution whether additions to that and making a large institution was sufficiently strong enough, would be strong enough to do the kind of supervision that is needed immediately in terms of credit unions, building and loan and so forth. We were not convinced about that. Our view is that the first step should have been to get institutions to deal with those, because there are a lot of them and they need immediate assistance. There are so many things hovering around them at the present time having to make loan loss provisions and the economy then was not moving and they have their members to serve and we felt that it was important at the beginning which you can filter over a period of time to have dedicated staff allocated to the non-bank financial institution who will from day one go forward. So our concern had nothing to do..., we think the idea was important the need for supervision. From that day I believe that institutional arrangements that were made were the most adequate for the present time. So I just want to explain it because it is an important area.

I remember you know when Barbados was having this problem with Balance of Payments and they had put some constraints on commercial bank lending in certain areas to try and improve their Balance of Payments position like if people want to get cars. At one time they wanted to restrict the number of cars coming into the country because too much foreign exchange was going out. They wanted to restrict some other things from coming in, what happened? The policy was completely destroyed because the Credit Union took up the slack, what the banks was not going to do. So the cars came in anyway and whatever else came in anyway and it ended up in a situation where you had the Government's policy thwarted because the mechanism imposed did not cover those institutions and I think things tightened up after. So what I am saying Mr. Speaker, we support the need to get those things done. I do not think a brand..., I do not think bringing a large institution is the answer.

Mr. Speaker, I want to look at..., I want to deal with BAICO and CLICO but I think I best leave that for a little later. Mr. Speaker, outlook and risks. The outlook got near term growth. I mean growth coming quick like in 2012 that is what it means by near term growth. It not really that good you know. You still have economic crisis and some have increased internationally and Mr. Speaker, if we are to participate in exercises that have some impact then it is going to be very difficult indeed. You have better chance of coming to growth maybe sometime mid 2014, 15, 16. Indeed in a document which I saw here for the first time a few days ago creating fiscal space and ensuring sustainability, there were some projections which shows that the measures being taken

in relation to some of these items including the continued wage bill will not really bite before 2014, 2015 but that is another matter which I have referred to already. So Mr. Speaker, growth is going to be difficult and I really would not like us, Mr. Speaker, to have a fifth year of negative growth. If we were to have that in the absence with tighter fiscal consolidation then what would happen, Mr. Speaker, it would have been measures you have to take subsequently in subsequent years to get over them would be harsher and that is why it is important, Mr. Speaker, to begin to take some steps now. You do not have to go with the whole hog; you have to begin the process.

You know I am going to talk from my own experience you know. I was in Belize for six weeks as part of a mission examining the fiscal situation as what we are doing here today and I recalled one of the things that struck me is that the Belize economy is almost exactly the size of ours, because I had Belize as a big country I really thought that they had a much larger economy than it was at the time and the Government invited the bank to send a team to advise them on their fiscal situation. I was part of that team, four of us went. All of us had different skills and I spent six weeks non-stop in Belize on that exercise and we suggested various fiscal measures which the Government of Belize implemented and they returned to surplus in one year, then after that they began to take off and about three years later the Government changed and they started back spending and when the IMF came they ended up with having to send home 1,200 people. I do not want that to happen you see, I do not want that to happen here at all. I am saying because of that, Mr. Speaker, we have to take action earlier than is being proposed.

It is a very serious matter Mr. Speaker, very, very serious and I do not want any of us to underestimate it. I do not want to see it happen here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, I do not want to see it happen under any circumstances but we must do what we have to do to make sure. I do not think we have done enough yet, but, Mr. Speaker, that is the situation.

Mr. Speaker, revenue measures I see a number of them here and I was looking at a table a while ago, the print is very fine, but there was suggestions of some revenue measures and this relates to St. Vincent eh, this is an IMF report on St. Vincent and the Grenadines arising out of the mission that was here as a proposed consultation. What they were looking at is fiscal policy measures and expected savings that could arise out of those fiscal policy measures and under revenue measures that they were stating, the first one is Inland Revenue Reform. Part of that has already been done in the sense that we have the large taxpayer unit and you are committing yourself to a more robust stance in terms of collections of the VAT and so forth. And you know what they are anticipating they find the figures higher but they had all the basics data to work with I did not have it. It says that Inland Revenue Reform will bring savings of .4 percent of GDP. If you are to be successful in that and have an increase in revenue of .4 of 1 percent of GDP and I already said that GDP is about 1.8 or so billion dollars. And you said that is .7 in 2013, 2014 and then you going up to 1.1 percent of GDP, in 2014 and 1.3 percent of GDP in 2015 and 1.5 percent of GDP in 2016. So in that one measure they are anticipating that level of saving which means that taking those actions will provide you with that more revenue the incorporation tax will have provision in relation with that too which we expect in their tightening then they will save another 1.1 percent of GDP. Market evaluation properties they will save another .1 percent of GDP, Custom Administrative Reform that is improved efficiencies and so forth they will save another .1 percent of GDP.

Making a saving in a single year the first year of more than .6 percent of GDP and the fairy [inaudible] goes up right up to the year 2016. They had to do those things if it is to happen.

And then on the expenditure sides they look to..., no on the revenue side that is through taxes and improved efficiency you can increase your revenue. So that gives you more money available to Government. On the expenditure side now what they have done indicated here, the expenditure measures they have three, the first one is containing the wage bill and they do not have any savings in 2012, they do not have any savings in 2013 and there have .3 savings which .3 percent of GDP in 2014 and .7 percent..., 1.7 percent of GDP in 2015 and 1.8 percent of GDP in 2016. So you see they are looking at both sides of the coin. On one side they are seeing how they can improve the revenue position on the other side they are seeing how could reduce your expenditure position. And that is part of their proposal in dealing with the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

So they said revenue measures taken through the Government, introduce market based property taxes and you have it there that is in the budget, enhance the revenue collection, you have statements in that to reviewing ad hoc exemptions. You heard the Prime Minister said there would be a study to look at what is happening with the exemptions to determine what they should do with the exemptions. But all of these things are in the IMF Article 4 consultation. Then the enforcement capacity of the last taxpayer unit you will get some savings from that also and then you have the expenditure measures which he just mentioned.

So what I am saying, Mr. Speaker, it is obvious Mr. Speaker and there should be no doubt in any of our minds that fiscal consolidations mean some austerity. You do not have to go overboard and send home people, but you have to tighten in various areas to generate savings both on the expenditure side and the revenue side so you can have some additional amounts of money so you do not have no primary deficit but a primary surplus that is all it is saying, that is all it is saying.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister yesterday in his presentation made a number of comments. He was very pleased with his Government's performance. I cannot join him on that because, Mr. Speaker, the reality is, is that we have a lot of consolidations to do. I want, Mr. Speaker, to say something here now which will annoy some people, but it will please some people. The Government of St. Vincent discussed with the IMF staff who were here on the mission, it says here, let me read it, staff, meaning IMF staff also discussed the merits of a more ambitious fiscal adjustment scenario which could help to reduce debt faster and allow a more rapid build up of financial buffers to counter exogenous shocks. But exogenous shocks, do not bother with all that big word you know, all it means sometimes is a hurricane which affects the economy.

We know we are vulnerable to those shocks, we are vulnerable to bad weather conditions, we are vulnerable towards what is happening in the international community in terms of their economy okay and what is being said that we have to look carefully, we have to look carefully at how we deal with those vulnerabilities. For instance I see a programme there on the environmental in the capital budget; I assume that also tackled some of the vulnerabilities. But this is a serious matter. They go on to say, Mr. Speaker, that large external current account deficits are not sustainable over the long term. All of us know that you know, we know it and we have to take action, Mr. Speaker, to deal with it. And the staff indicates that they welcome the Government, when they say the authorities, they mean the Government, they welcome the Government's commitment to avoid external commercial borrowing. Because generally speaking external commercial borrowing carry a high

interest rate and the repayment period is shorter which is more expensive that is all it means. And Government has given a commitment that they are not going into, commercial borrowing. I have no problem with that.

Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of discussions on non-bank financial sectors, the need to strengthen supervision of the non-bank financial sector which I dealt with too a while ago and encourage the Government to seek a solution to the BAICO/CLICO situation. Mr. Speaker, we have had a number of presentations in this Parliament by the Prime Minister, to be fair to him, on the question of BAICO/CLICO and where we are. The figure has changed somewhat, but I am being told now in listening to the presentation of the budget that the exposure in St. Vincent and the Grenadines to this exercise is somewhere of the order, something over \$375 million. In fact, the table here has \$384 million. CLICO is \$174 million and that is 9.4 percent of the Gross Domestic Product of this country that is a big figure that is 9.4 percent of 1.8 or 1.0 billion and then BAICO at 11 percent of GDP. So BAICO has about \$204 million exposure, when I say exposure I mean people here put that amount in those institutions that is what exposure means. So between the two we have put in some \$383 million and this is exposed the crisis that the CLICO and BAICO and so on got into trouble and that is what St. Vincent is trying to recover.

The Prime Minister is Chairman of the task force who is looking after that in the OECS. But this exposure here is a very large percentage our GDP and I had no doubt whatsoever, Mr. Speaker, and indeed the Prime Minister mentioned the concept of haircut yesterday which applies to hair, he mentioned a haircut and I believe that the haircut we will have to take, Mr. Speaker, especially in relation to the annuities, which is going to be very high. What I mean by that, Mr. Speaker, I understand there is some 11,000 OECS people or conference or whatever they are who are involved in special annuity. That is where any money to BAICO and so on and the different investment expecting a high rate of return. If any of these collapse you cannot get back your money and you cannot get back in the interest that they have earned you that is what it means.

So people are now trying to get back their money and the task force which the Prime Minister heads to the OECS is involved in that exercise. But there are a lot of these people who are retired civil servants, businessmen who have used up part of their..., have used that for investment purposes and so on and for couple years now they have not gotten back anything. Well a number of exercises are taking place. They have dealt with the property portfolio, companies oppose that already, there is something on the health portfolio and some work is being done now on the insurance policies, yes some work is being done now and companies are to bid to take over that and a certain amount of monies are going into it. So that some work has been done for those persons who have traditional life insurance that they are accustomed to when we say insurance but I am very concerned, I am not convinced at all as to the reality of dealing in quick time without significant loss to the holders, without significant loss to the holders; I am not at all convinced that we are as far advanced on the annuities.

This is where people put in their money and like a teacher retire and they put in the \$100,000 gratuity they got. I am not satisfied at all where that is concerned and it is a difficult issue to deal with and I have no doubt in my mind. And I believe that the biggest haircut is going to come in that area. If even if you have given your bonds you might be able to sell the bonds but I do not know how much they would be worth, but in terms of what value is put on those annuities now with the collapse of BAICO I ain't sure at all. I do not want to raise

anybody's hope. There will be a haircut and probably we will get some in cash but sometime down the road, not in the near future and maybe some in bonds. I do not know, but that part of the portfolio I am very concerned about. There are a lot of those persons I assuming if they go to the extreme will die before that is finish. Much more progress is being made in the other areas than it is with those annuities. I am very uncomfortable about it and while I recognise that legal action would be taken that too is going to take a long time. That is no short term matter. You will have appeals in all sorts of things where that is concerned and you have a lot of people right now in our own country who have to bear monies to tidy up that thing.

You can always say, well we did not tell you put your money there, they took a risk for the person, they could always say that, but that cannot be the answer. Any responsible Government in a small economy like ours with that level of exposure has to work very hard, but it is to what extent and do not ever expect 100 percent or maybe even 50 percent of what the portion is. Must make an effort to get back some of that money, must make an effort.

Some time ago I made a suggestion that maybe the Government still look at a bond issue for those people in St. Vincent and the Grenadines or at least a portion whether it is 25 percent or what of what is owe, what these people have invested. Of course all that comes within the framework of this declining situation that we have here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and I recognise that. But I also have to think about those people who worked hard over the years, retired and put their gratuities there. We cannot forget them and there has to be a certain amount of realism, Mr. Speaker, in terms of whether it is likely at all that you could have a solution to that particular aspect of this disastrous situation.

I spoke to a gentleman sometime ago who worked in the private sector forty something years, he put his entire gratuity there, nothing to get back. I know many people like that, that is what he was to live on, now he tells me he ain't have none, fortunately he has a small NIS pension, but that is all he has because he put his \$105,000 gratuity in there. I [know] people who put sums larger than that, I know of four individuals who between them had about \$7 million that has been put in some of these things and I recognised the work done by the committee you know. All I am saying the timeframe we are likely to get some return in cash your pocket is a long distance away and some of those people will die and that money will go to their estate when it comes and that is why I think we also need to look at the short term solution but as I said that is complicated now while our general fiscal situation has outlined this very budgetary proposal that we are dealing with. It is a very serious, serious matter.

I spoke to another gentleman a couple days ago about the same thing to me like he is going on a bit nutty, he does not know what to do, well it is gone and he had no children. That is what we had to live on, can he wait five years? Can he wait ten years, we do not know when; we do not know when we will get some solution to that particular aspect. I can see the others coming on-stream and some have already come on-stream but that particular aspect needs very careful attention and some decision as to what assistance can be provided to those persons.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to say anything more about that. It is a very painful exercise when you speak to people who are in fact involved, very painful indeed, the other thing with respect to the legal action. I do not know what the Prime Minister's views are but I am satisfied in my own mind that those could be fought very

hard, those legal bonds and will be fought for a very long time. And if we are to depend on those for a resolution to the issue in relation to those who has the special annuities then they ain't getting no money.

Mr. Speaker, I want to turn my attention to another aspect of the budgetary proposals and that has to do with the capital budget, the specific ones I want to respond to or say something about and that has to do with the environmental project that has been proposed at some \$23 million in the capital budget. I mention it now because I also see some comment on it in regards to poor consultations. Waging efforts are on the way to build climate resilience with the help of the World Bank and significant sums are being approved and St. Vincent will be a beneficiary of those funds and there are a number of projects which will fall under those funds which will help to protect citizens in terms of natural disaster also.

Things related to the building code, evaluation of natural hazard, climate change risk, rehabilitation of damage and vulnerable infrastructure caused by the damage of Tomas and so on and a lot to help to reduce some of the economic losses preferably by the urban poor and also to protect the effect, the negative effect of other upcoming natural disasters. So I am going to support, give my fullest support to that particular project. I believe it is a very important one for the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said earlier, I have to say something about the NIS. Yesterday the Prime Minister in his presentation in dealing with this issue did not say very much except to say, it will be dealt with in the next budget, because he is waiting on information and data. Mr. Speaker, I want to refer to a couple of areas where that is concerned. I already indicated that the profits had fallen considerably that again is the BAICO/CLICO situation. The IMF I think had an exposure there, investments is there to the order I think of some \$52 million and I believe NIS, and I believe that they would have had to provide the account in the event that there were losses arising therefrom. And I believe that would have been a major contributor without seeing the accounts, I believe that would have been a major contributor to the fall in the income, the net income of the NIS from \$7.7 million net income in 2008 to \$5.6 million in the year 2010.

Mr. Speaker, this is one institution in our country that we have to take a serious look at and it has to be always on the front burner, it has to be always on the front burner. In that same situation we are committing ourselves to providing pension for life, for life after 60 and Mr. Speaker, it is an awesome responsibility. It is not a project that is going to last 10 years or 15 years, it is going to be here long after all of us have left this scene, it has to be here long after all of us have left this scene because we have given by way of legislation the commitment to peoples pension when they retire and; therefore, it behoves us, Mr. Speaker, at all times, to ensure the financial soundness, the financial health of the National Insurance Services.

A lot of people, Mr. Speaker, in their retirements will have no other source of income. I do not know when the world is going to come to an end, some people know though, but I know that the NIS has to last until death, eh, I know but I do not think so. The NIS has to last until as far as I am concerned the end of the world and Mr. Speaker, it is a serious think you know, you are telling generations unborn that we are looking in trust after an institution that will provide pensions for those yet unborn. It is an awesome responsibility if you look at it in those terms and in a lot of instances, Mr. Speaker, there will be no other source of income to those receiving those types. We therefore cannot skylark, to use the local terminology, with that NIS. It has to remain viable, has to remain viable.

I do not know what actuarial are going to say, I really do not know, but I know the NIS has to continue, it has to and therefore steps will have to be taken, Mr. Speaker, to put it on an even better financial footing and those who do not like to hear the word “austere” may find themselves having to take some measures that are austere , in the interest of the financial, further financial and long term development of the National Insurance Services and those steps ain’t going to be easy. If you do not want to use the word austere that is your business, the fact remains that we have to do something to protect the commitment that you made to future generations with regards to the National Insurance Services.

All the Prime Minister give is excuse yesterday, he ain’t going to deal with that until next..., I ain’t going to accept that you know, I believe there is some things that can be done now because we know that they have not provided all of the money yet in the account and you may find yourself having after 2011 again to make provisions for further loses in the event that you may not and therefore no Government can operate in this country without dealing with at issue and dealing with it very adequately.

You hear figures being referred to all like 20, 50 and all sort of things like that. Let me read some of it. Well you know you have two pension schemes say with the NIS and you have the civil service pension. On the NIS you pay employee 3.5 percent I think and the employer pays 4.5 percent, civil servant pay NIS and therefore the Government have an obligation under the recurrent budget to provide for that and so is the private sector, but you all stop the public service pension which the civil servants or public servants do not contribute which is an issue. They have different dates when you can reach retirement under the scheme so there are a lot of issues inside there, a lot of issues and you will find me very bold face when it comes to the Government decision on that matter whatever decision is made. We cannot let that institution fail. I want to make that very clear you know. This is a national issue. For me it is not a party issue, we cannot afford to let the National Insurance Services fail. I want to make that clear.

I saw something which shocked me and I want to quote the words from the NIS subject in the Article 4 consultation. It says here, the latest actuarial review, you know every three years they review this theme, they say, let us go in and make recommendations for changes and so on that is what the actuarial review is about. The latest actuarial review shows that in the absence of parametric reforms the contributions collected, that is the amount of money the 8 percent that is being collected now every month both from the employer and the employee will not be sufficient to cover expenses after the year 2016 that is just now you know, that is just now. Because if you do not have enough when from the contribution income to cover that you will have to use the investment income from the NIS to cover it and nobody wants to do that. That is not advisable when you looking down the road 50 years or 60 years or 70 years to hear is a early date 2016 the contributions will not be able to cover the expenses. The figures alarm me and already you have a situation of serious decline in income.

Mr. Speaker, I do not know when the Prime Minister expects to get the information to deal with this matter, I want to advise if I may that this is a matter, it just cannot wait until next year budget, I just wanted to say that. Mr. Speaker, we are dealing with the pension benefits of the people of this country. We are already in decline in relation to the profitability of the institution and therefore its long term viability. All of us are now aware of it because we have the information. We cannot let the NIS fail. I do not care who vex you know, we cannot let the NIS fail.

Mr. Speaker, let me read something and there are people in this room who could tell you know who have been involved with the NIS not only here, but overseas like in Barbados for instance and they have had difficulties and had to move very swiftly to deal with them and one of the difficulties that they had to deal with and already I think the Government has indicated that they will have to deal with that is what you do about retirement age as part of the tools to deal with the NIS. Barbados is up to 67½ before you could get your pension and I hear retirement age might eventually go up to 70 and that is way, part of the mechanism that is being used there to improve the scheme viability, reduce the level of current payouts so that the scheme has time to build up and build up. You hear talks in the United States about their social security system all over, these issues have to be dealt with early and do not tell me it ain't have no austerity.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister mentioned yesterday the pension system in the public service is a non-contributory scheme with replacement rates of up to 66 2/3s percent hence the lowering and replacement rates of up 127 percent in combination with the NIS benefits. You know what that means, when you get your benefit from the NIS pension in addition to the benefit from the public service system which the employer does not contribute to they are getting 127 percent you know what that means. So whatever we do..., and the Government will hear from us on this side when the proposals are being made I am recommending that you do not wait until next year's budget to deal with this matter. We cannot wait another full year for more provisions to be set off against the income from this one; it has to be done as soon as the report is received. Indeed we have to take some first steps to deal with this matter. This is no joke, no joke at all. It is a matter of deadly serious importance.

You cannot have people coming out of their jobs; retired having made their contributions, the employer having made his contributions and you are telling me you have no money to give them. You know where the money will have to come from, from the budget. The same budget that you are trying to consolidate now you would have to find the money to pay the pension. So let us make sure that the institution itself does not fail. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to some early action on this matter.

Mr. Speaker, I want to spend a little time on the Estimates. During the debate on the Estimates Mr. Speaker, I spent a lot of time, Mr. Speaker, pointing out that from the point of view of the economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the state that ours is in that any measures to be taken can only be done through fiscal policy. I spend a long time on that deliberating. I am going to repeat some of that today because I believe it is critical. I know that the Government is aware of it, I want the public to understand it that whatever actions are taken eventually impact and affect the public.

You know countries which are not in the OECS, let us take an example Trinidad or Barbados or Guyana they have their own Central Bank. The OECS countries together I think is eight countries has one Central Bank, one Central Bank only and therefore no one country can take action especially of an economic nature without taking into account what the implications are for the other; one bank. The one in Barbados they Government can say, well the Central Bank is going to restrict this or do that or reduce interest rates to encourage investments and so on, they could do that because the Central Bank is there own, is for their country alone.

The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance of St. Vincent and the Grenadines cannot go to the Central Bank here in the OECS and tell them I want interest rates in St. Vincent reduced because he has to take into account

all the members of the bank. He cannot say make much change or suggest any change without the approval of the other members of the OECS. So this puts us into a particular predicament and a very serious one at that, but we have to measure that, Mr. Speaker, we have to measure that against the benefits we have had over the years of having a single Central Bank. I can tell you that if we did not have that Central Bank EC dollar would not be 2.7 to 1; it may have been 5 to 1 U.S dollars. The Central Bank to me has turned out to be the guardian of the exchange rate and in fact, prevented us from being licked by the IMF and the World Bank in that regard, because they did not like the rate of 2.7 to 1 it was thought that it would be too high and I do not believe they like it now. Although I see some analysis on the exchange rate here in the IMF report. But that is what has protected our currency from devaluation. In 1976 I went to the meeting where the OECS dollar was tied to the U.S dollar and even then there was speculation. I went to that meeting, Hudson Tannis was the Minister at the time and Mr. Speaker, and our people have to understand that that a Government cannot take certain actions in St. Vincent and the Grenadines because they have implications for our brother in the OECS.

This means that the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines cannot use any monetary measures to deal with the economic situation that we now face. They can only do so if the monetary measures have the support of everybody which assumes that all our economies will be in the same position, they cannot. Therefore what you have to do, you have to use fiscal policy, they have to use the budget that is how we have to try and bring ourselves out of the lack of growth that we have in our economies. We have to use fiscal policies. What we do with our tax dollar, what we do with every cent of revenue we earn and every cent of expenditure which we disbursed. That is what we have to do and that is why fiscal policy in these islands is so important. You know you have much more flexibility if you could have used both monetary and fiscal policy. We just do not have that flexibility and therefore, it becomes important that our people and our country understand. Critical, in that way you understand why, very often, in order to get action on the economy you are looking at taxes and expenditures, another is interest rates.

United States some interest rates were down at what 1 percent some were averages of 2 percent and so on you cannot get an OECS decision on that if that is what we wanted and people stimulate the housing. And these are the things I think we need to be very clear about. So when we are here discussing this budget, Mr. Speaker, we have to have that in mind. There is no question about it.

Mr. Speaker, we have the budget of \$793.9 million, call it \$793 as compared with \$786 million in the previous year just about a \$7 million different in the budget last years as compared to this one for this year, but this budget is \$119 million less than the budget that we presented in 2010 that is why I made some comments about people understanding. You put forward a big budget, you does have to walk you know, put forward a big budget some years ago \$913 million and I heard your comments in this Parliament biggest budget ever. People in your business community and investors examined those documents and make a determination about their decisions, their investment decisions. For instance they say, a lot of construction going to go on, Coreas and the others say, well boy we have to bring in more cement, so investments decisions are made based on the budget that you present. You do not just inflate your budget to only size to make it look big; you do it in a manner which is realistic and achievable. Serious business, so I am pleased because the budget of \$913 million that you put forward couple years ago you spend \$600 million, \$300 million was never spent so I am glad to see the

budget coming down to more realistic levels and if you look at the three year projection in this budget here, like you going down every year, after that those figures have no meaning, I know that.

So Mr. Speaker, we are looking at \$793 million right, this budget, Mr. Speaker, has wages and salaries at \$250, million that is up \$7 million from the \$243 million in 2011 that is an increase of about 2.8 percent and Mr. Speaker, based on the comments made by the Prime Minister that money is provided for increment, it does not provide for any increase in salary at this time which is consistent with what the IMF said in the document which I read from. Pensions and NIS have only increased by \$1 million from \$46 million to \$47 million but you know a little while ago we discussed the NIS and one of the areas that has to be looked at is the contribution rate both by the employer and the employee and when action is taken on that matter then those figures will go up. It only moved from \$46 million to \$47 million, it will go to a higher figure because the contribution paid by Government will go up and the contribution paid by the employee will go up. So we will have a more significant change in the NIS and pension payments set out below.

So bear that in mind. Then we will have the question, Mr. Speaker, of other transfers that is going from down, from \$113 million to \$103 million in this year as compared with last year. A decline of about \$10 million Mr. Speaker. Now I do not know how that is going to be applied within the various institutions, I know in the relation to the Tourism Authority which gets transfers from this line that they are going down by \$1 million. I do not know what else that will be going down.

Then it comes, Mr. Speaker, to interest rates. Now the interest rate you will see has dropped from \$53 million that is the amount of money that this country, this Government will have to pay on interest for the year. You have to pay \$53 million .3 percent in 2011 and is down to \$51.5 million right and the main reason for that has to be the loan from the CDB to clear the Government debt in the NCB. Well the CDB loan will have a lower interest rate than those debts that those institutions and the Government had with the National Commercial Bank that would have contributed to reducing that rate.

Then, Mr. Speaker, come the goods and services. There is not much change in that. About \$1 million or so, now goods and services buy the things that you want in the various..., for the last two years that figure have been declining..., well we have complaints about a lot and lot of ability to buy what we need, but that category has been taking some of the consolidation. It has been declining, it declined by \$5 million last year and it declined by \$5 million the year before and now it is up by \$1 million or it is about the same thing 75.3 yes, it is not much of a difference in terms of the figures.

Then it come, Mr. Speaker, that you have \$528 million to be spent on those items and your revenue what we get from taxes to that bring we \$507 so you are going to have about a deficit of about \$21 million, but then I come back now, Mr. Speaker, to the cash deficit. You remember I said earlier in this presentation that the principal repayment on our loans as distinct from the interest is very heavy and we have to find the cash to do it and the amount we have to spend in 2012 on the principal is \$74.3 million even more than we have to pay in interest and we have to pay our debt. You do not choose whether to pay your debt, you have to pay your debt.

Mr. Speaker, you see this issue so the deficit now..., then you have to pay money in your sinking fund, so the deficit changes from this just about \$21 million to just over \$100 million, but you now have to put in for the

principal which you did not count before, because when the analysis is done on the primary balance, you do not count the principal, but you have to pay it out in cash. So the cash deficit jumps from \$21 million to over \$100 million, in fact, to \$100.6 million, I just want to make that point, because very often if you just look at the primary surplus you get the impression, well things not so far off, but when you recognise you have to pay the principal, when you recognise you have to pay sinking fund contribution, you have to pay and therefore the deficit in terms of cash is far larger of what you need.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister said in his presentation that they wanted to use an experimenting of running a deficit for a short few years, he say as part of the countercyclical model, you cannot do it anymore, you cannot do it anymore. This situation prevents that from happening if he is to consolidate the fiscal situation in this country. So Mr. Speaker, we have here a budget in terms of a current budget that is really not significantly different from last year. Last year the approved Estimates were \$532 million and this year is \$528 million, \$4 million less and when it comes to the whole of the recurrent budget, last year the approved amount was \$609 million and this year it is \$608 million. So you see, there ain't no real difference, there is no real fiscal consolidation here which is what is needed, it is not here.

And Mr. Speaker, the capital budget, I have already spoken about the project for the environment which I am giving sound support to, but the capital budget of \$184 million, even that is not significantly different and the question is whether one will be able to at least pay out 65/70 percent of it, but time is running out on me Mr. Speaker. So I want to make reference one more time, I do not think I should ever do it again in this Parliament. But the fact that other capital receipt, I went at length on that last year, I am not doing it again in this Parliament after today.

Other capital receipts are put there that is revenue at \$100.6 million. Mr. Speaker, that \$100 million is to come from an item which says, you get money there from anything that Government sold other than land and other properties. Our history has shown that for 10 years on average we only got \$2.8 million from that. Our history has shown that last year it was \$115 million, let me make sure I have the right figure, it was \$115.6 million last year, but they ain't put the actual of what they get you know because they ain't get nothing neither. The average over 10 years is that you get \$2.8 million from that and we putting down here expecting to get \$1.6 million. Who you fooling? This ain't real and this highlights the problems that we have to the Estimates and the need again to borrow to fill those gaps if we carry out our expenditure programme that is what it is and I am not going to deal with that again, I dealt with that so many years in this budget. I do not mind you putting in a small sum, but a large, large sum which we know is not attainable under any circumstances. Mr. Speaker, when I just look at that financial summary sheet alone in the Estimates, I know what the Estimates are about. The Estimates are not about fiscal consolidation, the Estimates are just the same as what we been getting all the time.

Mr. Speaker, I want to spend a little bit of time on the question of crime.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: 25 minutes remaining.

HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE: 25 minutes, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, all of our people here are concerned about the crime situation, all of us. I have already said on more than one

occasion I do not think one can deal with the question of crime unless all the various components of our society get involved. Of course the Government does have a role to play, so does the Opposition, so does the church, parents, the police, teachers, all have a role to play in dealing with the question of crime.

And Mr. Speaker, crimes against property in the past are really increasing. I have seen some of the reports and I find Mr. Speaker that in relation to the crime of murder the heinousness of those crimes is unbelievable to have men throwing a bound man into a cauldron of boiling water, big men doing that to a younger man. I read what his mother had to say in terms of the young man. She said he had a nervous breakdown, but he had eight subjects also. He was not stupid and even though he is stupid you do not throw him in boiling water and tie him when you throw him in too. None of us in this House Mr. Speaker can agree to that. There is no justification whatsoever to committing a crime of that nature. Even if he was doing something that was wrong that three men, according to reports I saw in the newspaper, will tie him up and throw him into a cauldron of boiling water which he did recover.

You cannot blame people for that but it tells us something about our society. It tells us something about our society and some of the directions that we are going. We had a young man who cut off the lady's head in Tokyo sometime ago. It had the lady in Chateaubelair in her 80s who was raped and murdered [interjection] yes we had the Bertie Browne issue. I raised these issues, Mr. Speaker, because they say something about our psyche. What are we becoming that we can find ourselves resorting..., these are serious issues, Mr. Speaker, and I am convinced, Mr. Speaker, that this has to do with our values and the extent to which these have declined in the last decade or so, and we seem not to have any undue concern about it unless it touches us directly. But we cannot continue like that, we cannot continue like that, Mr. Speaker, and we on this side of the House, we recognize the role, the important role of the police and other such persons, prisons officers and so on, but we are saying that the society as a whole has to get up and take note and to take action.

We presented our social, spiritual and redemption chartered to this Parliament, we could not debate it, but that is what we are attacking, the value systems and we need to strengthen those institutions in our country like the Cadets and so on which have been strengthened and Girl Guides which these values will set our children thinking. Whether we be pathfinders or whoever they are all have to become involved in this exercise. Wait, you ain't letting me finish? I am coming to the family that is the last how they come [interjection] listen I ain't tell you how to give your speech you know, so do not tell me how to give mine.

Mr. Speaker, you know we have children having children that is all we have, children having children and that also goes back to the value system and therefore, Mr. Speaker, that is where the family comes in. You are satisfied now? [Laughter] that is where the family comes in where everybody, Mr. Speaker..., it is the mechanism that we need to get everybody fighting from the same corner, because we cannot continue like this you know, we cannot continue like this.

Mr. Speaker, I do not believe that our children are born criminals. I believe that in many cases they were simply socialized that way. They are exposed in this kind of globalised world with the electronic media and other things to all sorts of things on a daily basis. You cannot get away from that. Nowadays sometimes you wonder whether you are safe in your own home and you wonder about your children when they go out whether

they will come home, you even have some that are disappearing and the crimes of murder, rape, assault, theft and so on have been going out of all bounds.

Internationally I think I got a figure here recently, internationally, Mr. Speaker, I had a figure from an organization, international organization, which dealt with the question of murders and he was saying that 8 per 100,000 is the developed world's average, 8 murders per 100,000 person, per 100,000 persons 8, we have 24 that is what it is and we have some..., increases. Up to May 2011 there were 736 reports of burglaries that were up to May. This 63 more than the number of burglaries reported over the same period in 2010. In 2011 the number of reported robberies was 69, an increased of 35 over the same period in 2010. There was also an increased in the number of reported thefts for the five month period to May 2011. During that period there were 1,345 reports of theft that is 222 more than the previous year. What this is showing, Mr. Speaker? This is showing there is an increase a mass increase in crimes against the property and person in this country and we have arrest it. I do not even pretend to know some of the mechanism, because some legal heads put together we can come up with some sort of mechanism so address this important issue in our society. Because I am convinced it is ground in the kind of values and all of us, Mr. Speaker, had to be blamed.

I would have liked to spend a little more time on this matter Mr. Speaker, because I take it with the utmost seriously, we have some of our young people who sometimes for economic reasons find themselves up in the hills with persons, criminal experience and we lose them. Sometimes we do not even know where they are whether they are dead or alive. So Mr. Speaker, I have an intention not to talk, I have an intention to the Prime Minister of this country on this matter of a mechanism which is more all embracing, which is non-party political to address the issue of crime in our country and make recommendations. And where they worried about the extent to the crime and the heinousness of some of the crimes..., it is not like us as a people. You know when fellers get in argument and one knock down a next one he understands that you know. I hear a man trying to take on people skin to sell it for smoke, what you are trying to tell me that is what we have descended too.

Mr. Speaker, you know while we are involved in the cut and thrust of politics that was far from my mind..., while we are involved in the cut and thrust of politics, I will never forget and while we are discussing the budget, I never forgot the three teachers who ran in the last elections [applause]. We do not have on this side of the House a great deal of control over that matter, but there was a union agreement signed by the Government and the Teachers Union which permitted that activity to take place. And today they and their families are at home without an income and we know, Mr. Speaker, that better could have been done, better could have been done in terms of returning them to their position. That is another matter which needs action, Mr. Speaker.

You know, all of us have take the decision if we want to serve our country at the highest level that is in here in this Parliament, and I assumed when the agreement was made in relation to the teachers that it was an opportunity to take some of our best educated people and give them the opportunity to participate at this level and to make their contributions, but alas that is not the case, alas it is not the case. You know as we advanced in age, as we advanced in age you know very often we have to look at things different, we have to recognize, Mr. Speaker, the need for humanity to breathe, to live, for their children to live, so I say no more.

Mr. Speaker, we have come to this exercise in this Parliament, all of us. An exercise which we all know is important to the development of our country, we all know that. There is nobody in this Parliament who is not

aware of it. We all know the importance of this exercise and we all know that if we fail in this exercise it is to the detriment of the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. That is not fair, that is not fair, let us come to a decision and actions that needs to be taken to bring our country out of the economic crisis that it is in now. All of us in this Parliament want to see better for our country. I have no doubt about that. Despite all the cut and thrust that you may have here and words thrown across the table we are insignificant in relation to our objective. That objective is to ensure that the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines have a better standard of living. None of us will begrudge them for that, but all of us have a role to play in ensuring that that happen. That is why we are here, indeed that is why they put us here to look after their interests [applause].

I have not even dealt here in this presentation with the fiscal measures. I have made some comments here with one or two of them, but I believe it is critical, Mr. Speaker, that we come to a clear understanding about the way forward for the economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Without coming to that understanding we will fail, we will fail our people. I do not mind, I do not mind the cut and thrust you know, you can curse me all you want. Very often I do not even respond, but, Mr. Speaker, I know that we can do better. I believe that we have the collective brain power in this House of Parliament here to transform the economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Of course we will have differences. That is normal, we are human beings and we have different ways of looking at different things and different circumstances to force decisions of different types, but the fact remains I have no doubt that we are all concerned about the future of our country, the future of our people, the future of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

I had intended this morning to speak for three hours. Now I feel to do like the Prime Minister yesterday, to speak as long as that because a lot of you I hear say, I am not fit, but I believe, Mr. Speaker, I believe, Mr. Speaker..., the Prime Minister tell me this morning you know that he did not realize he spoke so long. I realized though, I realized it because I had to listen. But seriously, Mr. Speaker, I appeal to all of us to take another look, take another look at what we are doing and how we do it and to make sure that finally what we do will bring the desired development for the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I am much obliged, Mr. Speaker [applause].

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Any further debate, Honourable Member for East St. George.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I think this is an appropriate time for us to take the luncheon suspension, perhaps we return at 3:30 p.m. two hours and a little bit.

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

Question put and agreed to.
House suspended at 1:15 p. m. (Luncheon)
House resumed at 3:34 p. m.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for East St. George, Minister of Road, Housing and

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HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Just give me a minute. Okay Honourable Member you can go ahead.

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution for the 2012 budget debate in this august House. I am indeed delighted for this opportunity bestowed to me. May I first of all, Mr. Speaker, extend the highest commendation to the staff in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning under the astute guidance and leadership of the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance for the tremendous job that has been done to craft these budgetary Estimates against the backcloth of a stringent international economic climate.

In 2011 Mr. Speaker, well before I go there I have something, Mr. Speaker, despite the circumstances that we are in, the global economic downturn worldwide, this Government continues to craft appropriate strategies to address these challenges, strategies which are designed to improve the lives of every citizen of our blessed land.

Mr. Speaker, this morning the Honourable Leader of the Opposition lamented on the fact that during the Estimates the debate on the Estimate, not every Member of the Government side spoke, but Mr. Speaker, I have here the Hansard of December 1999; 8, 13, 14, 15 and 16 and after the then Minister of Finance the Honourable Arnhim Eustace made his presentation, every Member of the Opposition then in the ULP spoke on the Estimates and then the Honourable Arnhim Eustace wound up the debate on the Estimates. So when he came here this morning and said that only the Opposition spoke on the Estimates that is what happened up to 1999 and his day and that was the order of the day then, Mr. Speaker.

As a matter of fact, they used to put Appropriation Bill and the Estimates together until the Honourable Vincent Beache then Opposition Leader brought it to the attention of the House and Mr. Speaker, it is a pity he is not here and the rest of his crew or Members of Parliament on the Opposition side sorry, Mr. Speaker, to hear the words of Shakespeare when he said, “to thy own self be true and it will follow as night follows day, canst be false to any man.” The Opposition Leader was false to himself this morning and to the nation [applause].

Mr. Speaker, permit me now, since they are not in the House you know and ain't sure if they are listening. I like to watch them over there and tell them what I have to tell them. So just in case they come in well I think I will turn back to them. But Mr. Speaker, permit me to address the work of my Ministry and I notice in the gallery that a number of my staff members from the four different divisions are here and the mission of my Ministry is to facilitate national sustainable development for the private and public sectors through the implementation of an integrated approach to Physical Planning, Land Surveying, Land Management, House and Development as well as the upgrading of the Informal Communities.

In 2011 Mr. Speaker, the approved [interjection] no, no, I am glad to have him, Mr. Speaker. In 2011 Mr. Speaker, the approved budget for the Ministry of Housing stood at \$10,044,911 with actual expenditure being \$9,092,389.93; of this amount recurrent spending was concentrated among four programmes, while the capital budget was approximately \$5 million. Mr. Speaker, the first half of the fiscal year 2011 was indeed a very challenging period for my Ministry given the global economic crisis which extended an enormous impact on the public sector investment. This meant, Mr. Speaker, that many planned development projects were not implemented, but in spite of this my staff was able to give more focus to the programmes for which funding was

available. It was a glorious opportunity, Mr. Speaker, for my staff to adopt a strategic approach designed to ensure optimum use of resources to provide quality services for the citizens of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, in order to further the Ministry's mission and to address the many challenges which confront us, the Central Administrative Unit must be enhanced to provide leadership, to drive programmes implementation, provide transparency and accountability for the use of resources, coordinate the activities of each component and to ensure efficiency of operation and use of resources as well as to promote continuous improvement in productivity and quality of service. Emphasis is therefore being put in place on creating the conditions for organizational change and the reshaping of the professional behaviour of staff. In this regard, Mr. Speaker, several teams and committees have been created to introduce additional layers of management within my Ministry and to expose and involve staff in the management of the daily routine of the Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, we now have in place in addition to the top management team, we have the senior management team, the human resource management team, finance committee and the internal audit committee. The top management team, Mr. Speaker, is where top officials meet to discuss pertinent issues, especially those for which urgent necessary solution must be crafted. The senior management team manages, monitors and evaluates the implementation of our programmes, policies and plans. The human resource management, Mr. Speaker, concentrates its attention on the professional development of staff as well as other personnel matters. The finance committee addresses all finance related issues. The internal audit is expected to monitor the prudent implementation of the Ministry's approved budget as well as to keep close tabs on our equipment, furniture, vehicles etc. etc. and Mr. Speaker, we have meetings regularly at the highest level and I must daresay the participation and enthusiasm of the staff in those meetings are very high.

Mr. Speaker, given that professional development is of utmost importance, extremely important, members of staff within my Ministry participated in broad range of in-house development sessions. There was also participation in relevant professional development sessions at the local, regional and international levels. In addition, Mr. Speaker, the Permanent Secretary and Senior Staff also participated in a consultation and training needs assessment mounted by the Service Commissions Department. Areas for development, Mr. Speaker, both long term and short term were tabled by my staff given the need to focus on succession planning in the technical areas.

Mr. Speaker, this issue of succession planning is of extreme importance, especially at this juncture of our development and the need..., and it is for this we need to address this aspect of our development with extreme urgency. Because what we noticed, Mr. Speaker, is that we have a number of persons in senior positions that are of the same age and going out at the same time and the younger ones if they are not training them to take up the mantle will be at a loss and the work that we have to do we would not be able to carry it out effectively and efficiently as we should. So Mr. Speaker, much emphasis is being placed on improving our relations with other Ministries and Departments and also with the general public.

Mr. Speaker, every effort is being made to publicise every single activity that we concentrate on within the Ministry and this is done by the written and oral media, written and oral press and this is an attempt to give focus to the Ministry and to let the public know about our daily routines and other developmental activities. I must here commend the API, Mr. Speaker, for highlighting our activities when we do have these activities. So

they come and they capture these..., what we are doing and disseminate the information to the general public. So that is one way where we get out information out to the public.

Mr. Speaker, we are also making every effort to update information related to the Ministry and the attendant activities on the Government owned website. And the dated information therein is being changed, Mr. Speaker, because we would wish for the information to be current and accurate, so we continually update this information.

Mr. Speaker, in the area of housing, the national housing programme continues to play a pivotal role in the developmental thrust of the ULP administration and this is one aspect to reduce poverty and to foster social economic advancement. Throughout the year 2011 the focus was however on recovery and restoration following the occurrence of the natural disasters, Hurricane Tomas in October 2010 and the April floods of 2011. Mr. Speaker, these two natural disasters visited us in quick succession, just about six months apart.

Mr. Speaker, in this regard approximately 1,200 persons requested assistance and to date about 600 households throughout the island have received assistance. The assistance, Mr. Speaker, carries a value of \$6.5 million as I would have answered in a question and consists of constructions and partial repairs with 75 houses being completely constructed. We must commend the several friendly Governments and organizations who have offered funding for the recovery programme which is ongoing.

Mr. Speaker, the ALBA fund the new income housing programme was placed on hold albeit temporarily and this was to accommodate the recovery and construction process and this is expected to resume in the near future. Mr. Speaker, the national housing programme continues to enjoy enormous appeals. The demand for low and middle income houses is growing rapidly. I cannot begin to say to this Honourable House, the Honourable Members here and the number of persons who visited the Central Administrative Unit of the Ministry and also the Housing and Land Development Corporation on a daily basis make formal request for houses. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, I think we have about 4000 applicants' applications at the moment. So this programme is one that is really seen as one of the areas where our citizens are looking to get houses in order to improve their lives.

Mr. Speaker, 30 low income houses were completed in four locations Diamond, Questelles, Richland Park and Chateaubelair that is during the year. In addition, Mr. Speaker, ten low income houses have been completed at Clare Valley with another eight currently under construction at that very site and another 130 houses are projected to be built from 2012 onwards in Clare Valley and we are hoping that later in this year construction will begin on 60 low and middle income houses at Green Hill and that is on completion of an access bridge to the designated lands. The Major the Honourable St. Clair Leacock, I know he is the representative for Central Kingstown, yes, work on this access bridge Mr. Speaker will commence very soon because we have to cross a small stream to get there and these lands are located in or between, just a little above the Liberty Lodge area and between the first set of houses that we have there.

Land and Survey, Mr. Speaker, the increase demand for lands and for surveying services by the Department to assist in Government projects and the national housing programme is enormous. A land regularization programme and the relocation of persons affected during national disaster placed significant demands on the

services offered by the department and the use of crown lands during 2011. I am please to say Mr. Speaker this demand for all these attention by the Lands and Survey Department that the staff in that department stepped up to the plate in order to assist the general public and the various Ministries within the Government that they have to assist to get lands so that they can carry out their capital programmes.

Mr. Speaker, the land information system continued quite nicely with approximately 2,500 parcels of lands being added. In addition, Mr. Speaker, we were able to make the following purchases and permit me to list them, Mr. Speaker. Properties in Georgetown to facilitate the completion of the newly constructed Georgetown Police Station, land at Lodge Village which will be used for the construction of a Learning Resource Centre, land at Hopewell to be used for the implementation of specific projects, land also at Georgetown to facilitate the proposed housing project, land at Jennings Valley to be use for the protection of the water source, land at Choppins to relocate residents who were dislocated round the Harmony Hall area and Mr. Speaker, 340 letters and 75 crown grants were also issued.

Mr. Speaker, my Ministry is making every effort to promote a brighter future for every single citizen in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and in this regard we have determined that land must be utilized in an efficient and sustainable manner in support of national development and the livelihood of all Vincentians and so the Land Management Unit, the Lands and Survey Department, the Land Registry Department, the Forestry Department and the Valuation Department continue to join forces to make this finite resource manageable.

As a consequence, Mr. Speaker, much emphasis continues to be placed on the national land titling project and the land registration project to modernize land management and to craft the local and national plan to decentralize Physical Planning and to achieve land regularization and upgrade informal communities as well as to adopt standards for the construction industry. Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that my Ministry has achieved significant success with respect to the implementation of these initiatives that I just mentioned. The major challenges to land management are the large informal sector which operates without regard to law and formal requirement and also the competing demands for this finite resource for development activities. But we are saying lands, small territory, small country and lots of persons want a piece of rock so we have to know how to manage it so that everyone could benefit.

But in spite of this, Mr. Speaker, my Ministry is receiving much support for its effort to improve the management of land as the population becomes more aware of issues related to natural disasters, climate change, as well as the potential use of land as an important asset in wealth creation.

In 2011 Mr. Speaker, 226 families benefitted from the sale of crown lands through the Land Regularisation and Informal Human Settlement Programme. In addition, serving work for a further distribution was done in several informal communities including Langley Park, Keartons, Trigger Ridge, Queens Drive, Spring Village, Chateaubelair, Coulls Hill and Lauders.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, under Physical Planning, the first draft of the national physical development plan has been tabled and work is continuing on the local area plan. These instruments, Mr. Speaker, are important in establishing the framework for efficient land use and promoting sustainable development. In addition we are expected to ensure that optimum use is made of this scarce and finite resource

for the benefit of a brighter future for all of us citizens. It is of concern, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, that unauthorized developments continue to present challenges for the Physical Planning Unit particularly in the rural setting where developers disregard planning regulations and enforcement actions has to be taken.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say here today that by the end of December of last year, there was 20 percent reduction in unauthorized development as a consequence of new effective monitoring employed by the staff at the Physical Planning Unit and these strategies will continue in 2012 Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I must emphasize that compliance with enforcement action has shown a decrease of approximately 15 percent. So we are reaching out to some persons in the public. Mr. Speaker, we will therefore continue to work diligently in controlling unauthorized developments throughout the entire country and in this regard you know, we will like that all the persons here try to assist along this line. And Mr. Speaker, I want to say that I am not compromising on this and I am asking all citizens to follow the laws and regulation. Safety must become the front burner issue in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, there are some persons I daresay when you go to a community, the informal areas, the informal human settlement and you say do not do anymore construction, you will find when we have a long weekend, when you go back the next day you will see a plywood structure or some wooden structure there and it is not only there, Mr. Speaker, when you go around the Physical Planning Unit approach them you see a picture of a Parliamentary Representative stick up there. Now election gone since 2010 and no structure was there but then you see one there with the sticker. So I am saying do not use that as the Prime Minister say, to try to throw smokes in my eyes. Even though you are supporter whether of me or anybody else, follow the laws and go to the Survey Department and the Planning Unit and get permission to do any sort of construction. So do not use those routes and think you will get away with it.

Mr. Speaker, the proliferation of ad hoc advertisement throughout the nation is undoubtedly degrading the aesthetic quality of the environment. This is another challenge which confronts the Physical Planning Unit and we have new advertising regulations and these were recently approved by Cabinet and will be implemented in 2012. The intention here, Mr. Speaker is to regulate direction of advertising signs throughout the country. Mr. Speaker, much emphasis was placed during the year on local planning area studies in Georgetown, Lowmans Bay, Calliaqua, Arnos Vale, Argyle and Bequia and in light of the successful completion of the Gellizeau and Lowmans Bay plan baseline data was collected for the new study areas in Arnos Vale, Bequia and Calliaqua while Georgetown is at an advanced stage or near completion.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the land use study for the area immediately adjacent to the Argyle International Airport was recently presented to the Cabinet by the Planning Unit after it was presented to the Physical Planning Development Board. So it went to Cabinet for consideration and Cabinet has given it its blessing and I am pleased to say here today following that approval the staff will soon commence a series of public consultations and this will allow members of the public to make their contribution and so when this document is being shaped and we have the final document it would be a document not only of the Physical Planning Unit but of the general public on a whole. Cabinet also, Mr. Speaker, directed that a management committee of the IADC would be established to further discuss this document. This collaborative process is indeed necessary to

ensure that the public eventually owns the proposal lending support in the way to the final plans emanating from the discussion process.

Mr. Speaker, the national building regulations were formally implemented on the first of October 2011 with the focus being on design requirements and this is expected to have a positive impact on construction and it really ought to result in an increase [in] socio-economic and legal benefits for all citizens. Greater emphasis, Mr. Speaker, is now being placed on monitoring all stages of construction. Persons would have heard in the press conference that was held at the press briefing the different stages you know, it is no longer well you just bring the plan and you allow it to continue construction. Every stage the Planning Unit will visit to see that the first phase or the first stage you adhere to that and you can commence on the second one because what we are doing, Mr. Speaker, is to ensure that we have they following the guidelines, following the plan that you have and in so doing when your construction is complete it would be safe for all concerned. So these regulations, Mr. Speaker, have been introduced to ensure that our buildings are safe, strong and durable and they have the capacity to endure natural and manmade disasters.

I must daresay that these regulations will be reviewed after the first six months in order to eliminate deficiencies or weaknesses, because it is something new, Mr. Speaker, so it is not something that is cast in stone and concrete. After six months we will evaluate, see what is happening and then we move from there. But this review process will be done in the first quarter of this year and what we would do, Mr. Speaker, is to host a series of workshops and consultations with stakeholders in the construction sector.

Also Mr. Speaker, in 2012 we will see an increase in our attempts to deepen awareness of these building regulations throughout the country. The public must be sensitized, you cannot implement something and do not let them know about it. You have to sensitize them in the proper way and with this in mind, Mr. Speaker, we will use the print and electronic media and collaborate with the Ministry of Education to visit especially the Technical Institutes and also the Division of Technical and Vocational Education of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College.

Mr. Speaker, we will also continue to work with stakeholders in the construction sector because this is their..., this document impact them, so in this regard, Mr. Speaker, we mount demonstration workshop in each of the four planning regions where planning desks have been established that is Georgetown, Barrouallie, Bequia and Union Island to persons in the field of construction they can go there and participate in these demonstration workshops. Mr. Speaker, appropriate staff at the Physical Planning Unit will continue to provide technical support for the implementation on continued public sensitization of these necessary regulations.

Permit me to remind this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, and also the nation of our concern given our vulnerability to natural disaster, is ensure that structurally sound infrastructure throughout the nation can withstand the impact of natural forces and minimize destruction and economic loss. I need however, Mr. Speaker, to state here today that there are several engineering and design concerns which negatively impact the requirement of the building regulation and these concerns are in addition to certain treats, Mr. Speaker, posed by builders and designers who lack a working knowledge of their responsibility under the code and guidelines and we have been having that, Mr. Speaker, where persons not very skilled in the area but will be doing this sort of work so they have to be monitored. And to overcome these deficiencies, Mr. Speaker, there is some

structural engineering software which allows for efficient spot checks, calculations and assessment of design. The persons can get this software and look at it to ensure that they are on the right path and they are following the requirements.

Mr. Speaker, it is necessary and of extreme importance for applicants and builders to be aware of their obligations under the building regulations if they are to comply and it is for this reason that 2012 we will mount training sessions for designers, contractors and builders and truly intensify the public awareness programme. So we are going to make sure that our designers and builders you know have some training in order to assist them further with their work.

Mr. Speaker, the roles and responsibilities of every citizen stakeholder must be known so that the public increase in the* aids in ensuring compliance and that is one of the biggest problems we have in this country, Mr. Speaker, people not wanting to comply with rules and regulation and laws and so on. So we are asking them to be a part of the process and let us have compliance so that we can have decent structures and safe structures.

Mr. Speaker, you may hear mention being made some time ago about the GIS which is the Geographical Information System and this system is now established within the Physical Planning Unit and I will tell you about this. This includes the mapping of spatial data, buildings, roads etc. as well as other related data, example, census data in order to have an improved understanding of their relationship and the word spatial, Mr. Speaker, is spelled “s-p-a-t-i-a-l”, it is essentially referring to the various locations for persons who listening out there and this information, Mr. Speaker, is expected to provide integrated spatial data which would guide policy and decisions with respect to land use and development activities.

Mr. Speaker, data collection has improved vastly and my staff will continue to populate and update the current geo database on this which is expected to provide access to reliable and timely data necessary to assist in evidence based decision making for general improvement in economic development and the sustainable management of our countries natural and manmade resources.

Mr. Speaker, members of staff within the division are engaged in weekly fieldwork in the collection of data on all existing buildings except for residential buildings and they have completed most of the work on the Leeward side of the island and are now working on the Windward side and Mr. Speaker, data for such building’s use and conditions are collected from these field exercises. So the staff is out there collecting various data for the GIS and this as I said would enhance on banning on the policies of the Government and I must dear say, Mr. Speaker, that members within the division now provide training, mapping and advisory services to other Ministries and Departments.

Revenue collection, Mr. Speaker, with respect to revenue collection, the Lands and Survey Department continue to maintain a reasonable high level of stability. However, Mr. Speaker, as a consequence of the transfer of commercial lands held by the Crown, the National Properties Limited, and revenue collection by the Lands and Survey Department released decline in 2011 just as was the case in 2010. Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, improvements in the collection of income from the sale of land and other activities of the department will offset this loss.

Mr. Speaker there has been a reduction in the revenue collected from agricultural lease and I refer to the Rabacca, the ARDP and ADC Estates. This is as a consequence, Mr. Speaker, [of] the decline in the agricultural sector and the pervasive problem of subletting, a significant decline in revenue from commercial leases was recorded as a consequence, Mr. Speaker, of the transfer of lease of major rent contributors to the national properties limited. So when persons say that this came in from the Ministry compared to previous years, this is the reason and the value of leased transferred in 2011 Mr. Speaker, amounted to \$94,207.99 given the increase in surveying of parcels under the Informal Human Settlement Programme, Mr. Speaker, an increase in sale of crown lands is projected for this year. This, Mr. Speaker, may not necessarily translate into more revenue because most of these lands would be sold from 10 cents upward per square foot because persons were occupying the majority of these lands for generation. So we start from as low as 10 cents you know as persons were there since in the 50s going up to this time being on some crown land so we are trying to sell them for what it might have been the cost at that time onwards. So we will not translate this into more revenue but there would be a step up in selling of these lands to citizens of the state.

Mr. Speaker, the recent decision by the Cabinet to reduce the interest rate to 3 percent payable on outstanding balances along with a reduction in time for the first five years is likely to result in an increasing crown land revenue collection. In the area of Physical Planning, Mr. Speaker, as it relates to planning application fees, 720 applicants were submitted for the period January through December 2011 as compared to 757 in the previous year. This marks, Mr. Speaker, a difference of 37 applications between the two years and a decrease of 5 percent in 2011 when compared to the corresponding period in 2010. And Mr. Speaker, the total revenue for the period January to December was \$73,810 and I say with that of the same period being \$82,920 in 2010.

Mr. Speaker, the decrease in revenue was rooted in the redistribution of the classes of development which are being built. The lower categories of fees now contribute in excess of 60 percent of the total application but less than 31 percent of the revenue. By comparison, Mr. Speaker, the larger of the categories contribute to, in excess of 50 percent of total revenue but also contributes 24 percent of the total volume. Family residence the largest category of application, Mr. Speaker, have not experienced a decline and remain the largest category of application which is more than 50 percent in volume and within this category the distribution of residence has shifted. The even distribution between large residences which are attracting excess of \$200 and smaller residences which attract between \$50 and \$75 have shifted sharply, Mr. Speaker, to the smaller fee category. Mr. Speaker, the statistics are indicative of the response in the housing market of acute erosion of buying power in the construction sector, the increased cost of labour, raw material, and land as well as tightening of access to capital of all restricted house sizes.

Mr. Speaker, capital projects, we commence the process of transferring building lots at Enhams, to the persons who have to be relocated from Diamond Ribishi Point to make way for the Wind Farm Project. Title Deeds, Mr. Speaker, will soon be available for official transfer shortly. The Land Management Unit is continuing the data conversion work initiated under the National Land Titling Project and in this year the Ministry proposed to mobilize a land policy forum to facilitate a land management initiative. Mr. Speaker, we will conclude negotiation with a consultant to prepare the National Physical Development Plan. Funding in this regard is provided by the capacity building in the mainstream of sustainable land management project within the Ministry of Health.

Mr. Speaker, approximately \$2.5 million was used to provide land parcels for public projects under the purchase of land project. The sum of \$4 million has already been earmarked to cover purchase agreements previously negotiated and this is for the year 2012. The Informal Human Settlements Programme had to make way, Mr. Speaker, for more pressing national demand. We will however, continue to regularize the tenure of households currently occupying state lands in communities earmarked for upgrade. Mr. Speaker, we are currently evaluating the housing for the poor project which is also referred to as the no income housing programme. Negotiation for an additional injection of fund will continue as every attempt is made to improve the lives of the people who receive these houses and also to improve the efficiency of the project so that we will have increased value to the recipients.

Mr. Speaker, in 2012 I will be working very closely with the Permanent Secretary to focus on several priority issues and these, Mr. Speaker, will be addressed within the framework of the strategic plan and permit me here, Mr. Speaker, to mention the principal areas of focus for 2012. The Ministry's ability to develop and implement its programme is constrained by an inadequate range of appropriately trained staff, Mr. Speaker. In this regard we will seek to create opportunities for continued professional development for all staff as well as to introduce and eventually institutionalise a performance management system with staff being given the requisite training and an appropriate instrument piloted.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, long term training opportunities at the Undergraduate and post graduate levels for technical staff will be explored in a bid for [an] appropriate plan for succession. Mr. Speaker, we will continue to concentrate on the delivery of our services given the need for all members of staff to interact with the general public on a daily basis. In this regard, Mr. Speaker, monitoring mechanism will be put in place to gauge consumer satisfaction and facilitate the achievement of our objectives. We will extend our collaborative efforts with stakeholders to ensure that development interventions are more targeted and relevant and that they make the most efficient use of resources and we will continue to strengthen the National Geographical Information System along with the modernization of the land registry and the land titling system.

Mr. Speaker, the modernization of the information system to address timely, accurate and relevant information is on our front burner for 2012. Work will therefore continue on upgrading the database and information system in all departments. We will continue our thrust to improve our external communications by making full use of the print and electronic media to disseminate information and highlight our activities and achievements. Mr. Speaker, the Informal Human Settlement's Programme will continue to address the basic needs of citizens, especially those at the lower round of the social ladder.

Special attention will continue to be paid to the national housing programme in which the current policy is to provide housing at an affordable cost to citizens. Every effort is, therefore, being made to ensure sustainability and qualitative improvement. Mr. Speaker, we will continue to update the land records in order to facilitate proper land utilisation resulting from rapid organisation and increased population growth and the attendant development of a modern information system to facilitate the prudent management of available land. We will seek, Mr. Speaker, to enforce the new building regulation during the year and beyond and also to promote environmental sustainability as a means of reducing vulnerability to natural and manmade hazards.

My Ministry notes, Mr. Speaker, that nationally there is not enough acceptance at all levels of the society of the enormous benefits which can be derived from the adoption of new technologies such as the Land Information Management System environmental impact assessment inter alia. Public education in this regard will therefore be emphasised during this year so that we can bring our citizens up to speed.

Mr. Speaker, I am agreeing here with my staff that it is by establishing an integrated and holistic national development planning framework that as a nation we will be able to maximize the economic social environmental and physical dimension. In addition, Mr. Speaker, improvement in quality service will continue to be pursued by my Ministry. Mr. Speaker, given that we have an important role to perform in facilitating social and economic development, we must pay even greater attention to improving the way we plan and implement our projects and programmes which must be governed by public policies that are well defined and articulated.

As gatekeepers for the political directorate, all public officers must engage in the necessary research and policy analysis to inform the policy decision making process. In this regard, Mr. Speaker, division of this ULP administration is and I quote “an ethical sound society offering opportunities for the advancement and prosperity for all citizens characterized by good health, sound education and a deep sense of national pride within a framework of environmental sustainability.” Mr. Speaker, this vision provides a clear concept of the desired future which should guide the policy which prescription of the Ministry of Housing, Informal Human Settlement, Lands and Survey and Physical Planning during 2012 and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, permit me to express my gratitude an appreciation to all members of staff in my Ministry for their work during 2011. Without their efforts, their dedication to duty, their deep and abiding commitment, our achievements could not have been realized. I thank them all and I look forward to their increased efforts in 2012 as we seek to further our Ministry as a team [applause]. Mr. Speaker, I wish them all well as we go forward. Mr. Speaker, how I am doing for time, I reach an hour yet?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: [Inaudible]

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: To the hour, okay all right, so you have 6 and 15 is 21 [interjection] yes, yes, so yes, Mr. Speaker, permit me also, Mr. Speaker, to express enormous thanks and appreciation to every single household in my constituency, the constituency of East St. George as well as those who sit on my constituency council and also my immediate family friends and other relatives for their unwavering loyalty and support.

My being here today, Mr. Speaker, I owe it to all of them and I thank them most sincerely from the depth of my heart. Mr. Speaker, permit me now to highlight some of the work in the constituency of East St. George. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, progress continues on all fronts in East St. George. The Education Revolution is being consolidated. Last night in his presentation the Honourable Prime Minister mentioned about the fact that by 2025 we want to see every household in St. Vincent and the Grenadines with a graduate, based on the Education Revolution and the programmes that we have. I must dear say, Mr. Speaker, there are some households in my constituency where we have exceeded that number, there are some that we ain't have any as yet, but I want to say that in one household a mother with five children and five of them are graduates,

university graduates in that household [applause] one under the previous administration and four since we got into office, two of them in the medical field, two of them professional teachers and one of them business and that sort of things. So at least I know my constituency has been noted for having record longevity in life and so on so I do not know if this one is a record. I know Sister Miguel has three at least, so [interjection] eh, Minister of Education, the Member for Marriaqua, Mrs. Miguel.

In this regard, Mr. Speaker, as a result of the Education Revolution being consolidated, a skills and literacy programme is on stream at the Glen Adult Education Resource Centre with classes in Math and English up to the Form 3 level. There is Woodwork also being done there, Computer Science, and Computer Programming and Civic Education. I think that is something that is lacking Mr. Speaker, the Civic Education within but that is now being done in the various schools them now and we are carrying it into the Technical Institute, so we know that sometimes when some children are being taught certain things in Primary School they tend to want to divert from it so we want to continue this Civic Education throughout so that people will be civic minded.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, all of my constituents have access to proper and adequate health care and the home help programme for the elderly is a programme which is growing great ones [applause]. Mr. Speaker, this is a rapidly growing programme and it specifies a certain number of persons who we can accommodate, but persons who have gained employment and have their parents and grandparents home they are coming to the Ministry responsible for Social Development and to Parliamentary Representatives I know from both sides to ask for assistance and this is a wonderful programme and as I said, it is very much implemented in East St. George like the other constituencies.

Basic amenities such as water, street lights, as well as the extension of electricity service are also provided, Mr. Speaker. The regular social programmes are continuing and I here refer to the public assistance programme, the provision of building materials etc. Mr. Speaker, East St. George has long ceased to be an agricultural community. Construction is now very trendy as many persons construct houses and developed the built environment. So work now shift from agricultural land and earlier on we heard mentioned last night about the decline in agriculture and persons not doing nothing and also the Opposition mentioned it this morning.

The Calliaqua Town Hall is scheduled for completion during this year and physical expansion work at the Division of Arts, Science and General Studies of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College located at Villa is also expected to be completed by September of this year. Mr. Speaker, this new project, financed by the European Union and the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is at a cost of approximately 8 million Euros and you know the Euros usually go up and down so sometimes you cannot give the figures in EC and this will house additional classrooms, Science Labs, sewerage facilities, renovation of existing classrooms and Science Laboratories, a new student union, an external stage, bleachers and a hard court, so we are providing for the students all the necessary and basic amenities that will enhance learning and if you look in the presentation by the Honourable Prime Minister when he made the budget presentation here, he mentioned all about what is taking place at the Community College.

Roads and drains, Mr. Speaker, continue to take place in various parts of the constituency and this programme will continue and Mr. Speaker, they say within the Caribbean the largest industry is repairs of roads and drains and these are things that we will die and roads, the repair will still be going on and have to go on. However

there are some persons who are persuaded that every single road which needs to be repair must be done immediately. I wish to urge those persons to be patient and to show some understanding, because the necessary work, Mr. Speaker, will take place gradually. There are certain procedures which must be followed.

Mr. Speaker, the sports lovers now has a great opportunity to enjoy the floodlights in the Calliaqua Playing Field [applause] but Mr. Speaker, I once heard E. G. Lynch asking on NICE Radio, asking my good friend Linton Lewis about the floodlights and he told him that the lights are turned on only whenever there is a ULP function and whenever there is a religious crusade, I heard him with my own ears. But Mr. Speaker, how utterly absurd this is? Mr. Speaker, you would have passed by at times when you go to visit your old community and see the guys play [interjection] well East St. George you know that is where he is from, Calliaqua so he has to go and he has his relatives there, so he has to be there to see them from time to time unless they called him ungrateful for moving out and not coming back. So Mr. Speaker....,

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Mr. Speaker, I think there is something in the rules that says, we should not be gratuitously calling peoples name in this Honourable House who are not here to defend themselves. I mean, this is something that you know, on opponent on a political rostrum, if you want to say something, say it outside where you could respond to it.

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Tell me where in the rule that says so, Mr. Speaker, tell me where in the rule that says so.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Well if it is not in the rules [laughter]....,

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: You made it up.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: It is in the rules of fair play. Dr. Lewis is not in this House to defend himself, so you should not be calling his name up here where he cannot defend himself.

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: The same like how he want me to go in jail after the 2010 election.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Striking of the gavel.

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I do not know why he always takes offence to this thing really maybe Dr. Lewis is a threat to him in leadership [interjection] yes. Yes Mr. Speaker, read your rules and regulations before you come and say rules and regulations says.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Gentlemen could you please....,

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: I will do, Mr. Speaker, I am obliged. Mr. Speaker, the only time lights were turned on during a ULP function is when I mentioned when the Prime Minister announced the date for elections, well I announced that floodlights is here in Calliaqua and they turned on the lights so that people can see. So Mr. Speaker, since that time the ULP has not held any activities there and may I remind this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, that it was this ULP administration that installed the lights and if we use them we will pay for the use of the lights. So Mr. Speaker, what gross dishonesty.

You see, Mr. Speaker, the constituent of East St. George understand and fully appreciates what is happening. They are now enjoying the good times now that this ULP is in this seat of controlling our blessed land despite the challenges and difficulties. They are aware that their needs will be met as long as the required resources become available. It is nothing but a matter of exercising patience and understanding. Mr. Speaker, I have nothing but best wishes for my constituents in 2012 and beyond.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, may I express my thanks to you, the Clerk and Staff of this Honourable House for your work in 2011 as well as for the support which I received from you. I also have very good wish, Mr. Speaker, for the Honourable Prime Minister and my Parliamentary colleagues on this side of the House and also for the Leader of the Opposition and the Honourable Members on the other side. I offer, Mr. Speaker, nothing but the very best to you all as well as to every single Vincentian here on our blessed rock and also in the Diaspora as we move forward along in 2012.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I have been here since 2001 and all my wishes have come through and do not wish for things that I know would not come through and as long as I want to be on this side of the House I will continue to be here and persons have come and they tried, they do all sort of things, but I remained rooted and grounded and standing firm [applause] all the time [laughter] and I am on the good side.

You see, Mr. Speaker, this morning the Opposition Leader spoke about growth and negative growth for four consecutive years, but who the people chose to continue to lead this country, Mr. Speaker? The Unity Labour Party [applause] so the same rhetoric that you have been carrying on from 2001, they are carrying on until 2010 and the result is the same. So change your tune. Mr. Speaker, I thank you very much for this opportunity bestowed on me today and I give you every assurance of my continued presence and participation in this House during 2012 and beyond. I am much obliged, Mr. Speaker [applause].

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Senator..., inaudible.

HONOURABLE ELVIS CHARLES: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to the budget debate for January 2012. I too would like to commend the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Finance for crafting such a budget that is so excellent for this time. It was done with prudence and wisdom and would no doubt serve to benefit the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, even though I want to look at the budget from a national standpoint, please permits me to refer to the constituency of Central Kingstown of which I am the caretaker until the next elections.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer to page 188 of the Estimates and look at the Youth Empowerment Service. Mr. Speaker, this is a wonderful innovation [applause]. This service offers on the job training for young people. It prepares the young workers for the job market and whenever the move from such stage, there is always a smooth transition. In fact, I have heard several businessmen commend the workers that they are so excellent that whenever they come to work in their institutions they bring with them a wealth of knowledge, good work ethics, proper attitude and Mr. Speaker, I would like to commend the Unity Labour Party for establishing such a wonderful programme [applause].

Mr. Speaker, these workers they become more confident, those who participate in the Youth Empowerment Service exhibit such confidence after just a short time. In fact, I have been in contact with members of the Youth Empowerment who participate in the Youth Empowerment Programme from Central Kingstown and they exhibit such confidence, they are so happy. Whenever I speak to them they cannot help but compliment the party for this wonderful programme. If you are to look at the result indicators for 2011 it said that there will be continued training for 500 persons with emphasis on job training and civic education and Mr. Speaker, we see here that over 360 persons were trained with the further 140 by the end of December and Mr. Speaker, we can always say this was wonderful.

The training that was said to be administered was done. So this is serious business and we compliment the Ministry of Education for spearheading the Youth Affairs Department for spearheading this project. Mr. Speaker, because it is so important there is very little difference between the figures, the Estimates for 2011 and 2012. In fact, there is just a small difference of about \$5000 which shows that amid this harsh and cruel economic time, this Government still sees to promote the wellbeing of its workers and to train its human resources.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to speak about the Boys Liberty Lodge Training Centre. For over decades, since I was a little boy this institution was referred to as “the Dodge” whenever a parent could not deal with its child or children he often reference to the Dodge, I would send Dodge, it give the impression that it was a home for the bad boys or the cast away of society. Those whom you had, those whom you could not rehabilitate, but, Mr. Speaker, this Government seeks to rehabilitate all individuals of anti-social behaviours, it seeks to rehabilitate those who we refer to as the cast away of society so that they will be able to take up their rightful places in society.

Mr. Speaker, this institution provides a home for young boys, many of whom are treated badly. They lack the love, the care and attention from parents. In some cases where their behaviour is so adverse and they really need the help of counselors, they are taken to this home and they are treated with the care and attention to enable them to help them to behave as civil individuals normally do. This institution serves to rehabilitate and educate. In fact, Mr. Speaker, my home is not too far from the Boys Liberty Lodge. So I am really acquainted with the teachers and the helpers and the students. When I taught at the Lodge Village Government School from 2000 – 2005 I had the privilege of teaching some of these same students and I must confess many of them are really wonderful to be around. They are talented, they are intelligent and today many have grown and we still maintain that friendly relationship. Many have taken up their rightful places, they have been helped, and they have been assisted. So we see here that the Boys Liberty Lodge Training Centre is really striving to meet its objectives and it is doing so with much aplomb.

Mr. Speaker, much would be done for this year, for this year for the Boys Liberty Lodge, there would be structural reform, things would not be done in the same old way, and there would be new innovations. The programmes would be monitored, they would be evaluated and that would be done with the help of the Social Development Unit who would be looking at the programmes and analyzing the programmes to ensure that they have been executed in a very fair way. So we see here, Mr. Speaker, things are not done there in any old ad hoc way, things would be done in a systematic way, things would be done with much thought.

Mr. Speaker, also, designs would be prepared through consultation on the expansion of the services there. So the services would be diverse, they would be increased, where instruction would be done in different ways so as to stimulate the young boy who are housed there so that they can feel as though they are in a home, a home where they are well loved and where they are taken care of. Mr. Speaker, many people often walk to the property and they walk through the gates without really given much instructions as to why they are there or why they are going to the Liberty Lodge Training Centre. But things would be done differently this year that there would be security service will be expanded for the students so that they can feel safe in their environment. In fact, collaborative work would be done with the various stakeholders to see how well security systems can be established. So we see here, Mr. Speaker, and why I am heartened is that the Boys Liberty Lodge Training Centre it does not serve only the people of Central Kingstown, it serves people from all over St. Vincent and the Grenadines, but I am really proud that it is established in Central Kingstown and we would be seeing first hand how things are done there, things would be done there so that we too can make our own input to improve the services for these young boys.

Mr. Speaker, I must say the Government has a keen interest in the development of this institution. Mr. Speaker, I have been a teacher for all my years before crossing into the political arena and I speak about education with a passion. Education empowers, it instills confidence in a person, it makes you feel rich, you become more aware of what is going on around you regardless to which class if you are in the upper, the middle class or the poorer class, once you are educated you feel rich [applause]. Mr. Speaker, this Government has really revolutionised the way things are done on the educational front in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. No wonder it is referred to as the Education Revolution. There has been a radical change, a radical shift in the way things are done. In fact, I commented just a few days ago that Vincentians we seemed to be taking things for granted, we are becoming a little too complacent as though you know this was an innovation since way back when. But since 2001 when this Government came into office it showed the people of this nation what true education is all about, what it means to educate the people of a land. What it means to train the human resources, train and educate the human resources of a country and for this, Mr. Speaker, I will be forever grateful.

In 2011 the promise was made that all learning institutions, all primary schools, all primary school children would be given netbooks and this was realized, marvelous achievement [applause]. In fact, when some people want to criticize, they say, somebody had to do it, but who did it? Clap who did it [applause]. Mr. Speaker, when I taught at the Lodge Village Government School, you would always hear me refer to this school, because it is the only primary school in the constituency which I am the caretaker and I am very close to the teachers and students there. In fact, during the lunchtime I spend about 40 minutes with them, went from class to class and greeted the students and maintain contact with the teachers and Mr. Speaker, what I saw, the students many of them were using their netbooks and could have seen the fun, you could have seen the fun they were having, discipline. There was no noise, but each student was glued to his/her netbook learning from his Ralph book [applause].

Mr. Speaker, this is a marvelous achievement you know. I have not travelled as widely as many of you have, but I do believe that it is the only country in the Caribbean where you have students, all primary school students having a computer [applause] what an achievement? For a country with limited resources [applause] for a country we are not rich, we are a small developing country, but this has been achieved because we have at the

helm a captain who is wise, a captain who has vision sailing St. Vincent and the Grenadines not down the bad..., it is not sinking, but lifting us over the boisterous waves [applause]. So this morning when I heard that I was troubled because I was saying this is not the same person that I know. Maybe they are talking about a different captain.

Mr. Speaker, all of us feel so proud whenever we talk education. I am not going to behave as though I spend two years at Mona Campus, but I went there when I was completing my Masters course in education, I went there for summer and I remember saying among the Jamaicans I am from St. Vincent and the Prime Minister is Dr. Ralph Gonsalves and I talked about the help that he give to all of us to educate ourselves. I boasted about and even though they were only two Vincentians on campus at the time doing our programme, we were loud enough, Nigel Scott and I were loud enough, we talked proudly of the great work that this Prime Minister is doing to develop all of us educationally. And Mr. Speaker, it would continue as long as this leader is at the helm and even though he departs, the policies are already established this would continue [applause].

Mr. Speaker, in 2011 the party promised internet access in primary schools and Dr. Jerrol Thompson, he explained to all of us what that really meant, today there is wireless access for the students. No wonder they can use their netbooks and this is great for the poor families who cannot afford those kinds of things at home where their children can stay at school and surf the net, find the relevant information and learn an I am glad that the people of Central Kingstown would benefit because Lodge Village serve as a melting pot for students from all the different villages in Central Kingstown. So I see down the road in my mind eyes, I am seeing a bunch of children who are witted as one educator, one philosopher, coon inside there must be wittedness, students who are bright, students who can stand up with confidence and speak you know as educated individuals and I am happy for that. I am really happy that I would be part of that society once the good Lord spares my life and I am doing everything possible to outlive my father who lived at 91. I really I want to make 100 [interjection] all that I am trying.

Mr. Speaker, I am looking here at what would happen in the medium, the short term and the long term to our students, where they would gather so much knowledge. Many of them would not have to go to a library; they have a library on hand in their computer. We are talking about students who would be meaningfully occupied at home. Mr. Speaker, this is really important to me because once they are home surfing the net, dealing with technology, our young children seem to possess a knack for that and I can see them being at home occupying themselves meaningfully, learning all the time. I believe the parents too, many of them are rejoicing because I believe they do not have to worry about where their children are, because they are right there learning. When they go on to secondary schools, the transition is so smooth, they go on to universities they are computer literate. You Mr. Speaker, I once thought when I heard about the computer, I was wondering if I would be able to turn one on, if I would be able to use the computer. I did not do that until I was well aged. But here are young students in primary school and at early ages using computers with such skill. They are so computer literate and Mr. Speaker, I am really, really happy for that. I am happy for the people of Central Kingstown.

And in fact, Mr. Speaker, during the Christmas season, I held talks with friends in the Diaspora, friends who visited here from Canada and from America and right now we are trying to..., they have promised to raise funds to assist me in securing not only books but other school materials so that I will be able to make donations as I

have done before to schools in Central Kingstown. It was just a couple of months ago when I donated some notebooks and some writing materials to the school and I always say to them, I have taken this school under my arm and I am going to be there for the students. I want to help to continue to educate the people around me, educate the people of Central Kingstown, because I believe when you educate a person you are fitting him/her for life and that is what I am going to continue to do even though I am in Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, during 2011 the Ministry of Education embarked on programmes to improve the reading of pupils to make reading fun for children. Mr. Speaker, when students can read, when anyone can read, I am certain I am not exaggerating here by saying, the world is at your hand or you have the world at your feet. It is so good when you can read and many people cannot and I know the agony and the pain they feel of not being able to read even the newspaper, the Bible or any simple material, having persons reading to them. Mr. Speaker in fact, I felt the pain of one man who said, he could not see the words because he did not have his glasses and suspected he could not really read, I felt his pain, but now we are seeing here that the Ministry of Education embarked on a programme in 2011 to help students to read so that reading would become fun and not only that, but to train the teachers in reading methodology to help teachers to assist students who can read and to help them to detect students with reading difficulties and this was done satisfactorily. Because when I looked at the indicators, this was done satisfactorily. So the objective was really achieved.

Mr. Speaker, more programmes would be introduced for struggling readers for 2012. Instructions would be more diverse and varied and rich and the Ministry would continue to assist students in their reading programmes. In fact, it was just during the lunch break when I spoke to the teachers at the Lodge Village Government School, I was told that for last term the schools were in three consecutive reading finals and that is a great achievement [applause]. Mr. Speaker, policies would be implemented for the management of early childhood education, early childhood. The start that you get determines how well you continue. Mr. Speaker, if a child does not get the right start generally he develops into a bad student, bad in the sense maybe not attitude, not having to do with violence, but he finds it difficult to learn, he is generally that student who does not achieve much academically. And in 2012 we see here that the Ministry of Education would continue to implement policies for the management of Early Childhood Education, to prepare young students to learn, encourage them to learn and to see learning as fun.

Mr. Speaker, preparatory work is always important. I always refer to sports when I talk about these things. You warm up your muscles and your body, you know you move so freely, so smoothly and when you prepare the young students to learn, Mr. Speaker, they would develop into good students. And Mr. Speaker, many people would always hear me talk about education when I am in the House because this is my passion.

Mr. Speaker, on 292 of the Estimates, National Commission on Crime Prevention, Mr. Speaker, I am always happy, I joke with the police that whenever they are around I am confident. If I want to have a drink I go the police canteen or find somewhere where there are policemen. I feel protected. In fact, I was at a party and I am not afraid to say that, I was at a party I dance most when I see the police because I say; nobody is going to hit me today. I like the police, I like the constabulary. In fact, if I did not become a teacher I always believe I would have been a police or a farmer, not too old but you never know.

Mr. Speaker, let us be honest here, crime in St. Vincent that subject has been a subject of discussion lately, where some people are saying that they are not safe in their homes anymore. Some people go off on all kinds of deviant behaviours and they look at it as being so mature. They are making those of us who are civic minded and well trained feel so uncomfortable and one crime in this country is one crime too many, it is one crime too many. Sometimes we say these things..., I remember we used to say those things happen in Trinidad, in Jamaica, now it is happening on our doorstep. And Mr. Speaker, this Government is making every effort to stamp out crime and criminal behaviours in St. Vincent and the Grenadines [applause].

Mr. Speaker, I am the caretaker for Central Kingstown and people often joke with me and ask, “You does pass through Sharps” I will never live in these places Elvis, but I find the people are warm. Mr. Speaker, I have socialized with them for a very long time since I constructed my dwelling house in Green Hill in 1995, I have been around the people of Sharps, I have thought them, I have thought many of them so I feel very comfortable among them and sometime it hurts when you hear people say that these people are so violent as though when you walk through Redemption Sharps something is going to turn and just slap you or hit you or kick you, that does not happen. They are talented people in the community of Redemption Sharps. They are intelligent people there. In fact, I love to look at football in Sharps. It gives me that feeling as though I am in a big stadium where there is rivalry; they play football with a passion. I go to church in Redemption Sharps, I fellowship at the Faith Deliverance Church, Brother Lowe is my Pastor [interjection] yes, not too far, so I feel comfortable in Redemption Sharps. And I remember the police have programmes where they would come to Redemption Sharps and invite the people from the surroundings and they would have programmes, the Pan Against Crime, they would march through the streets, they would have meetings on the park and Mr. Speaker, I feel very good about that, because I know that would continue. I see here that it is one of the objectives of this party to really assist the policemen in whatever way in order to bring peace and order to communities that we look at as “hot spots”. And I am very happy that much work would be done in Redemption Sharps, Green Hill, Kingstown park area and surroundings to assist the citizens there. I feel very, very happy about that, Mr. Speaker.

In fact, new community strategies in addressing violent activities would be done through the revitalization of community neighbourhood watch groups and police youth clubs. Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the police because again I hope I am not repetitious here but they have been doing great work in trying to stop out crime but they are not getting the praise that they really deserves. Many people look at them as beast but they are not. What I am saying here, if we work with the police, if the community support the police and we work together, St. Vincent and the Grenadines will be a better place [applause] we have to work together.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to talk here about crop production. Farming is very important in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. In fact, the people of Green Hill where I live they would boast that their homes were built from farming. When I left Biabou and I went there to live I complimented the youngsters who I see, they till the lands everyday planting ginger, eddoes and all kinds of other crops and today many of them have built their own homes, many of them have established themselves well. In fact, so much of the produce from Central Kingstown moves to Trinidad. There are so many speculators in the areas, I still have, I still have me ginger crop that I am going to start next month. I plant..., I am a commercial farmer, Mr. Speaker, I plant ginger and eddoes mainly and from time to time I bring a root or two to my colleagues. I was telling senator Browne here

that I went on the net and I looked at the advantages of the ginger plant and I really hope that many of you here would seek to drink the beer and the tea because it increases the circulation of blood to all parts of your body, to all parts and I went into all the other websites and I looked and I observed and I made my notes, so I am going to advise you to drink more of the ginger tea. The Minister of Health and Wellness here he is just whispering to me to let the people know to say it, to make a clarion call to use the product. Mr. Speaker, ginger tea and the beer...

Mr. Speaker, I see here in 2012 the Government will be seeking to promote the production, the Ministry of Agriculture would be seeking to promote the production of root crops such as ginger, eddoes etc. and to promote the sustainable production of root crops so here we are saying that the future looks bright for the farmers, the future looks bright for me. I do not have the amount of lands like others, but if I plant and I can get 32 sacks when they bear well it tells me that I am a commercial farmer. Minister Daniel I know is looking at me thinking that I have this little back yard garden with one root; I am a big farmer, big farmer.

Mr. Speaker please permit me here to speak about work done by the Ministry of Transport on page 419 of the Estimates. The Ministry of Transport and Works has done great work in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. It performed well in 2011 amid the harsh economic times and amid natural, I mean the forces of nature. The Ministry delivered, roads were fixed in Central Kingstown and all parts of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I remember when we had Hurricane Tomas and the Freak Floods that much attention had to be diverted to people who are mostly affected, but still work was done on all our roads. I can talk about the back road at Block 2000, up in the Pan Yard area, the people would clap when I passed and they say, Elvis Charles you stick to your promise. Because I promised them that that would be fixed in 2011 and it was fixed [applause] that road in Green Hill from opposite the Green Hill Hard Court about 120 metres of roads, the road that one man referred to as Punty Fraser's road that was fixed, in fact, I drove on it I came out I parked my vehicle and walked on it and I told my neighbours I said, I promised you that, we promised you and we delivered and when you are going up to..., the van men in Sharps just above Block 2000 all the way up, work is being done because they are marking those areas, those patches where they would be..., the men who are working on the road they would be doing their little excavation and fitting in the hot mix to make the road smooth. And I believe all of us here can testify to the fact that in your community some piece of work was done in 2011.

Mr. Speaker, even though much funds had to be diverted, the Ministry performed creditably well and for that I continue to thank the different Ministries.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You have eight minutes.

HONOURABLE ELVIS CHARLES: Mr. Speaker, Informal Settlements, we talked about regularizing Informal Human Settlements in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and whenever we talk about Human Settlements and building of homes, I cannot help but refer to Green Hill, the Green Hill/Redemption Sharps area. Many people now have rights to lands; they now have no income homes that they are proud of. In fact, the van men would say that since the low income homes were constructed at Lofty Heights that they are sure that their vans would be filled on mornings with passengers, because they passed my gate and I feel good about that. I feel good that this is a Government that helps everyone to achieve his own home. He gives you the kick start; it is just left to you to continue. Pick up from there and I remember Minister Burgin said that sixty low and middle

income houses would be built in Green Hill in 2012. Watch a Government [applause]! Mr. Speaker, I look forward to that. Those who are in the construction industry, the carpenters and the masons and the other tradesmen they will get jobs and I am excited that they would have, work to do for many months to feed their families. I am really excited for that. I am excited that more people throughout Central Kingstown would be able to own their own homes and I really want the people to know that this would be coming in 2012; sixty low and middle income homes that would be added to the numbers that were built before.

And then there would be the construction of a Learning Resource Centre that is slated for the Lodge Village area. I always wish that one would be constructed in the constituency and we would have a Learning Resource Centre built at Lodge Village soon, because this Government wants us to learn, it is promoting learning and education in this country and I am very confident that this promise would be kept. Mr. Speaker, what I have just said to this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, these are information, pertinent information that I am glad that I am able to share. I am glad that I am able to participate in this debate and I can assure the people of Central Kingstown that Elvis Charles would continue to serve them and will try in the best way possible to make life comfortable for all of us.

I am here because they help me to get here and I am forever grateful, I will always say that to them, I am forever grateful. Yes, I did not win that seat, but I am on the winning side [applause] and I remember one colleague or one man said that I was whipped soundly, it is true, but when you are on an NBA team you do not have to score 20 points you know to get the ring, it is who in the finals and when my team wins I will get ring [applause] so I am on this side, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I am much obliged [applause].

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Any further debate, any further debate? Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members. I rise to make my contribution to the debate of the budget, the Appropriation Bill 2012. Mr. Speaker, this debate I think we need firstly to try and establish, what actually is the debate about, and in doing so I think for the benefit especially of listeners out there we can make it simple, put, is a budget. My understanding of it is how we explain expenditures and revenues. It is like a management process in a country. How do we pay our bills, how do we buy our stuff, get our supplies, how do we put plans together to develop our country.

Mr. Speaker, in doing that or in order to do so I think one has to have or ought to have a clear philosophy and in this case the philosophy of the Unity Labour Party is a social, democratic one and which means we put the people first, we work in the interest of the people, we respect the democratic process which is a complicated one but simply the wishes of the majority that is usually expressed every four or five years in a process call “General Elections”. And we know that if we respect democracy we will respect the wishes of the people and wishes of the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is that the Unity Labour Party as a party should govern the state of affairs [applause] and they have entrusted us with that responsibility for the third successive time. We are grateful for that we say thanks to them and we will do our best to deliver.

But in a debate on the budget I think at the risk at being repetitive, we need to set the stage again and repeat, what are the existing condition in which we in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the region and the world is

living. I think it is important because I listened to the presentation of the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister very carefully, so too to that of the Leader of the Opposition and sometimes I wonder if we are talking about in the same environment, although when it was convenient I heard mentioned of the global situation from the Leader of the Opposition, but at other times you wonder if he recognize them. But Mr. Speaker, before I proceed at the risk and I really hope not to offend anybody, at the risk of being off, I do not know. This morning if you listened to the Leader of the Opposition, I started wondering if there was a new gospel or 'gospel' according to the IMF, because that is why I said I do not want to offend anyone about blasphemy or anything, but if we had to count the number of times that the IMF was mentioned I believe, I planned to if I have the time to check the hansard, were no less than 50 times.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned this because I introduce* about the philosophy of the party. And I want to say clearly that the IMF is not the only game in town [applause]. I am not an economist and I was reminded by the Leader of the Opposition, but I am grateful to the opportunities I have had and to what all Vincentians are having now to be able to read and understand better, the Education Revolution, you do not have to be an economist [applause] to understand what is happening out there and for those of us who read and I do, the whole questions of economics in the world today..., well the Honourable Prime Minister at the end of his speech read or quoted something that I really identified with, where basically even the best of the economist today are finding it difficult to explain the global situation [applause].

HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN: Truth.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: And as he spoke about philosophy there are those of us who believe in some form of socialism or social democracy and there are those of us who believe in the free market and enterprise system. I do not think either of them has the solution, I do not think either of them is perfect, I believe we have to find where we can fit in a niche and I believe that is where our Prime Minister has been doing a good job and this party has been trying its utmost [applause] to find that niche [applause].

But Mr. Speaker, we have to compare what is happening in the world to understand what is happening to us. If we listens the debates in the United States, it is a very important country to us, we will hear and all of us I believe are familiar with it, if you listen to the democrats and the position of Obama, they call him socialist, oh yes, they say he is too liberal, he is a socialist. Some even call him communist, why, because his policies, are more peopled centred or pro poor than the republicans. I do not see a dissimilar analogy in St. Vincent and the Grenadines at all. It is the same things we hear here sometimes and we hear terms about austerity and prudence and so on, it is really an application of what we are reading, but I can tell you if you read or you happen to subscribe to New York Times and there are some interesting up heads from the economist there and I think there one Krugman, he is a Nobel Prize winner, he is liberal and therefore I like to read..., he identifies with my position, but they are stating clearly that these confusion in the world's newest important economic sentinel as to how to solve these problems.

Now if there are problems there, if there are problems in the EU, if there are problems in Asia, I do not see why we in the Caribbean would feel that we are so different or whether instead of us throwing up our hands and quote the IMF and believe that the IMF is the only place that has the solutions, we know that tumuli of the IMF has been the downfall of many nations. We do not want to get into [applause] them. As important as it is and I

am not saying that it is not important, because it is, really is and do we think that some of the recommendations which were taken as options are solely the ownership lies solely with the IMF. Because many of them, other people and other persons of other economic views practiced them because some of them are logical, all of them are not necessarily politically favourable because we have to mix politics and economics you know. Because they say political science and..., I am fortunate to have studied a little bit of it. It is not everything about balancing the books. You could balance all the books as the IMF and as the NDP wants to do, but you could leave the people suffering by balancing the books.

So the whole question about this budget debate I think is about getting our people to understand what their policy makers, their leaders are doing in managing the country and it fair game. The debate..., in a debate you have proposals and opponents and at the end of the day the people must listen to what is said on this side and for what is said on the other side and decide and observe and see who is doing what is more favourable to them. But Mr. Speaker, you know, one of the things that we all agree to have to do is implement some change, but change is..., I always say that human beings are inherently resistant to change, even when that change is favourable to them sometimes. It does not mean that all change is favourable, because certainly we would not want to change from a ULP administration in Government to any other [laughter] we would not want to change for us to be in Opposition you know, but more seriously we really must adopt to some changes because the whole world is changing around us and if we do not we can be left behind. Mr. Speaker, I happen to have the honour of leading in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Trade and Consumer Affairs and how does the work in this Ministry influence on this budget debate and the development of our country.

Well Mr. Speaker, let me start with Foreign Affairs. Mr. Speaker, permit me to just read briefly the mandate of the Ministry, I have some extracts from it. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade and Consumer Affairs whose primary responsibility for the conduct of foreign policy and for facilitating the implementation of trade policy at the local, regional and international levels. I will skip out some and our overseas missions have a mandate to promote the national interest of St. Vincent and the Grenadines with the international community to preserve distinct sovereignty and contribute to the economic and social development of its citizens.

And the Department of Trade and Consumer Affairs is charged with the responsibility of coordinating and facilitating policy formulation and implementation and the monitoring of trade at the local, regional and international level etc. So how does this tie into the budget debate? Well our foreign policy, we have heard a lot of discussion about that. We know that our foreign policy reflects significantly our philosophy and ideology and I have no apologies about our foreign policy, those who want to be apologetic to others when we make decisions that are their democratic rights.

Mr. Speaker, we have decided as a strategy, foreign policy that we will use our sovereignty and independence to the best benefit of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and we have been doing so [applause]. Mr. Speaker, how have we done it? Well we have strengthened our traditional ties with countries that historically have been our allies, North America, United States and Canada, the UK, the European Union are major donors we have strengthened those. We have the Republic of China on Taiwan we have maintained our strong ties with them. We have had traditional ties with Cuba; we are now reestablishing our ties with other countries such as Venezuela. I say reestablished because and I have purposely used that word reestablished because you know,

Mr. Speaker, I dare anyone of us to explain much about Venezuela before 2002. We have diplomatic ties on the books with Venezuela, but very few of us really knew anything about Venezuela which is a stone throw away, it is our neighbour. Very few of knew that Venezuela was one of the riches countries in the region because of its oil, but is one of the biggest gap in wealth distribution. We would have benefitted from those oil riches in Venezuela.

We have used our sovereignty and independence as I said to reestablish and strengthen our relationship with the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and I know that there are those who said, when we signed Petro-Caribe they will unsigned it and if they are saying that about Petro-Caribe Agreement I would imagine that with ALBA which is an even more stronger political commitment, I would imagine that they would do so. But this is what they will be un-signing and I want people, Mr. Speaker, I want Members here to understand and the listeners to understand, because we are talking about the budget. We heard that even some of the recommendations from the IMF which seems to be “a Bible” for the other side that we must try our best not to attract commercial..., do commercial lending.

For the past three years this Government has not been borrowing at commercial rates, why, because we have been strengthening this relationship with Venezuela and through the ALBA Bank we have been able to borrow US\$40 million at 2 percent [applause]. We need to understand this in our budget debate, because if you want to know..., I am not a banker, but just imagine if we had to borrow say US\$100 million at 8 percent which is probably, sometimes it goes beyond that, how would be the monthly repayment. Those of you who are into bank and economics could give us that figure easily. Compared to if you are paying back at 2 percent, I can tell you it is something like \$800,000 per month as compared to \$200,000 or \$300,000 and if I am off I do not think I am very much off, okay. I know the Honourable Member here used to be a banker and he might be able to support me on that that is the important [interjection] but no, people who have mortgages because these loans are for almost like mortgage, 20, 25 years and Mr. Speaker, I think it is important for us to understand the importance of our foreign policy and what they are.

So much so I wish to use the opportunity to inform Mr. Speaker and Honourable Members and the public that the importance of this connection has caused us to decide to establish a Resident Ambassador in Caracas during this year [applause]. Because we are doing so much business we know the role that Venezuela plays has played in the laptop programme, in the construction of our international airport, in the training of our young people, there are 50 plus students there now. We think that it would be advantageous for us to be there to facilitate the negotiations of these discussions, these agreements etc. plus there are many other South and Central American Embassies there; members of ALBA which is a major player in our development now that we can use that location in Caracas to communicate more, to establish stronger relationship with our allies, so, Mr. Speaker, that is one example of the success of our foreign policy which we intend to continue to practice.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, we have during the past year and I wish before I proceed to use the opportunity to thank my staff because as you may know, Mr. Speaker, this is my first year in a new Ministry, an area that is relatively new to me. I have had a very rapid learning curve thanks to the staff, Permanent Secretary Wickham and other staff members, they have really taught me the ropes quickly and I appreciate the assistance and support during the year and I look forward to a even more exciting and productive 2012.

Mr. Speaker, we have decided last year that we will use our foreign policy to establish new contacts and diplomatic relations. Mr. Speaker, I want to suggest that our foreign policy is one that should be considered one that is educating Vincentians, because there are some countries with which we are establishing diplomatic relations that many of us even in this House do not know much about them, yes that is a fact. I had to do some work, I had to read and I want to suggest that we read and understand, I want to suggest that all Members here must get the information as to who do we have relationship with, because..., and we are going to help facilitate..., we are going to facilitate that establishing an electronic data bank with all the countries we have diplomatic relationships with, the countries that we have honorary councils and who they are what they are etc. very important.

Because, Mr. Speaker, many of us did not hear about Georgia, I mean we did not hear about Georgia, but we think about Atlanta Georgia, about other country and I am not necessarily referring to us in here but there are many persons who did not know about Georgia, Azerbaijan, Qatar you know and some of these countries, Moldova, no they are very exotic countries to some of us, but we have found that it is important because some of these are emerging countries and take Azerbaijan for example, it is a country..., I even see a commercial on I think CNN one of them, where they are touting it as one of the real big time countries to watch. They have massive resources of natural gas and I think they are one of the first countries that had an oil industry because they are part of the former Soviet Union Republic. We need to understand this because we are selectively looking in the interest of the citizens of St. Vincent and the Grenadines; the countries that we can gain some respect from and also some resources.

So when the Prime Minister travel or when I travel and we have discussions and debates, some people call it begging, we call it negotiations, but when we get resources from them it does not go into the pockets of the Foreign Minister nor the Prime Minister, it goes into the Treasury and the projects of St. Vincent and the Grenadines [applause] and that is how you use your sovereignty and independence.

Mr. Speaker, St. Vincent has jumped several notches in the table of recognition in this world under our administration [applause]. Mr. Speaker, our Ambassador to the United Nations is one of the most popular Ambassadors at the UN and that is no careless statement [applause]. I was so pleased when I visited there and people come to me and not in his presence, but the way they speak of him and I mentioned this because we had decided that we will expose our young people at the highest level. When we appointed Ambassador Gonsalves the big roar about, oh nepotism is a dynasty and all that, you know it was sad. We have appointed other young Ambassadors, we have appointed Ambassador Prince, we are proud of her performance, but I guess that is passé now, Ambassador Gonsalves was selected as a co-sponsor of several international committees at the UN and we are doing well. Because of that last year alone, we had over 70 visits of diplomats to St. Vincent. Sometimes we do not hear about them, but there are people knocking at the doors of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. You know why? Well let me just give you the examples, just recently an emissary from the..., President of Azerbaijan came here and I know the Prime Minister met with him, I met with him and he came to express his thanks to St. Vincent and the Grenadines especially for really playing a significant role in having Azerbaijan elected to the security council for the period 2013 to 2014.

And he mentioned to me that it is not just that St. Vincent and the Grenadines voted for them, but St. Vincent was able to mobilize CARICOM support for them [applause] that is the important piece of news today in this House. Mr. Speaker, we know that managing foreign policy is a delicate thing. You have to bold, you have to be assertive, you have to know what you saying and what you are doing. You have to take some risks, but well calculated risks. So we know some traditional partners may not like some of the decisions we make, but that is management. Any country and especially in a small country with scarce resources with our expressed policy of using our sovereignty and independence, we know we going to have to make some decisions that sometimes have some people trembling in their pants, not us.

So, Mr. Speaker, for example when we decided not just to support the Palestinian State Hood at the UN, but to announce it even before they voted, I can tell you we received several calls from some traditional partners, we received visits trying to dissuade us, but Mr. Speaker, we went into it in a principled way and you know you just had to know and understand and you know and understand by reading and studying, because really take for example the United States, we know that they are the biggest supporter of the Israeli's cause we are friends of Israel too, but have traditionally been supporting the Palestinian caused as a member of CARICOM and we stuck out because at the end of the day our position was not really any different from the United States position but you must know it and be able to quote it to them, which was done. The endgame that they have is the same endgame that we want two independent states Palestine and Israel with well defined borders based on 1967 that is what the Americans want that is what we want. The problem is how do you get there? They want a certain way and we decided well they are Palestinians and the majority of the global community wants to have accelerated action and we supported it. I do not even think that the United States really was upset of such, they did not like it, but they respected our opposition and that is important. When you make your decisions it must be in a way that even though the other side does not agree with it they must respect it and St. Vincent had earned its respect in this world [applause].

Same with Cuba, we have always voted against the, what we consider criminal blockade, even in the United States of America there are many people there who had considered it a waste of time to maintain the blockade against Cuba, [interjection] yes but we are not going..., you agree with that too, I know that okay that is good. So Mr. Speaker, our foreign policy is clear.

Mr. Speaker, we continue and I want to use the opportunity to thank our traditional allies for the support they have been giving us. The Republic of China on Taiwan, they play a significant role in our development, the construction of the terminal building is primarily financed by them and we are grateful. And you know it is interesting our foreign policy even bamboos some people including WIKILEAKS, you remember what they said? No well the Americans actually, but they said that our foreign policy is contradictory because you know some people cannot understand how we could be so close with one and so close with another who is supposed to be so far apart. It is really diplomacy at its best [applause] you know and you know we will continue to play it that way. Now we are naïve to realize that there are times when there might be a costs to be paid, but that is one that we intend to measure carefully to minimize any cost to the citizens of this country.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to take this opportunity to touch a little on our Diaspora although I am a Foreign Affairs Minister to some extent the Diaspora interacts with us and I want to use this opportunity to

thank and I hope members of the Diaspora committee in North America especially New York are listening to thank them for the successful programme they have had with Diaspora week. Unfortunately I was overseas on official duties most of the time when they were here and I want to single out my good friend Max Haywood, unfortunately we were not able to link to have some further discussions at home, but our Diaspora is very important and we can link that to the whole question of migration. Because you know that is an interesting issue that is being topical but sometimes I do not know if..., well we do not see it the same way, there are discussions about the importance of migration in our society. There are some who see it one way and some see it another way and that is okay. Migration you know there are studies that indicate that we may have people who are entitled to Vincentian citizenship either usually by birth or by descent or marriage. It is about 300,000 thousand that is living overseas, it is estimated and St. Vincent has historically been a country that has been involved in migration, emigration and immigration.

I know that some of us may have special claims that others do not, but I believe that all of us have been migrants because there had to be a starting point. Even the Garifuna people came across some South Americans according to their little history I know. I am not a historian you know, right. The Caribs not the Garifuna the Caribs, you see that is the..., I did claim that I ain't really so hot in the history, but the context is there [laughter] and then we had slavery and indenture ship you know, we had the Portuguese and we had the Indians and recently historically we have had some Arabs the Syrians mainly and Lebanese and we have had the Chinese. So we are a real callalou, not the Vincy callalou on face book, real callalou you know. We are callalou, so we are a country of migrants because many of us to have gone the other way in the Caribbean we know about Curacao and Cuba and Panama and all about and that has created a melting pot. It is important, why is it important? As we may know our Garifuna movement from St. Vincent colonized..., went and established communities mainly in Central and South America and it is believed that there about 200,000 of them and that can be and is a potential source for tourism and when our international airport is completed we are expecting to see them paying [applause] pilgrimages back home.

HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON: Coming home, they coming home.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Oh yes that is how all the thing tie up in the economics you know, you know in the budget and so on, so when you hear we put in the international airport there, all of this is the planning and the thought behind it, very important. You know well I was present, I think the Prime Minister may have mentioned this and I will repeat it because some people may not know yet. Chatoyer is one of the three national heroes in Honduras. He never went there but that is to tell you how important a man he was to the Garifuna and interestingly he was proposed by the former President of Honduras who was Minister of Culture then Zelaya, President Zelaya who was..., that is very important and when you travel I went to Nicaragua some time and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs who ended up being a very close friend of mine, he is from the Atlantic Course and he prides himself of being a Garifuna, he speaks mainly English when he is with us because he say, "man me a Caribbean man, man," he has his accent that sounds real Caribbean and I mentioned it because they have an interest, it is amazing the interest that the Garifuna people have in St. Vincent as the motherland. It is much stronger in my opinion than in the black power days that we had as black people wanted to go back to Africa. Yes, and I believe that it is area that we can tapped in tourism in the future and our culture and so on.

Mr. Speaker, so the immigration thing we must not see the immigration or migration as negative. Of course I know there are times when there might be some feelings and sentiments of xenophobia when we see none Vincentians coming in sometimes seeming to be progressing more than us, yes I understand that, but let us see how we can benefit from the richness of an additional culture. I am certain that over the years the migration of Indians and other people here can help even in our culinary skills you know. The way we eat and so on. So we must necessarily be fearful of it. Let us understand it, let us use it to our best advantage, because we too, because you know in the whole question of the migration, it is part of our long term policy. When we decided to go for Education Revolution it is because we wanted to train our people so that when and we expect them to migrate, they migrate as educated people to go at a higher level of the job market. Do we benefit from that? Our people send remittances, they send remittances for many reasons, they are patriotism, but even economic. For those of us who read about economics and know about interest rates internationally when you save money in the United States, you can point something of a percent interest so there are people who work in the United States and send the money home to save where the minimum you would get at the..., I think the minimum rate is 3 percent, but you have other instruments. If are holding agent you can get 4.5 percent and there are other instruments. You have Credit Unions that give you a little better and we need to understand all this and we need to encourage it. We need to encourage our citizens who migrate to keep sending the remittances, it is a significant part of our economic activity and therefore migration must be seen as a positive. Let us use it, let us understand it and let us understand the policies of the Government when we make noise about our Education Revolution.

I remember for example our nursing programme. We know that when we stepped up in the numbers of trained nurses we were not going to be able to employ all at the same time. We know that many of them will go overseas, but we also knew that many of them when they go overseas will earn good money and send back to help develop St. Vincent and the Grenadines [applause]. It does not just happen so you know, you have to sit down and plan, you have to understand, like I can make the analogy of medical practice, we have to look at the situation, you ask questions, you assess the situation then you make a diagnosis. When you make the diagnosis you put in the treatment that is how we approach, scientific approach to management. That is what we do and we do it well. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, how much time do I have sir?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You only did 39 minutes.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Yes, that is all right. Mr. Speaker, in our consumer affairs, Mr. Speaker, I want to address that area and tie it in with some of the fiscal measures taken by the Honourable Minister of Finance.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: You know you have 75 minutes.

HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER: Yes I do. Mr. Speaker, consumer affairs, who are the consumers? All of us, why is it important for us to understand the affairs of the consumer. It is obvious because we all have an interest. Mr. Speaker, I wish to address and tie in consumer affairs with some of the fiscal measures here. The Prime Minister has decided to as Minister of Finance put some tax on some products. I know some Members on both sides may have some problems; I did not call any name [interjection] okay [laughter] so we have increased the tax on cigarette. I do not think many of us have a problem with that right.

They call them sin tax [interjection] yes and I will call it beverages. Well I do not consume alcohol so I do not have a problem with that. Is it a deterrent, I have tasted D Andre [laughter] yes, but also and some non-alcoholic beverages which interestingly the way I look at it is most of them or some of them are imported. I want us to see consumer affairs in the way of trying to substitute importation as much as possible and trying to address the question of health. Because if it is going to deter people from using..., and I am certain some Members of the other side will agree with me due to religious beliefs that some of these carbonated drinks or carbonated drinks in general are really not good for your health. They are made for convenience and unfortunately people find it very easy to use and some people love them.

If we can encourage our people to consume less of that our health will benefit, our national health. If we can encourage people to use more local products our economy is going to benefit because we will be generating a greater demand for local foods and that is where I want to address from. Because, Mr. Speaker, you know there are times you go to restaurants here when many fruits are in season and you cannot get a freshly made fruit drink. You still have to go to the carbonated drink. It is pitiful because they are cheaper to produce, yes, I understand that my good friend Fitzy has recognised that and is establishing a market. Fitzy good luck to you I wish you success, because you know when we are talking about the budget and development, these are issues that are important too and we need as I said at the beginning, the question is we recognise the problems, what do we do as individuals, as families, as a country to really address these challenges.

If we start with ourselves and we start to address the problems, we heard terms of austerity, if we start to address them there are times when austerity is necessary. It does not mean that you have to global austerity and austerity to the extreme that you cutting back jobs and so on, but you must also be prudent and sensible in the choices you make. So we need our consumers to recognise that we can make an impact on our economy by consuming more local in a way to substitute import. You know take another example, we seem to have acquired a lot of overseas taste and I say we including myself, some of us, a lot of us, you know some people seem to think that it is more fashionable to eat Irish Potato or English Potato than to eat dasheen or bobas yam or yellow yam or banana or what, they see it as..., it is a fact or breadfruit, bobas yes man, nice with boil-in and thing. So for example you would go and people thing it is so posh to produce a dish for you with bakes, scalloped potatoes and this and that and the other. But what happens that is foreign exchange, we have to import that.

Not necessarily inherently bad you know, I am talking here the economics of it and foreign verses local, because I would like to suggest to all of us that we try..., the same thing you do with that potato, do it with our dasheen, our eddoes, our sweet potatoes, our yams and you may enjoy it much better [applause]. You know we have to..., all of us if we give a commitment to ourselves to try it even once a week at home, some of the suggestions I have made, you can save per month a good few dollars and per year it will add up and in the country, the whole country can save hundreds of thousands if not millions of dollars and these are ways in which we must..., I want to see the public [interjection] of course we can see the people understanding what a budget debate is about, how development touches even the most mundane what we perceive as mundane thing, because it is important.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the fiscal measures in terms of taxation, I happened to live in the area where it is said that we might be most heavily hit by the taxes but for those of us who live in the Kingstown area, the property tax is going to hit us a little harder, but the fact is the country has to raise revenues. We all demand social services, it is our country and the taxpayers have to stand the bills. It is not the Minister of Finance or the Minister but the taxpayers and I think it is a reasonable and fair way of raising revenue and those of us who have to pay a little more so be it. I think some of us might be able to manage it, but there are some provisions to eliminate excessive increase if anybody is going above 25 percent that is important, increase.

Mr. Speaker, international trade, or trade in general, Mr. Speaker, St. Vincent and the Grenadines as a Member of CARICOM signed on to the Economic Partnership Agreement with the EU. Interestingly we are the only area of the world in terms of the partners of the EU when they consider the African Pacific and Caribbean Countries that have done so. There are some who think that we may have done it prematurely, but we have done it. We have signed on and I think it is for us to understand the implications of such agreement, how can we benefit from it. Therefore I wish to address the private sector especially.

The private sector needs to get itself familiar with this agreement. We have over the past year had several workshops, we will continue in this year to do more. We really urge you to attend them. We have established an implementation unit the EPA and the CSME (Caribbean Single Market and Economy) unit joined. We are engaged in discussions of CARICOM Trade Agreement which is similar; it is another trade agreement similar to the EPA or with the EU. We wanted to familiarize ourselves with it because there are benefits to be gained, because we know that we are in a situation where trade preferences no longer exist. So we have to fight our way through and if we do not take the advantages afforded to us in these agreements we will be left behind.

They are complicated, but the fact that they are complicated does not mean that we must not attempt to exploit them, but to do so it requires getting acquiring knowledge of what they are and how they work. For example our artists, our culture we can earn a lot of money because our cultural exponents can use the opportunities afforded by the EPA to be able to go and perform in Europe. You have heard the Prime Minister say..., those of us who listen to the Prime Minister, because it appears as if sometimes people do not, because as the Prime Minister would say in parenthesis this morning, I heard the Leader of the Opposition repeating himself that the Government need to explain the budget to the people or certain aspects and I wonder if he live in St. Vincent and the Grenadines with these trade unionist, because the Prime Minister has had sessions with all trade unions [applause] so I could not understand and he kept repeating the mistake, yes, because that are the problems that you get when people do not listen to themselves.

All of us can have that problem. For that reason that sometimes we have to listen to the radio they are not so nice. You do not want to hear what others saying because you can stay in your cocoon and believe that because you did not hear what people say, they did not say it. It is like in the practice of law, ignorance of the law is no excuse and Mr. Speaker, let us be careful when we are making statements that we do not know the facts and the truth.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, the EPA is important and along with it I have been very actively as Minister of Foreign Affairs engages in seriously negotiations with the EU. I have been to Europe several times and we have been using and again it is important it is nice to understand how our development is tied in to this debate,

because we are negotiating with the EU countries, a group they call the a Schengen states of visa waiver, because right now if any of us wants to go to France or to Portugal or Italy we have to get a visa. To get a visa most of the time requires that you have to buy a plane ticket to go to St. Lucia or somewhere where they have an Embassy that is an additional cost and inconvenience and whenever you..., sometimes they give you three months visa. So if you ain't in business and you want to establish some business contacts in Europe, it is more costly and inconvenient. We are negotiating that and I was hoping that today I would have been able to say that we have achieved the waiver, but unfortunately due to no fault of ours conditions beyond our control, it has not yet been approved, but we are very optimistic from feedbacks from the EU. Many of them have sent already letters supporting our case and we are hopeful that in February or March when the EU Commission meets that it will..., the decision will be made.

Mr. Speaker, these are important issues, every important and to tell you how important the question of visa waiver is I remember sometime earlier last year a Vincentian citizen was travelling through Central America and she came to thank us, to thank she said the Government because she was so proud to be a Vincentian. What happened, they choose a group of other citizens from the region and apparently you can take some land tours, some bus tours through Latin American countries, central South America and she was one of the few who was able to go to all of the countries that they went to without requiring a visa, important, because many other people had to use a visa and coming to talk about visa, I do not think we can debate this, the question of migration and visa without mentioning another important issue that has been fairly topical. What is happening in Canada?

We are all aware of a report in the Toronto Star I think some time ago where and we are aware of the so-called refugee problem in Canada. What is happening? Many Vincentians have seen to be able to spot a loophole in the migration policies of the Canadian that will facilitate temporary status in Canada after you have applied for refugee status, they give you fairly good treatment and people have been exploiting it. what is amazing though is that a lot of people have politicized the issue and we know, come on, all of us live in St. Vincent, when we hear of some of the allegations we wonder if it is the same country you live in. There are people who say that they cannot live in St. Vincent because they are prosecuted by this, even politically that they cannot do this and that and the other. We know..., you know what is interesting about it which is..., and we are lucky, the Canadian Immigration Authorities know that these allegations by and large are false. We have confirmed that. In fact recently our honourable Counsel General and I had a discussion and he said about two or three days after that report in the Toronto Star he had a preplanned meeting with the Canadian Authorities and he said, he was amused because they came, they laughed at the report because they told him that they know most of it is fraudulent.

In fact, interestingly what we do not know at times is that they send the emissaries here, they send their people around. Sometimes even as tourist and they know what is happening. There is case, a friend of mine who worked in my Ministry met me in the market on Saturday morning and told me that she was trying to get on to me, a Vincentian citizen went to an agency in Canada and applied for refugee status, what is her reason? That she is HIV positive with two children and in St. Vincent and the Grenadines she is being discriminated and persecuted, not just discriminated, yes we know there is some discrimination that is true, but to an extent that she cannot get treatment nor care in any of the health institution in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Now it is

important that we know these information, because fortunately the person who the agency contacted is in an institution now that is highly respected, but that person work in the Ministry of Health and understand and knows the programme and was able to quickly send information to the authorities and say, no that is not so. This is what is happening in St. Vincent and the Grenadines with HIV and Aids you know and all of these issues are important, because unfortunately too much partisan politics is being played with them, because there are persons out there and I know, I am on face book, many of us are. We see the blogs, we see the discussion. People blame the Government for everything you know and it is unfortunate, but some people are irresponsibly propagating the talk and if we say we are patriots, we say we are Vincentians and we want to work together, I think we have a responsibility..., even on facebook when we see these discussions to put a stop to it [applause] [interjection] oh yes, we have that responsibility.

Mr. Speaker, the world has become a smaller village now because of IT and that is why I chuckled when my good friend the Leader of the Opposition..., and I am sorry he is not here, but I am not going to say anything to denigrate him. He said that I do not know anything about economics [interjection] I heard that already, but it does not really faze me you know. I think I know enough to understand because I have read and I can read. I think I know enough to understand that the economic policies of the Unity Labour Party Government are much better than those that were there before [applause] and this ship the ULP SS, ULP SVG [laughter] is sailing well despite the stormy seas. We have a confidence that we are going to reach to the next port.

Mr. Speaker, now you know we have to put a little bit of humour in this thing, you know what I mean. You know talking about humour I made an observation, let us go back to consumer, our health is important you know, I made an observation yesterday and I am sorry the two persons not here, I noticed that the Leader of the Opposition pouch is now a little bigger than the leader of Government [interjection] oh yes, so if he is listening I want to tell him, he has some catching up to do now and it ain't..., comrade nah no easy man to catch up it you know [laughter] but I am not leaving it there alone, Mr. Speaker, I notice also that some very good friends of mine, are trying to see if they could compete with. When I use to be [laughter] you see, Mr. Speaker, I did not call name, when I used to be the doctor of a certain friend of mine over there I used to see him slim and trim and my neighbour, wey you looking at me for man [laughter] I could call their name since they here right, yes but seriously speaking now we all have to be careful with that because you know we have a little fun to it but it is serious. Let us take care of our health [interjection] no man, no, no, no, no, no, I had an office right in town here you know and that use to be one of my clients..., that is why he stop coming by me now since I ain't practicing, that is why he looking like that.

Mr. Speaker yes, this budget is one..., I am going to call it excellent because these are difficult times. I am going to call it very pragmatic. Yes Mr. Speaker, I am reminded that I do not have constituency as I used to before that gives me more time to talk on other things. I do have a constituency St. Vincent and the Grenadines, I am national, I have grown from South Leeward to St. Vincent and the Grenadines, a bigger constituency you know what I mean. Before I go there though since I am from Leeward and I do not have a constituency there, but I have a good..., a very effective caretaker on that side, so I just want to extend greetings and best wishes to the constituents of South Leeward, my former constituency that we have loaned for a very short period of time to the Opposition. I just want to say that you will continue to get representation, you are lucky you have to at least..., three representatives over here. We have the former representative, myself, you have Minister who

lives there and you have the Senator and we have another Minister, so we are well represented over here, so South Leeward safe, safe yes [laughter]. Yes, Mr. Speaker, but since then my colleague and former colleague is not in Parliament and I am not too sure whether the current representative may wish to acknowledge some of the successes and activities in North Leeward, I will use the opportunity of my extra time to mention some of them.

Mr. Speaker, in North Leeward, North Leeward, Mr. Speaker, continues to be an ecotourism hub. Thanks especially to the real zealous input on the former representative Dr. Jerrol Thompson. We are here trying to revitalize the activities in Dark View Falls and the Trinity Falls which would be reopened sometime. We know that there are some problems with the Trinity Falls. I understand that yachting is picking up again in Chateaubelair and Cumberland that is good news. We have all heard about the good news about St. Vincent and the Grenadines but it is important that we repeat it you know, because it came around a time when that same Toronto Star report was very negative and it was very good, encouraging to hear that St. Vincent and the Grenadines by four international agencies CNN, Travel and Leisure, what is the next one again, New York Times is the last one that acknowledge it and the forth, another one, but Matt Lauer on NBC. It is a tremendous thing you know that is hundreds of thousands of dollars if not millions of dollars worth of advertisement [applause] and we as Vincentians should all be proud and I want to give some credit to the Honourable Member of Northern Grenadines for acknowledging you know even though it was a little qualified, when I read his comments you know he is querying the credibility of CNN, but that is all right. But we understand the politics, but certainly seriously though it is something that we all should squeeze out, bleed to the last drop because we may not benefit in this tourism season so much but in the future you know we have some bragging rights. Let us all as Vincentians go behind this and promote St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Because you know what the Members on the other side they are hoping, expecting to be on this side and so just in case, we do not expect that, I do not hope so, I ain't expect that, but just in case, start to big it now so that they could reap the benefit later. But in any case whether you stay over there you will also reap the benefits because you are Vincentian and Vincentian patriots.

Mr. Speaker, as I was saying in North Leeward we have those developments going on down there. We know the telecom universal service is national, but North Leeward is benefiting especially from its development where we are hoping that the yachts we will be able to have the IT facilities, the communication technology is to communicate with the security forces. But we have some problems, we have problems in the yachting industry all over and all of us have a responsibility to try our best to minimize them. I know the Rose Hall Community Centre and the Rose Bank Community Centre, there are plans to renovate them and to improve the aesthetics of the centres and to give people better opportunities culturally. The highway, I understand there are plans to the improvement of the highway between Dark View and Rose Bank because there are some land falls there and slides and so on to improve the safety of motorist there. So things are going on there.

In the case of education, we have the ongoing early childhood education programme centres in Spring Village and Rose Hall they are earmarked for about eight other schools and the Spring Village Government School is about 80 percent completed and the BNTF programme and I know Dr. Thompson is going to work with the representative or around the representative to ensure that that is so. The Cumberland Playing Field there is a plan to build a Players Pavilion there soon and the tourism project around there, the whole question of security.

We have heard discussions on crime and yes we all have an interest in ensuring that we combat criminal activities because we all benefit from a low crime rate and we all suffer when it affects any of our citizens, because we do not know who might be the next victim, we do not want it to be so. So in Spring Village the police station is going to be rebuild or renovated this year. I think there is another one or two this year.

Under Transport and Works there is some important projects. We spoke of the development, continued Cumberland development projects and many other projects that have been left over from the previous representative, but who..., the previous representative who continues to play his role in the development of North Leeward. So, Mr. Speaker, this budget is one that I will advise that all of us, including our citizens, to read the presentation by the Honourable Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and also read that if it is available of the Leader of the Opposition. I think you hear my..., it may sound boredom in the latter because there was a lot of repetition excessively so really I know it is important sometimes, repetition, but even the Honourable Speaker had to try in a subtle way to suggest..., you may wish to move on, I do not know if it is this strong affinity that the Leader of the Opposition has with the IMF or that he had nothing else to say or a combination of both. But really, no I am not exaggerating here, I challenge anybody to read that speech and I want to bet the IMF was mentioned more than 50 times. Why should we feel so much a victim of the IMF? No man, we should not be.

As I have said before, they are important, I do not know if..., they may be considered if necessary, maybe, but they are alternative. We have chosen more pragmatic and practical alternatives to developmental process. They are not perfect, they may not always be successful because sometimes they are risks, there are those who say we must be more austere suggesting probably laying off workers or holding down salaries, I do not know, but I would say to be fair to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, at the end of his presentation he did made some comments with which I identified about the NIS, the pensions and so on. But you know, Mr. Speaker, the interesting thing though, he presented as if in an antagonistic way as we were forcing him..., no, what you were saying is well taken but..., yes you would think that we had said otherwise you know, but certainly the question of the NIS and its sustainability, the question of the dual pension is one that we are concerned about and have all reason to be. I think though he is suggesting that we should not wait until next budget, but Mr. Speaker, my understanding of these things is that you just cannot go and rush into it and say well do this, do that it has to be properly and done. You have to get data, analyse them, because you do not want to go and make a decision and later you realise, boy I should have done this, you have to change it and so on. Pensions are serious business.

If you are going to raise the..., and I made some notes because the Honourable Leader of the Opposition implied that we may have to raise the contributions to the NIS. It might be possible it might be necessary, but if you are going to raise it, you just do not raise it overnight. We have to do the actuarial reports and all the necessary studies so the NIS rates may be raised but you just do not come out over the weekend and say you raise it. You have to it properly. The same thing with retirement age, I happen to agree with him. In the old way of doing things I would have been a retiree and I feel at the peak of my performance now, intellectually better [laughter] at least intellectually, but seriously, I think these are considerations but they are not easy and what I hope is that when it is being discussed I hope you remember the debate of the Leader of the Opposition. I hope they do not then go and play politics with it and accuse the Government of doing things which they themselves support but we know that there is a habit of them, they will support things one place and go

otherwise elsewhere and say other things. Constitutional reform is one good example, yes Mr. Speaker, therefore I wish this budget a safe passage. I know there are challenges, there will be challenges, but you know if life had been easy and simple it would be dull. I believe that we are prepared to confront these challenges, we have excellent leadership, we have a great team, we have good support from the Opposition and therefore with our individuals taking on their responsibilities, St. Vincent and the Grenadines the ship of state is in good hands, even though it is in some choppy waters, we see a calm ahead and we will get to port safely. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker [applause].

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Any further debate? No further debate? [Inaudible] Honourable Deputy Prime Minister we notice that..., we are hoping that at least we would have gotten in about five today to keep us on schedule but we might just have to go until Monday, because it seems as if..., leave the Leader of the House to determine [interjection] well it was a question.

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Well then, Mr. Speaker, it seems that we can suspend until tomorrow morning at 9:00 a.m.

**Question put and agreed to.
House suspended at 6:48 p.m.
Until Wednesday 11th January, 2012 at 9:00 a.m.**