

**No. 4**

**Wednesday**

**Second Session**

**11<sup>th</sup> January, 2012**

**Ninth Parliament**

**SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

**THE**

**BUDGETARY DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**ADVANCE COPY**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

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# **THE BUDGETARY DEBATES**

## **OFFICIAL REPORT**

### **PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FIRST MEETING, SECOND 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.**

**FOURTH SITTING**

**11<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY, 2012**

#### **HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

The Honourable House of Assembly met at 9:05 a.m. in the Assembly Chamber, Court House, Kingstown.

#### **PRAYERS**

#### **MR. SPEAKER IN THE CHAIR**

Honourable Hendrick Alexander

#### **Present**

#### **MEMBERS OF CABINET**

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

Member for North Central Windward

Attorney General  
Honourable Judith Jones-Morgan

Minister of Education/ Deputy  
Prime Minister  
Honourable Girlyn Miguel

Member for Marriaqua

Minister of Housing, Informal Human Settlements, Physical Planning, Lands and Surveys Honourable Clayton Burgin	Member for East St. George
Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and Rural Transformation Honourable Montgomery Daniel	Member for North Windward
Minister of Tourism and Industry Honourable Saboto Caesar	Member for South Central Windward
Minister of Health, Wellness and The Environment Honourable Cecil McKie	Member for West St. George
Minister of National Reconciliation Labour, Information and Ecclesiastical Affairs Honourable Maxwell Charles	Member for Central Leeward
Minister of National Mobilisation, Social Development, the Family, Persons with Disabilities, Youths, Sports and Culture Honourable Frederick Stephenson	Member for South Windward
Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade And Consumer Affairs Honourable Dr. Douglas Slater	Government Senator
Minister of Transport and Works, Urban Development and Local Government Honourable Julian Francis	Government Senator
Parliamentary Secretary in the Office Of the Prime Minister Honourable Elvis Charles	Government Senator
Honourable David Browne	Government Senator/ Deputy Speaker

## **OTHER MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE**

Honourable Arnhim Eustace Leader of the Opposition	Member for East Kingstown
Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday	Member for Northern Grenadines
Honourable Terrance Ollivierre	Member for Southern Grenadines
Honourable St. Claire Leacock	Member for Central Kingstown
Honourable Daniel Cummings	Member for West Kingstown
Honourable Nigel Stephenson	Member for South Leeward
Honourable Anesia Baptiste	Opposition Senator
Honourable Vynnette Frederick	Opposition Senator

## **ABSENT**

Honourable Roland Matthews	Member for North Leeward
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**SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

**WEDNESDAY 11<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2012**

**PRAYERS**

The Honourable Hendrick Alexander read the prayers.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. In accordance with Section 12(5) I beg that the proceedings of today's sitting be exempted from the provisions of the Standing Order Hours of Sitting.

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

**Question put and agreed to.**

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member for South Central Windward... [Inaudible] Now I just want to advise Members that we have come here this morning today to debate the Budget Presentation made by the Honourable Prime Minister and I believe that we all would have come with our various plans and ideas, thoughts and so on, as to what we are going to do and this as we say in our local parlance "this hemming and hawing" in relation to who will go first or who will go last. We cannot really tolerate that, we have to be forthright and objective in what we are doing. And at any point during this Budgetary Debate that I would have made at least two calls for debate and no one is standing, if the Leader of the House is not here I will suspend the session until he comes to do his wrapping up; because by now I guess we are determining in our minds what we want to say and what we want to do. And this looking at who coming first and who coming last does not make any sense to me; you come to say something, you come to make a presentation and I want to make it abundantly clear after I have said, called the debate once, called the debated twice and nobody stands, then I will suspends the sessions until or if the Leader of the House is here I would ask him to wind up the Budget. As I said you come here with an objective and let us go forth and do exactly what we have too. Honourable Member for South Central Windward, as a Minister, you have 1<sup>¼</sup> hours.

**HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, today I rise to completely associate myself with the Budget Address delivered by the Honourable Prime Minister and Member for the Constituency of North Central Windward delivered in this Honourable House on Monday afternoon of the 9<sup>th</sup> of January, 2012.

Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to commend the Honourable Prime Minister, the Ministry of Finance and all the Ministries for crafting a Budget, which is appropriate for the times and a Budget which is an exercise in fiscal discipline and prudence, taking into consideration the need for growth in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I am extremely delighted to participate in this exercise. Delighted, because I am honoured to represent the voice of the youth at the humble age of thirty-one (31); the wonderful people of South Central Windward who elected me last elections and to be a part of the Ministry of Tourism and Industry.

Mr. Speaker, I am also delighted because I am a part of a mass political party; The Unity Labour Party, given the mandate for a third term to bring solutions to many of the vexing problems that we to face and that we have to grapple with as a small nation state. It is indeed an honour, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines... the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, they continue to place their trust and their confidence in the Minister of Finance and the Member for the Constituency of North Central Windward, and they do it through a democratic process, they go to elections and every time he has been to the poles in the last three occasions, he has been successful that goes to show, that the people are saying that he is doing something right [Applause]...

[Interruption]

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** I am going to ask the Honourable Deputy to hold for a few minutes, while I sort out some very urgent issues.

**DEPUTY SPEAKER HONOURABLE DAVID BROWN IN CHAIR**

**HONOURABLE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** You may continue.

**HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, if I may now turn to the impact of the Global Financial Crisis on the Tourism Sector in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, it would be a gross oversight if I do not first take the opportunity to contextualise this debate against the backdrop of what is happening to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as a result of the Global Financial Crisis.

Mr. Speaker, there are three (3) very important questions facing the world today. Firstly, whether the United States of America would have a double dip in 2012 this year-(1);

(2) Whether the Euro-zone would be able to solve their financial crisis in 2012, 2013, 2014 and the final one;

Whether China would be able to maintain its levels of production taking into consideration that its two main markets, being the United States of America and Europe are in a state of depression?

Mr. Speaker, this definitely has had a significant impact on Tourism and Industry in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and more so Tourism, Mr. Speaker, because Tourism is very closely tied and hinged to international capitalism.

Mr. Speaker, our main Source Markets, Europe and the United States of America and Canada, but more so the US and Europe are going through a severe financial crisis. What this means, is that the person from Atlanta, Georgia or the individual in New Jersey who wanted to take a vacation to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines he has on his doorstep the threat of unemployment, being temporarily employed and the long and short of it is that, the people who come to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, as tourist, they have, for the most part the possibilities of having a lower levels of disposable income. This definitely would be a hindrance to travel.

Mr. Speaker, not only are the Source Markets affected in the sense, that the persons who live in these Source Market may not readily demand travel as in the times when their economy was doing better; but foreign direct investors from Europe and America are also sitting on the fence, waiting and watching, hoping that their local economy recovers before they move to a place like Saint Vincent and the Grenadines or any place as a matter of fact to invest.

Mr. Speaker, I listened the Honourable Prime Minister in his address and he noted that today there are a lot of “crackers and cheese” tourists- “crackers and cheese;” what this is saying that those persons who travel, because of what is happening in their country of residence and to their personal disposable income, they are willing and ready to spend less when they come to the destination. So Mr. Speaker, you may readily analyse and assess and appreciate, that it is no longer just about bringing persons to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines but we have to come up with creative ways of making them spend more when they come but taking into consideration that they, for the most part are now coming, but coming with less.

Mr. Speaker, what is more is that there are several service operators who are going out of business locally, regionally and internationally. And when I say operators I am speaking about the operators within the tourism sector, because they cannot maintain in any sustainable manner any production below a certain threshold. I had an experience, Mr. Speaker, in Puerto Rico, recently where I attended a meeting and when I heard the cries and the woes of the Ministers of Tourism in the region and I am not going to call any country name because it was a caucus meeting, but there are some countries, Mr. Speaker, in the OECS that have had to consider giving income support to taxi men. When the Royal Caribbean Cruise Line and Carnival pulled out of a certain port and when I say “pulled out” I do not mean pulled out to go sailing, I mean pulled out as not returning. Taxi men had to use their taxis to sell mangoes and bananas in the capital of that island. And persons had to turn portions of their restaurant into a place where you sell clothes, could you imagine that? That is the reality of the situation that we face and Mr. Speaker, when you are going through a financial crisis as the one we are going through and you are the Minister of Finance, it is definitely a difficult task and I want to commend the Honourable Prime Minister for doing the best job that I think possible that could have been done with the limited resources to bring this Budget to parliament.

Mr. Speaker, wherever there are problems, as a Government we have to seek solutions. And if we look far and if we look deep, and if we study this problem very closely, the main source of any solution is increasing our production and our productivity as a nation. And it is against this backdrop, Mr. Speaker, that I would like to frame the focus of this presentation, every single Vincentian today and in times to come must take the need to increase our levels of production and our productivity if we are to build a stronger nation.

Mr. Speaker, when we increase our production and productivity, we can successfully sustain a realistic Poverty Alleviation Program, we can improve our standards of living and we simply have more disposable income and we can create the necessary kind of wealth and the resultant growth.

Mr. Speaker, in a recent visit to the United States of America, I had the opportunity to go to the birth place of Martin Luther King Jr. and to take a tour of the house that he was born in and to travel back in time and see how this very ardent man, freedom fighter would have lived in his youthful days, also attended the Ebenezer Baptist Church, but Mr. Speaker, what is more, is that in my attempt to expand on my readings on what has happened or what has occurred in the United States during the period of the Civil Rights Movements. I came upon an essay written by Booker T. Washington, this man was born a slave, he was emancipated went to school and later became a teacher. And Mr. Speaker, since I am going to use the backdrop of the need to increase production and productivity, please permit me to quote very briefly from an essay that he wrote and I want particularly for the young persons and for everyone within the economically active age group in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to share this portion with me, Booker T. Washington written and delivered on October the 18<sup>th</sup> 1895 and this is what he had to say about production:

*“Our greatest danger is that in the great leap from slavery to freedom we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live by the productions of our hands...”*

But what he is saying here you know even though, men moved from slavery to emancipation and we know that slavery was abolished in the British Colonies in 1833, the Act was passed in the British Parliament and it was enacted in 1834 and they had Apprenticeship up to 1838; but what he is saying as a people, as we grow despite the fact that we have a history of moving from slavery to freedom it is not that as we become free, we should stop work...

*“Our greatest danger is that in the great leap from slavery to freedom we may overlook the fact that the masses of us are to live by the productions of our hands and fail to keep in mind that we shall prosper in proportion as we learn to dignify and glorify common labour and put brains and skill into the common occupations of life shall prosper in proportion as we learn to draw the lines between the superficial and the substantial, the ornamentals of life and the useful. No race...”*

And it is still instructive today and I may add, Mr. Speaker, no race, no people, no nation...

*“...can prosper till it learns that there is as much dignity in tilling a field as in writing a poem. It is, at the bottom of life we must begin and not at the top, nor should we permit our grievances to overshadow our opportunity...”*

This is a man writing in that period, a man who went through slavery, was freed and realised that at the end of the day if we do not work, we cannot build a sustainable society or a sustainable economy.

Mr. Speaker, yesterday I had the opportunity to sit and to listen quite carefully to the presentation delivered by the Member for East Kingstown and Leader of the Opposition. And Mr. Speaker, I am one when I listen, and I do not like to listen but it is my training that as I listen, you ought to take copious notes and as a man holding a very high position in this land, I have the utmost respect when he speaks to take notes.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition described the Honourable Prime Minister's Address as one: a repeat of empty phrases and tagline year after year. He noted that the length had an inverse relationship to the value of its content, it was anecdotal; meaning it was unreliable based on rumors, that is the dictionary meaning. He also noted that "we are not in the state of Greece" this is word for word, but heading there-a crisis. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Speaker, spoke for approximately four (4) hours but he did not once in his address, Mr. Speaker, and I want the persons listening, not only in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, not only the persons in Park Hill and Byrea and Diamonds and Chapmans and Greiggs but I want the students in university who are following this debate to hear this and I want those in the Diaspora, in London, in New York, in Boston to hear this; the Leader of the Opposition in his four (4) hour address did not one time mention the Argyle International Airport [Applause]

Mr. Speaker, every time I heard the Leader of the Opposition mentioning the word "international" it was in my mind that the next thing he was going to say was airport. But for those of us who went to primary schools in the rural districts will know, one thing school children is scared of is something, and I pronounce it in common parlance, 'stinging nettle' a man running...the Honourable Leader of the Opposition is running from this subject like how school children run from stinging nettle [Applause] He spoke for four (4) hours and not once did he mention the International Airport but he spoke a minute, almost a minute about Kentucky Fried Chicken and issues touching and concerning eating Kentucky Fried Chicken and over two minutes he spent, Mr. Speaker, in a very unfortunate way and I must say it was one of the saddest and darkest moment in this Parliament when the Leader of the Opposition saw to delve into facts as he claimed, because he was purporting them which will soon become the issue in a criminal matter which will be before the Court. And it was very sad to see that next to him my learned friend and attorney was sitting and did not even give him the knee, because I could understand late in your address you were getting a bit tired and so you going off on some tangents but I...I just hope Mr. Speaker, that the defence attorneys in that matter which will come do not choose to go down the route of pre-trial publicity, because this parliament is not the place for a discussion like that. And I forgive the Honourable Leader of the Opposition for engaging in a discourse that he should not have done, but whilst I forgive and whilst the members on this side may forgive, John Public it is already out there, the woman pushing the cart from up at C.K. Greaves going down to Tokyo listening to her radio, she already heard you purport certain things as if they were facts and that is only disappointing, but Mr. Speaker, the impact of the Argyle International Airport and the possibilities and the potential and the opportunities that it can open for this country, they were to be addressed by a man, an Honourable Member of this House who seeks the Office of Prime Minister [Applause]

Mr. Speaker, when you look at the possibilities that this International Airport is going to have on tourism, it is overwhelming. And it escapes me, Mr. Speaker, and I have to talk about it again, it escapes me, how someone can have a discussion claiming; because the Leader of the Opposition outlined his CV as an Economist and I respect that; but how can you in a way seeking to find solutions and to turn around this economy, this small vulnerable economy in times that are desperate when everyone is seeking for solutions and answers. And you do not mention a project that has gone so far and is going to open many doors for the people of this country.

Mr. Speaker, it is not only in tourism, it is not only with an International Airport will we be able to bring more persons to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, but we will also be able to take more agricultural produce because some persons are of the conceptualization, the mis-conceptualization that is only people travel on planes. But the Amerijet carries cargo and I want the farmers in the rural districts of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to appreciate the fact that the International Airport is not only coming for tourism but it also coming for agriculture and it is also coming for industry [Applause]. Ms. Douglas Pepper Sauce in Diamond, my old nenny Ms. Douglas, her pepper sauce would be able to be shipped from the Argyle International Airport to the streets of New York and to the streets of London.

Mr. Speaker, I speak to foreign direct investors on a regular basis and the very first thing that they ask me when they come to invest in tourism in this country- ‘when will the International Airport be completed?’ they start with that and they end with that. How can this escape the Honourable Leader of the Opposition? But he spent three quarters of his time on the IMF, I am not saying there is anything wrong with spending time on the IMF you know but there are solutions right before our eyes that we are not taking into consideration. And we are keeping our focus on documents prepared for us when the solutions are in our backyards.

Mr. Speaker, the international press they also are speaking about the completion of the International Airport, the young people throughout Saint Vincent and the Grenadines when they travel, every time they come home whenever they have a journey where they experience a lot of hassle they speak about the airport. The taxi men Mr. Speaker, the taxi men listening to me whether up at the Cruise Ship Berth or at the Airport or at the Heritage Square, they want the International Airport; and they are already seeking to secure monies to purchase more taxis to put in the flight that would be established out there. And you want to tell me that something has been sweeping through this land as important as this, with so much potential, financially and socially for our people and the Leader of the Opposition spoke for four (4) hours and he did not once, and if he did not once, he cannot twice. He never mentioned anything about the airport.

Mr. Speaker, I had an experience and I am a humble man, so I am not afraid to share of my experiences. I had an experience about a week and a half ago coming out of Atlanta, Georgia, leaving Miami about 7 o’clock thereabout, getting into Barbados after the last LIAT flight would have left. And I am man of humble means and everybody knows that, very, very humble means; coming out of the airport all the persons from Barbados, their families came for them, I was there...I was there, another lady, I went across to her because she had four children there with her. I asked her where she was from she said she was from Dominica, so, you at an airport at 11 o’clock in the night, I asked her “where are you going to stay?” she say “well they usually send for we every year but we does sleep in the airport.” And I watch the concrete, *me say nah*, when I feel the breeze, I say never. I asked the taxi man to take me to a very humble place, but like he took what I said to very logical conclusions.

He took me to a guest house, there is no front desk, Mr. Speaker, somebody came out with a copy book, they write down your name, they tell you go down so and turn so; is like they sending you to a Boot Camp, I did not sleep the night and you know the joke about it is that he asked me what is my occupation, I say I would tell you first thing in the morning, cause I did not want him to know exactly what I was doing. The next morning, Mr. Speaker, and this is not said in jest, this is not a joke, this is a serious thing that Vincentians has to go through on a daily basis and how can we say that we love people and that we love our country and that we want to build our country and not take these matters into consideration into this Honourable House [Applause]. Men could boast and say they are Economist from now 'til eternity, unless you love people you *cah* lead a country and I am not calling names.

Mr. Speaker, when I turned up at the airport in the morning, when I came out, because I was coming home on the first flight, because I wanted to be in work very early. You know what I saw, the Dominican lady and her children, they used their suitcases for pillows and they slept right there in the airport. And the Leader of the Opposition spoke for four (4) hours and he never once discuss or address such a significant capital project, being developed before us. There are hundreds of persons out there employed. Any careful analyst of employment in this country over the last four years and the injection and expenditure of monies in this country over the last three years must analyze money is going to the IADC.

Mr. Speaker, I feel so passionate about this that it would be against my conscience not to ask the Leader of the Opposition not to resign on this matter.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to dispel a certain falsity, a myth that and it occurred in a neighbouring island when there were greater investments or when there was on move to invest in Tourism. That persons in the society and in the economy started to say that all the money was going to tourism and nobody is studying agriculture; but that is not so there are significant linkages between Tourism and Agriculture which should not escape us. And that is why since I took up this job and since there has been a twinning of Tourism and Industry it has been very easy for me to in every single address that I make whenever I speak about Tourism, I speak about its linkage to agriculture and to industry.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to write a piece entitled *Tourism in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines reaching the silver lining.* And if I maybe just permitted, Mr. Speaker, to just read a few lines of it briefly because it is very instructive as to how Tourism bringing more guests to our shores, whether they come by yachts, Cruise ships, whether they stay in hotels or resorts, but it shows in this piece the direct linkage between Tourism and Agriculture and not only Agriculture in its broadest sense but bananas.

Mr. Speaker and I begin:

*“In recent times we have lived through several onslaughts on our Banana Industry, hurricanes, WTO rulings and diseases, wherein then resides the way forward a strategically diversified agricultural sector geared at reducing our food import bill and addressing the critical issue of food security must be twinned with an attempt at establishing a sustainable tourism product if we are to increase the wealth of our nation...”*

I continued

*“Let us always keep to the fore of our minds...”*

And this is the part that I want our farmers to pay very close attention too

*“Let us always keep to the fore of our minds that an increase in visitor arrivals must be met with a proportionate increase in food production to feed the tourist.”*

Let me put it this way using the example of bananas; what will change, with an International Airport, let us say the persons consuming our bananas remain constant, for sure the place of consumption will change. The actual consumption will not purely take place on the breakfast tables in London, High Wycombe and Birmingham by consumers in our extra-regional market; instead a large percentage of our bananas will now be consumed in our own supermarkets, hotels and guest houses locally in Villa, in Bequia and Canouan. And that is just using one product, so instead of sending the bananas to England with an international airport, when we bring more persons from England they would be eating the bananas right here that is [Applause] what I am putting in that context. Hence, we must put the resultant challenges which would arise, whilst at the same time factor into our planning the many positive impacts that an increase in tourism will have on the increase in the demands of foods locally. This is so since tourism although an export product, quite uniquely is consumed in the country of production.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to the positive PR that this country has received in the period 2011 and already in 2012. You know it is always a pride and a joy to sit in meetings as the Minister of Tourism for one of the most beautiful destinations in the entire world [Applause] it gives a resounding sense of pride. *CNN* ranking us as the top fifth out of ten, *Travel & Leisure Magazine* ranking as third of the top nine, the *Today Show* ranking us as the top twelve, *Toronto Star* top fifty destination and the *Toronto Star* I am advised by the economist in the Ministry Mr. Bernard John is Canada's highest circulation newspaper and the *New York Times* the top seventeen of forty-five and I am advised by Mr. Glen Beache the CEO of the Tourism Authority that it is the only English speaking island of the Caribbean was placed on the list and this definitely is commendable [Applause]. And what is more, Mr. Speaker, is that for the *New York Times* its website is the most popular American online newspaper website receiving more than thirty million unique visitors a month. What this is going to show and at this point I must pause to commend all the former ministers of Tourism whether from the New Democratic Party Administration, the Labour Party and the Unity Labour Party, I think I can recall names like Allan Cruickshank, Herbie Young, René Baptiste, Glen Beache, I promise to continue to build on the legacy that they would have left but we have to do certain things in a reviewed way and I also have to build, so that one day when I leave that the person coming after me would meet an excellent foundation.

Mr. Speaker, I would now like to look at the performance of the Tourism sector in 2011. Mr. Speaker the economic growth in 2011 has been fueled significantly by an 18.7% increase in tourism that is noted and pointed out at page 7 of the Budget Presentation of the Honourable Prime Minister. This is something that should occupy the minds of the persons on radio, those who are studying overseas and it should become a discussion of every single citizen that tourism is up by 18.7%.

Mr. Speaker, please permit me to quote from a report compiled by the Tourism Authority that would give us a snapshot of an analysis of the performance of the sector:

*“Stay-Over: stay-over is up by 2.5% in 2011 after declining consistently for the past 5 years.*

*Yachting: yacht arrivals have performed better than stay-over and are up by 7.2%.*

*Same day for the January to September period 2011 against the January to September 2010, this category is down 21.6%.*

*Cruise: the decline in the cruise visitor category this year has not been as harsh as we witnessed in 2010 and this category is down by 16.8%. The cruise forecast shows that we would likely see a turnaround in this category in 2012, though the Princess Line pulled out of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines it has been replaced by a few other lines based on the 201 calls scheduled to come for 2011-2012 season we can forecast that there will be between 140,000 and 150,000 cruise visitors to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for the upcoming season. This will mean that there will likely be a substantial rebound for the season and a return to the peak cruise visitor arrival levels.*

*Conclusion: the stay-over and yacht visitor category which are arguably more important in terms of contribution to GDP have performed exceedingly well for 2011 and better than even the most optimistic expectations given the recent or it should be the current global macro-economic trends.”*

[Applause]

Mr. Speaker, I received a very warm letter and it is all over ‘Facebook’, I have an account, I do not follow it, it is all the radio stations, it is all over the TV, it is being discussed in Byrea Hill, it is being discussed Pasture in South Rivers, in Greiggs, in Lowmans, in Mespo and a topic that has gained extreme currency in tourism is the fact that the Vision of the Seas will be coming to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines [Applause]. I was at the barber shop recently Mr. Speaker and from the time I mention it to my barber, he says my girlfriend sails on that ship I am happy she is coming home, that is the fact. [Laughter]

Mr. Speaker, if I may just read the letter sent to me and I am too old to receive love letters. My love letters come in the form of good news to the Ministry of Tourism and not...and the Leader of the Opposition is smiling and I think that is a corrective smile, I am not only too old, I am also married...it is a corrective smile.

*“Dear Minister Caesar good afternoon,*

This is the letter from Royal Caribbean...

*“Here is a bit of good news...*

This is how these men write to you, you know, not anything like it is taken from a Shakespeare Book, the man is being practical.

*“Here is a bit of good news...”*

Straight to the point

*“Royal Caribbean International will announce tomorrow...”*

That tomorrow is already gone

*“...the deployment of the Vision of the Seas on a series of longer Caribbean and Panama Canal cruises for the winter season 2012-2013. As these cruises are designed to provide a wide variety of destinations not frequented on the traditional seven night cruises, the Ship will call St Vincent for the first time on three cruises in winter 2012 and 2013. The Vision of the Seas carries 2000 guests. I will forward a press release as soon as it is ready for distribution.*

*Best regards,*

*Federico Denton”*

I replied right away

*“Dear Sir,*

*Greetings and salutations for the New Year, the Government and people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines are indeed encouraged and delighted of the good news on the deployment of the Vision of the Seas on a series of longer tours to the Caribbean and the Panama Canal for the winter season 2012-2013. We are grateful to be included for three calls for these cruises for 2012-2013 as a signal of the deepening of the future relationship we enjoy with Royal Caribbean. These visits would go a long way in strengthening the local tourism industry. We look forward for future calls to our destination.*

*Minister of Tourism, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines”*

Mr. Speaker, if this is not good news, then what is?

Mr. Speaker, just before I move off, the fact that the Vision of the Seas would be coming, I listened quite carefully to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition...the Honourable Prime Minister in his address, when he noted that we have to do some work to clean up Kingstown, we also have to ensure that Minister of Tourism, after Minister of Tourism, after Minister of Tourism would have gone out and done excellent work in terms of negotiating with Royal and Carnival and these other cruise lines and now that they are coming we have to ensure that we are ready. And every single citizen is a stakeholder in the tourism sector; I want to repeat that because some persons are of the view because I do not drive a taxi, tourism does not affect my life. And

because I do not have a restaurant and I do not have a bar, but then your daughter is in Cave Hill studying Tourism and Hospitality and you have already gone to take out a loan to send a child to Grenada to do studies in this field or your son is an upcoming entrepreneur who wants to get into business in Tourism. And I say this particularly on the issue on littering and the need for us to lift our quality and our standard. [Applause] And this goes...everybody must work harder including the Minister straight across the board.

Mr. Speaker, I now move to harnessing fresh perspective from within in the Ministry of Tourism and Industry; because as a sector evolves there is always a need for a sense of a newness in thought, in ideas, a freshness and almost renaissance- a rebirth of learning within the sector. During the course of 2012 I have discussed already with the Permanent Secretary we have to create an avenue, a window where all persons who would have graduated from university with the expertise in Tourism or Hospitality to work along with the Ministry one way or the other. Whether it is by meeting at the Ministry, whether it is going by field trips where you can visit sites and give us ideas and definitely once persons come forward and assists you, you also have to ensure that when the foreign investors and come to the country that you also point these young person's to these investors as persons who can head, or lead, or who can drive from a national standpoint in their investment.

Mr. Speaker, the indicators would show that this year, 2012, we will continue to visit the schools because we have to speak to the next generation of persons who would come to sell their services in the tourism sector and also in industry. And it is very important to teach the young ones so that they could understand and appreciate this sector whilst they are in school.

### **Community Tourism and National Awareness 2012**

Mr. Speaker, I have said this before and I would say this again in this Honourable House, I am not going to sit in an armchair, up there in a high fashion building in the Ministry of Tourism, playing with a Parker Pen. I am going to go throughout the constituencies and the communities in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and ensure that the voice of Tourism reaches every single citizen during the course of this year and next year; because we want more participants [Applause] to understand and appreciate what the Ministry of Tourism is doing. You know I had the opportunity to visit Savannah, Georgia and you know sometimes when you see the package or the packages that you purchase as a tourist, you realise that we have a lot more potential here in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines that we can even fully utilise and we have to start to utilise.

Mr. Speaker, just on the tour... a trolley tour Major Oglethrope, a Major from England came to Georgia, set up a town Savannah and now they making millions of dollars, taking to see a building... a tree root say the tree is four hundred years old and you pay, you come out, you take a picture; but Mr. Speaker, just right there on that tour... and I spoke to National Parks already right here in Saint Vincent and maybe the guess of anybody, there is a constituency with five tunnels, why can't we call it the 'The Tour of the Five Tunnels', why can't we do a comprehensive study of the history of each tunnel. You could go up to Lands & Surveys to get a map of the constituency, you could put it, our map on Google Earth and flag each tunnel, and you can train persons in the constituency to appreciate and to explain the history of each tunnel. One of these tunnels... and I know by now for those of us who are from the Windward side the only constituency with five tunnels is the constituency of North Central, you could start in Byrea, there is one in Three Rivers..., you could start in Park Hill, there is one

in Three Rivers, there is one in Byrea, one at Black Point and there is one that is not developed on Grand Sable. And here persons in the rural communities, you sell the tour to Coreas or to other persons and when a cruise ship comes, instead of going only to the traditional sites, you can go to these new sites. But we have to begin as a people to harness the historical and geographical resources we have and to streamline them in such a way that the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourism Sector and the Tourism Authority, we can all benefit, and our people most also appreciate them. I spoke to an investor on the weekend, he told me that, you know when persons come at your resort and they spend twelve days after the first two days and they finish going to the Gardens and the Fort Charlotte and then they go down to the Grenadines on a Day-Tour, when they come back they want something to do, they want to do something every day. Not everyone, some persons go on their honeymoon and they do not want to come outside, but there are many persons who want something to do on a daily basis and every single constituency, as Minister of Tourism working with the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourism Authority, we are going to spread far and wide and attempt to develop the 150 sq miles in this country ready for when we take off in 2014 [Applause] the takeoff in 2014 missed by the four (4) hour presentation by the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, the IAASTF- the International Airport and Ancillary Services Task Force; this body is put in place to ensure that there is a seamless transition in terms of ancillary services when the Argyle International Airport is open in 2014 and we have already started our meetings, we are meeting with stakeholders, we are meeting with government agencies and bodies, Physical Planning, Lands & Surveys, Health & the Environment, so that we can create the correct environment for the seamless transition.

Mr. Speaker, we would be embarking on a legislative overhaul in 2012 and this is of significant importance and this will be piloted to a large extent by the Tourism Authority as it pertains to the standards and I want to commend the CEO of the Tourism Authority and the staff of the Authority for taking this very important issue to the fore in lifting the standards in the Tourism Sector in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. We have a long way to go but the important thing is that we have started.

Mr. Speaker, in a recent Cabinet discussion, the Cabinet came to the conclusion that in order to be competitive, to be competitive in tourism in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines with our neighbours, we have to first understand and appreciate and study very carefully the legislative calendar and agenda and hardware of our competitors. Some persons may wonder why a ship may come or go to Castries, St. Lucia and overnight and we do not have ships overnighing here on a regular basis, but if you look at it carefully, many of these islands have far more competitive legislation on the books that provides that framework that is an incentive.

Mr. Speaker, since that discussion I have travelled to Barbados, I have gone to Cave Hill Campus to do a research and what was most delightful is that I did not have to hire anybody to assist me; a group of Vincentian students spent three days assisting [Applause] me with the research. They have been able to compile these documents and in 2012 we would be assessing internally before sending off to the Attorney General's Chambers after Cabinet would have given instructions. The Bed & Breakfast Incentive Act, the standards and regulations are being done by the Tourism Authority already, the Cruise ship Overnighing Incentive Act, the Hotel Guest Levee Act, Water Taxi Regulation and I know this would be very important for the Grenadines and particularly since we are facing some hiccups in how the water taxis operate and the Beach Control Act and I

heard the Honourable Prime Minister made perfect reference to the fact that persons are taking the Pitt Bulls on the beaches, we have to be tighter. Nothing would spoil your vacation more if you are on the beach and you are bitten by a dog. That is not the kind of PR we want to see on the internet, that is not something that we can afford as an emerging destination. Seven- the Taxi Incentive Act would be studied, the one in Barbados, so that we can fully appreciate whether or not we can offer incentive; and we can use it as a base study, because persons would definitely be beating up their investments in taxis and rentals as we open or move closer to the opening of the Argyle International Airport.

Mr. Speaker, I am onto a very exciting topic and it is about making our sites fully functional in 2012.

Mr. Speaker, I inherited excellent sites. I must commend the Minister of Tourism who came before me for doing excellent work for developing these sites, he has left the site for me, it is for me to ensure that they become fully functional [Applause].

Mr. Speaker, please permit me to just read a bit from a report handed to me that was commissioned by the Ministry and was done by National Parks:

*'Recently on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011 five vending units were awarded to three individuals on community based groups from North Windward to operate these units at Owia Salt Pond Recreation Park...'*

You cannot have a site and I cannot leave Kingstown now go there and have lunch or when I get to the site the person... there is nobody to take me on a tour of the site, there are no rules, no regulations and I am saying this not in the context of casting blame but outlining my duty because the sites are already built and it is now the duty of the Ministry of Tourism to ensure that these sites do not just lie fallow, we have to properly engage the sites. Some persons are even using these sites for weddings wish is something that we can sell the site for. I heard...I do not attend fetes but I heard that there was a Cooler Fete and they are being used on... I see the Honourable [laughter]... I see the Honourable Senator Francis smiling. Presently a souvenir cafeteria and vending unit is being publically advertised for operation at the Botanical Gardens and we want persons who come forward who bid or who we engage to take their jobs very serious; because once you have an establishment and persons start to come to these sites they expect that they meet someone, you want to go all the way out to Owia to buy some Madungo and some chocolate tea and when they reach there they say that the person who is doing the Madungo, she went to town, that would be disappointing.

Mr. Speaker, in collaboration with co-managed entities targeted interventions with private operators would be sought at selective sites such as Dark View Falls and the Black Point Recreation Park to involve the private sector in the operation of vending units. Other than the five units recently awarded at Salt Pond, there are currently some seven individual vending units and two restaurants that are being operated at various sites. Currently, Mr. Speaker, there are ongoing efforts to target the operation of a further seven vending units, one restaurant and two craft outlets at sites such as Rawacou, Dark View, Layou Petroglyphs and Black Point Recreational Park by the end of the first quarter of 2012. In total it is expected there will be twenty individual units, three restaurants and two crafts outlets in operation at nine sites and the Belmont Educational

Development Organisation will co-manage the site plans, utilise the old post office located in close proximity to operate the vending unit.

Mr. Speaker, prior to this administration we all went to Rawacou before, we all went to Owia Salt Pond, I am not saying or casting any blame on anyone but we have come a very long way, persons had to use the grape bush was not...the grape tree was not something only for food but for most of us it was the most demoralizing thing to visit these sites, that is the crisis I want to talk about- a crisis of the sites.

Mr. Speaker, road works to tourism sites; Trinity Falls road all major works on the four areas of the road that Trinity Falls have been completed, 680 meters of concrete road with drains. Vermont Nature Trails road, work is ongoing on the base and drains; the contractor has been granted a no cost extension up to April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2012 on the project and these were for several reasons with whether the rains and asphaltting of the road is expected to begin by the end of January 2012.

Mr. Speaker, I am very aware that there are significant works outstanding in many... on a lot of these roads leading to the sites and it makes it an uncomfortable journey. And now that we are having all that excellent PRs out there, now we are bringing the Royal Caribbean Cruise Line we have to get it right. I know that when the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines speaks, he would lament on certain issues in Bequia and these are things that are real I am not hiding behind a grape tree, these things must be addressed and we are working with limited resources and I just want to assure the persons who are directly affected by not having the road ways to the sites that they directly involved with get fixed or they did not hear it mentioned here, that we are seeking to address such issues in due course and I am working very closely as the Minister of Tourism with BRAGSA.

Mr. Speaker, Security and the Tourism Sector in 2012 and it very important, Mr. Speaker, that we understand and appreciate the importance of having a secured destination. One act of violence against a tourist, one too many; this Government is tough on crime and the causes of crime against every single individual, because I know there are persons who are critics who will say the Minister of Tourism is only concerned about protecting tourists everything he talking about is security for tourists; but I am speaking generally about security for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, but when you are a tourist, when you are a guest to a country, when you would left your place of residence there is a certain unique and fragile security environment that you stay in for a period of time.

Mr. Speaker, I have been advised by the Coast Guard and the police that increased patrols at Admiralty Bay and other bays covert and some overt have already started. The request for a patrol boat specifically assigned to Bequia by the end of January has been addressed. The Grenada Coast Guard would work alongside the Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Coast Guard to have a greater presence in Bequia and the Grenadines on a whole. They have increased the presence of police on the streets in and around Port Elizabeth. Some persons I have met with they have said that we should put cameras on the beach. It is something I would not embark on or advise the cabinet to do unless there is national consultation because some persons are still iffy about cameras on the beach.

Mr. Speaker, increase the presence of police on the streets in and around Port Elizabeth Waterfront in an attempt to reduce the transportation of stolen goods to the ferries. Many persons would go down to Bequia they would steal their goods, they would hide them away for awhile and very, very, very early in the morning, I was advised, they would rush it off to the ferries. So we are trying to intercept that and there are persons who would be using the ferries from time to time, if you are stopped and searched please understand we are just trying to put some measures in place. I got a few calls about a few problems which came up over Christmas but they were addressed I was advised from the relevant authority in Bequia and for the most part for the Christmas into the New Year went well. But what we noticed is that when we work hard for a few months and we put a dent on the issue it is like almost the criminals are watching us, it goes further. And this just like the good press reaches around the world in a matter of minutes, so does the bad press. A closer working relationship between Port Officers and Police to address all issues touching and concerning security in the Grenadines would be put in place and not only in the Grenadines but also at the ports here in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The Honourable Prime Minister in his address went extensively to discuss issues which touch and concern... which touch and concern the Coast Guard and the work that they would be doing from page 66,67,68,69 and more particularly on page 72 and 73 of his presentation. I would just like, Mr. Speaker, to reflect on a few of these or be it briefly...

**HONOURABLE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** You have 15 minutes.

**HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The commencement of a project to establish a police sub-station at Mayreau on page 72, a startup of a 2 year project to repair the Coast Guard jetty at Calliaqua; (c) the commencement of a project to purchase fire fighting trucks for E.T. Joshua and J.F Mitchell Airports and it goes on; but all in the quest to enhance the security in the Grenadines and also in mainland St. Vincent.

Mr. Speaker, the impact of tourism on the overall development of our country, because as we come here to discuss our national budget, as we go through sector by sector, as we would have already gone through issues of revenue and expenditure it is also important that we make the public fully aware that the sector plays a critical role in the development of the country. And Mr. Speaker, there is no better case in point in terms of the time that it has been here than the Buccuma Resort and the Ministry has been provided with estimates of activities and Mr. Speaker, please permit me to make reference to these expenditure.

*'Expenditure to date for marketing of the resort £1.2 million per year for the resort alone; the number of persons employed during the construction and operation of the resort...'*

Because you see, Mr. Speaker, because historically tourism has developed for the most part in the Grenadines, any persons who reside on St. Vincent are very divorced from many of the possibilities and the opportunities and the positives that we can derive from tourism. I was walking through my constituency recently and a farmer told me but Caesar you are the Minister of Tourism how will you represent me, I am a farmer and that is why I took a careful time to show the linkages between tourism and agriculture. And on a lighter note I am sitting next to the Minister of Agriculture so he is safe hands.

*'...the number of persons employed during the construction and the operation of the resort at one point, Mr. Speaker, in time there were 1100 workers for the construction site and 350 for the resort operation. The company's investment in a fleet of planes...'*

Because every time I speak to the developers one issue come to the fore is the Argyle International Airport and its completion. And I must say that I have great respect for any investor who will come and build and invest so much in a development not seeing an international airport.

Mr. Speaker, currently 2 planes are being purchased and by the end of 2012 the company would have invested \$9-\$10 million in 4 planes in total. All of this was sent to me by the management of the resort. The total value of the company's or resource expenditure since its commencement of operation in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines \$50 million on the construction site, \$1.5 million for the day to day operation monthly. The monthly purchase cost for...and this is what I want the farmers to pay very careful attention too...the monthly purchase cost for processed and agricultural items and a forecast for 2012-13-14-15. In 2012 US\$840,000.00 in food-US dollars... in 2012 US\$840,000.00 for food, agricultural produce and processed food of course there are some items which will make you not get a proper analyst of how the money is being dispersed because some items are significantly more expensive than others and the Honourable Member may know that particularly since there are certain drinks and liquor because this includes drinks and liquor; 2013 US\$1.1 million, 2014 US\$3.2 and 2015 US\$4.5.

Mr. Speaker, Sport Tourism in 2012, there is excitement in the air cricket is coming to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines we will be having Three International One Day games, the committee has been commissioned by the Cabinet to put in place the requisite framework so that when these games come to Saint Vincent and the Grenadines that the stakeholders can maximize their profit and they could harness the resources which would be available during this period and this is a game a very interesting game West Indies Vs. Australia.

Mr. Speaker, very importantly Tourism and Industry; manufacturing output in 2011 has increased by 6.5% over 2010 and this was already outlined in the Prime Minister's Address. But what I want to mention is a careful marriage that would be taking place in 2012, a careful marriage in the role of the CED, we have studied carefully the role of the CED and we have asked the CED to re-focused and to restructure that has already been done and the CED would be focusing on our main productive sectors during 2012 to ensure that we encourage young persons and entrepreneurs to invest in tourism and agriculture and also industry. So what we actually having a more streamline approached to how CED is going operate and Standards Bureau I have spoken to Mr. Ledger and I have asked of the Bureau to be very present and to be very active and to continue doing excellent work.

### **Creative Industries for Development**

Mr. Speaker, throughout the region there is actually a portfolio being created in some islands headed Creative Industry; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines would move forward if we are able to establish an exceptional cadre of multitalented young persons who are not only able manage their lives but able to manage their communities, the nation the activities going on the sub-region CARICOM and that is the only means by which we can be

creative enough in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to a meaningful change from our shores to the rest of the world. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines policy framework and development strategy for cultural and creative industry will be fully operationalised in 2012 and we are already organizing to set up inter-ministerial units for cultural industries because culture plays a very critical role in industry and persons would be hearing more about this throughout the course of the year.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to my constituency, the wonderful people of South Central Windward they have elected me to sit in these chambers and significant work would be taking place in South Central Windward in 2012. Before the end of February 2012 there would be the launch of the Production for Living Campaign 2012. This would take into consideration the need for investment in agriculture, agro-processing, tourism and industry. In Mt. Grenan there are lands which will be prepared for distribution; road works the road connecting Mt. Grenan to Diamond one of the worst pieces of roads planed in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and that is the piece of road that serves both the Leader of the Opposition and the area representative, we walk along that road.

Mr. Speaker, I did not walk with the Leader [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, in Lowmans the clinic, the first phase of the clinic has been opened and we have already... we are in the process of receiving monies from the BNTF to complete the clinic. I know that the residences of Lowmans are in an almost virtual uprising and I am working hard as representatives to complete this clinic.

Mr. Speaker, in Lowmans also we continue to train persons to play steel pan forty persons are being trained in Lowmans every year and this will be continued. We are ensuring that South Central Windward is the upcoming pan capital in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. In Chapmans lands are being sought to be acquired for the cemetery, discussions are ongoing with the landowner, and lands for housing are also being sought. In Diamond the Camarcabou and the lively road lands for housing retaining walls in front of Chester Latham's residence that is creating serious issue for pedestrians and for drivers. Lauders the Antoine Playing Field a project would be launched to address not only that playing field but all the playing fields in South Central Windward. Sports is very important it is married very closely to health and to wellness and I spoke to one Aster John also known as Ras John to put together a special project that we will be financing hopefully by a marriage or jointly between the Government and the private sector we are seeking funds because we wait on the Government to do everything we have to get up and get stuff done our self as well.

Mr. Speaker, in conclusion I would like to congratulate the New Grounds Lighting Up Competition [Applause] they has a local competition within and it has ensured that in the national competition the New Grounds Lighting Up Committee won the national competition for yet another year [Applause]. I think it is six out of eleven times. There are persons in New Grounds who are moving to rename the village of New Grounds to the City of Lights at Christmas. There is a need, Mr. Speaker, for greater partnership as we work to develop this blessed nation of ours. We have the excellent...we have an excellent apparatus to work with and Mr. Speaker, today during this budget I recommit myself to the people of South Central Windward, this year 2012 they would be seeing me more than before I would be spending a lot of time in every single constituency with the Ministry of Tourism and Industry because during a period of global financial crisis we need to hold the hand of every citizen.

Mr. Speaker, as I close I encourage every single Vincentian that when we stand we must put our best leg forward, let us all continue to work, to build and to harness the resources and to lift our production and productivity and whenever our work is done we must ensure that we always make the green, gold and blue very proud. Mr. Speaker, I thank you and I wish this process...this passage a safe process through this Honourable House [Applause]. Thank you [Applause]

**HONOURABLE DEPUTY SPEAKER:** Before any further debate I welcome back the Speaker of the House.

[Honourable Speaker resumes chair]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Further debate any further debate...okay...fine...change of mind... just a second... ok Honourable Member... go ahead.

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution to the debate of the 2012 Appropriation Bill commonly referred to as ‘the Budget’. And I do this, Mr. Speaker, with understanding the importance of the exercise, the fact that many people in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines pay attention to what we are doing despite the sparse attendance here in this Honourable House but also do it with a sense of humility, Mr. Speaker, knowing that although we in this Honourable House we try our best to represent the interest of our constituents and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, that what we do often is not enough and that we must always try to do more not only here but in our daily lives, in our communities to make them stronger and better places to live.

Mr. Speaker, I know you are a man of literature [Laughter] I just wanted to quote from Dickens...Charles Dickens book *Hard Times* the title... it is part of the budget, Mr. Speaker...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** [Inaudible]

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** ...no this is not...well that would be appropriate too but. We are dealing here... the title important for two things it captures of course our current circumstances but also the message in the book reflects a lot of what was said in the budget. The opening paragraph:

*‘Now what I want is facts...’*

Let me borrow some glasses.

*‘Now what I want is facts teach these boys and girls nothing but facts. Facts alone are wanted in life, plant nothing else and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon facts nothing else will ever be of any service to them...’*

This is the principle on which I bring up my own children and this is the principle in which I bring up these children; stick to facts sir. And those were the words of course of School Master Thomas Gradgrind one of the principal characters in the book. I listened to the Prime Minister in his presentation, Mr. Speaker, and he too

spoke about setting out facts and there were so many facts and figures from the various Ministries that at sometimes I wondered whether the exercise was not just one of simply trying to set the record straight from his own perspective and trying to in a sense convince the rest of us that number means everything. We see from there facts and figures particularly from the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health of how many people are employed, how many students there are, but Mr. Speaker, the story of the figures is only part of the story telling me how many people are in the health care system at Milton Cato Memorial Hospital and elsewhere in the other communities does not address the fact that people are having difficulties accessing a doctor. In my own constituency in the Northern Grenadines, that if you go to the hospital you have to make sure hold on to your sheet because you do not know if someone is going to take it. So the facts and figures, Mr. Speaker, do not tell the story in any significant degree. It does not capture the reality of what is happening in our education system and it certainly does not capture the reality of what is happening in our health care system.

Mr. Speaker, I do not intend to say much under the heading of health care system but while I am on the subject, the situation, Mr. Speaker, is simply unacceptable when in communities doctors are not available for serious and urgent cases and people with young children who have to approach a doctor cannot get a doctor, people who are seriously ill cannot have access to a doctor. And we have a difficulty of transporting people to the mainland to have access to a doctor. I have raised this before in the past, Mr. Speaker, that the situation is one that is actually costing people their health and their lives. And we now in 2012 have to address this much more seriously. If a doctor cannot be there 24/7, 365 days of the year he is a human being but there must be provision made, Mr. Speaker, that there is access to a doctor at all times in Bequia. The community is too large and too active for there not to be that service and we must re-double our efforts not just in putting in buildings but making sure that the services are there and that the basic medicines- painkillers, bandages, these are things, Mr. Speaker, that are not being provided on a regular basis. And I know that the situation is not unique in the Northern Grenadines in Port Elizabeth, or in Paget Farm clinic. And it is time, Mr. Speaker, that we do more to make sure that these needs are met. I consider that there are three functions that government can perform in our communities that people rely on them for; 1. Is to provide security- we not in any threat of being invaded so when security here is being mentioned here we mean personal security, protection in our homes of our goods and for our lives. Education- to ensure that everyone has a chance to do well, to develop their potential and in turn to contribute to the development of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. I am not one of those who subscribe to the notion, Mr. Speaker, that we should be exporting... that we should be educating people for export, I believe our brightest and best should stay here to develop Saint Vincent and the Grenadines [Applause] and secondly or thirdly, Mr. Speaker, health- without health everything else is secondary, everybody knows that, you can have all the greatest plans in the world and as soon as you become sick, everything else changes in priorities. So those are things, Mr. Speaker, that we must give priority to not just the talk but we must walk the walk. In my own community in the Northern Grenadines the health care system is woefully lacking, it is barely functioning to be honest, the people who work in the system they are very reluctant to speak out but I know that the people who access the system they complain, they complain to me and they may have complained to the Minister, they certainly complain very loudly and it is time that something is done. It is a large enough community and especially now that is it the tourist season with lots of people coming and going we must make sure that better services [are] provided to the residents there so that they can have access to a doctor at all times and that we take the health and welfare of our people very seriously and not just talk about it.

Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister in his presentation spoke about appreciating the difficulties in the international environment and how it relates to our own circumstances here in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines that to me is a welcome approach, because I recall you know back in 2007 particular and 2008 and even 2009 when situation would have been very difficult in the international environment, we were getting the picture that somehow in St. Vincent we are insulated from all that was happening elsewhere in the world but that façade, Mr. Speaker, can no longer be maintained because the circumstances are such that people are finding it very, very difficult in their personal lives and the rhetoric, the previous rhetoric of this administration did not match reality. It still has not caught up with the reality of what the people say because the Prime Minister still paints...try to paint a rosy picture with all the numbers that are presented. But the most important teacher in that portrait, Mr. Speaker, is the fact that we have failed in four consecutive years to grow the economy of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. That is probably the first time in the history of this country that we have a certain sense of independence when we have been in control or statehood of our internal affairs that has ever happened in this country. What this means, Mr. Speaker, is that the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance has failed in his stewardship of the economy of this country. This is something that is now having a serious impact on the lives of the people throughout this country.

Mr. Speaker, the picture is far from rosy in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, when we speak on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, I...sometimes you know I look down the length of this table and I see all my colleagues and it is reassuring to have them here on this side of the House because in the lonelier days when there were only five of us, Mr. Speaker, we had to do a lot more work individually. But the point that should never escape the members on the Government side of the House is that the electorate in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is more or less evenly split between the Unity Labour Party and the New Democratic Party. When we speak on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, we speak with almost as much authority and certainly in terms with the popular vote with as much authority as the members on the Government side of the House. So you ignore us is our presentations, in our submissions, in our recommendations, in our criticisms, you ignore us at your own peril, Mr. Speaker, because our message obviously has resonated with the people in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines this is why there are so many members on this side of the House.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say something again in passing about the reference or the description by the Honourable Prime Minister of the economic situation in this country, the acknowledgement that we are in difficult times indeed in hard times. What I want, Mr. Speaker, is for everybody in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to have a good life. We must be able to create conditions here in this country for people now to improve their circumstances and also to make it a much more promising place for the next generation, for my children and the children of all the other members in this Honourable House and beyond. This is not what is happening, Mr. Speaker, our population has been declining showing that people are leaving these shores in larger numbers than ever before which means that they do not see themselves as having much opportunity here in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. If that is happening, Mr. Speaker, it signals that we as a country we are failing for reasons, Mr. Speaker, that are complex but many of which we have the power to change... the problems we have the power to change. But the way in which this country has been managed has not dealt with that reality in a responsible and constructive way. I sense a shift in the language in the current budget but this might have a lot to do as well with the relationship we have now developed with the International Monetary Fund, the Leader of the Opposition said a lot about that and I know that the people in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Mr. Speaker,

are very grateful to him for his analysis for what he has said the Government was not willing to say and I have heard the comments on the street since his presentation yesterday and people have called me and ask me to let him know that they are grateful for his presentation and they thought that he did a wonderful job [Applause] in educating the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard in the past from the Honourable Prime Minister in 2007 just when the world economy was entering into its most difficult phase which he recognised in the current budget that we were on the cusp of an economic takeoff. As you know, Mr. Speaker, we took off from a precipice and we have been falling ever since that happened in 2008, 2009, 2010, and the evidence here is that is happening again here in 2011. Despite all the brave projections of the Honourable Minister of Tourism and the Prime Minister in his own remarks, we have heard that the economic circumstances in this country from others who are of an independent source will continue to be difficult and perhaps to be even more difficult in 2012 that is a dire warning, Mr. Speaker, that we must take heed of not to ignore but to prepare for it and to ensure that our people are able to survive these difficult times. In particular, Mr. Speaker, we also heard talks from the Prime Minister in the past that even after the financial crisis broke that somehow we in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines were better regulated and would be somehow insulated from the financial crisis that was wreaking havoc in the United States and elsewhere. We have seen, Mr. Speaker, that that has turned out not to be true because the debacle that has taken place with CLICO and British American Insurance which has affected...both of which have affected many, many people in institutions here in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines that has shown that the notion that somehow we were insulated was false, misleading, a fairy tale and we have to get away from that kind of approach to governance, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of Finance when he speaks must speak with authority and people must be able to rely on what he says and your role as a Minister, Mr. Speaker, is to deal the affairs of the country not with affairs of the party it should be one in which people get facts, honest projections, honest assessments of what is happening in this economy. Not just a fairy tale that helps improve the position of a party at the poles. When we do that, Mr. Speaker, we would be representing the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines in a responsible way, in a tradition of the modern democracy and not just as some sort of a banana republic or some state where the Government is treated somehow being above the people who elected.

The people in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Mr. Speaker, expect us to represent them with honesty and diligence when we get out of this Honourable House we can talk as much politics as we like. But when we are here we do the people's business and they must be able to rely on us. This is why, Mr. Speaker, the letter which the Honourable Leader of the Opposition read out in length in his presentation to show of the discussions that were being held by the Honourable Prime Minister and the International Monetary Fund. And the conditions that were set there that was not made clear to the people in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines is so important because it shows, Mr. Speaker, that unless you dig and you delve important issues that affect the lives of people in this country are kept away from them. Investment decisions cannot properly, Mr. Speaker, if you are in a doubt...if you are in a cloud as the Honourable Leader of the Opposition said. So if this is a new approach if there is a new approach in this Government I welcome it but I have my doubts, Mr. Speaker, because as the old saying goes a leopard cannot change its spots.

Mr. Speaker, the situation with BAICO and CLICO, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition mentioned but I want to also urge the Government to do whatever its can as urgently and assiduously work hard to ensure that as

many people as possible are able to get back there in those institutions. There are a number of people in my own constituency who have invested heavily because they were assured that these were safe investments. They were under the impression that these investments were regulated and the Government must take some responsibility for ensuring that they get their money back. It is just that a personal issue though, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister pointed out that is a significant part of our GDP... that is a significant part of our GDP it is affected in terms of the investments that is made by those persons and institutions in British American Insurance and in CLICO.

It is important that the Government shows that it takes it seriously as a national issue, to ensure that those persons recover their funds but also to rebuild confidence in our people that investing our money is something that is good for growing their wealth in the future and that they do not...they are not scared away from investments forever throughout their lifetime. You know in the United States and in other countries people just take these things as part of the nature of investments and as soon as the crisis passes the money just starts flowing back into institutions like AIG and the various other merchants banking institutions in the United States. In our country people are more cautious about that because we do not have the same level of experience with investments and cash and funds available to invest at a risk. When they invest they invest their hard-earned retirement and gratuity that they need to live on and the only reason they put into institutions of that sort, Mr. Speaker, is because they need the little extra cash in order to see themselves through their retirement. So it is an important national issue and I hope that the Government moves fast and does all that it can to ensure that the people get their money back.

Mr. Speaker, understand that having said that, that part of the problem we have in this country is that the Government has now put itself in a position where there is very little room to maneuver we warned, cautioned the Government about this for years first with the increase in the national debt at a rate of over \$100 million annually, borrowing from commercial institutions in the early parts of this administration and then as the Honourable Leader of the Opposition pointed out the practice of incurring deficits in an annual basis on the current account. For the first couple of years the Prime Minister denied that there were deficits that they were doing deficits...running deficits in the current account in the estimates. I think the first person who admitted to that on the Government side I think it was the Honourable Senator Francis when he said that yes but it was justified because it was putting money in poor people pocket or something to that effect. The point is, Mr. Speaker, we all know that when you are spending above your means you have short-term gratification but in the long run somebody has to pay for it. And so that sort of financing, Mr. Speaker, that sort of the way in which you running the economy where you are basically saying make people happy now, spend as much as necessary. In the end when you have to pay for it, it is the same people who have to pay for it and you have to increase taxes, whether it be in Deeds of Gift or on Property taxes as I am going to come too.

So it is important, Mr. Speaker, I suppose... you know that was the principal difference between the approach this administration and this finance minister and the ministers under the NDP administration and the NDP administration on a whole. The NDP administration was able to win four consecutive terms of government while running a surplus of 5% per annum. What that meant is that they delivered, Mr. Speaker, effectively and efficiently to the people of this country while managing the country effectively and responsibly. You do not win an election as the cost of the country; you do not ruin the country to elevate the party. And this, Mr. Speaker, is

what the ethos has been on the ULP administration and the approach of the Finance Minister in that administration [Applause] they should go back, Mr. Speaker, to the example set by Sir James Mitchell and Arnhim Eustace under the NDP. Where for many and many years they ran a surplus without... they ran the country without going into deficit and they continue to win four terms at the poles. [Interjections] yes and that would be the last.

Mr. Speaker, that sort of approach has brought this country to the situation where there is nothing to assist the people that are in need. Any hiccoughs, any shocks we cannot observe it ourselves we have to run to the IMF. And now we are doing this reluctant dance, a reluctant tango with the IMF where on the one hand we want their money but we do not want their conditions. They are proposing a medium term structural program, we are saying no, the money you are giving us is enough now. We are going to see if we can make it do. So we cannot escape from the fact that we have had four years of economic decline that this year, this budget has not shown that there is anything in the budget, Mr. Speaker, that is going to produce the kind of jobs, economic investments and growth in 2012. And what is more the International Monetary Fund has us squarely in their sights. I know the Honourable Senator Slater he said that the IMF is not the only game in town I know that is big talk. If it is not the only game in town then why you playing the game; it is not the only game in town Georgia and Azerbaijan are the games in town? Since when have you heard them as donor countries? [Interjection] I asked a question I did not say he say.

So Mr. Speaker the point of the matter is this [Interruption] [knocking on the gravel] we have brought ourselves, we have brought this country to a state where the Government has no room to maneuver. We have had, I do not know of how many, years of countercyclical approach; as the Leader of the Opposition explained essentially what this meant is that there was more Government funding, more Government spending so it explains the rise in the debt. But when you do this in a country like the United States they expect that ok you do that for 2 or 3 years and then growth would start and the government would be able to pay down the debt for at least the economy would grow and the debt in relation to the economy will be a smaller proportion. We on the other hand, Mr. Speaker, we have incurred the debt and what has happened we have had four years of economic decline. So what this means...what is the assessment is that the approach of the Government has failed and what we need to do, Mr. Speaker is try to attract a lot more foreign investment, a lot more foreign direct investment because the capital simply is not here in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, perhaps not even in the region to do the kinds of investments that is necessary to generate growth in this country. But the preferred approach of this administration, Mr. Speaker, and various Ministers to go off all around the world to exotic places, basically seeking benefactors to bail us out from one place to another and raising concerns amongst our traditional allies as to where our loyalties lay. And some of those people, Mr. Speaker, or some of those regimes are very questionable repute, Libya being under Gaddafi being one of them.

Mr. Speaker we cannot have development simply development by donation, we have to have development by investment and the Government has try doing some investing, it has not done the trick and we need to see a lot more emphasis being placed on investing in the private sector and to attract foreign direct investment. The Minister of Tourism and Industry spoke about the role of the Centre for Enterprise Development, the CED and I note that in the Estimates there was a reference made to it as well but our approach, Mr. Speaker, is not simply to have a small office of the Government with less than \$2 million doing that business. Our approach, Mr.

Speaker, was to create a ministry of the private sector investment to show that we understand the importance of attracting foreign direct investments and private investments in general to the development of this country. That, Mr. Speaker, will show that we in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines we are serious of our private and about getting people to come here to invest in this country.

Mr. Speaker, there is not much said by the Honourable Prime Minister in his address about tourism, the Member for the...the Minister of Tourism spoke about various projects and so on, I said quite a bit about it in my speech during the Estimates debate. I will just switch to reiterate a number of things, Mr. Speaker, because it seems that no matter how much we mention these matters they are not taken seriously and somehow they are not being addressed.

Mr. Speaker the first thing to note is that there has been a reduction of the transfer to the Tourism Authority that has been acknowledged, \$1 million reduction from last year to this year. Now it is sad to see that an industry that we are saying is basically the way forward has to pay the cost, has to retard its developmental thrust, Mr. Speaker, because of the profligate policies that I have mentioned earlier [Applause] by the said administration that has now left us in stricken circumstances so that we cannot invest in the things that are essential to our future growth.

Mr. Speaker, I have noted in the Budget Address there was no mention of any new projects in any detail there was a vague reference to stuff that was being done...let me be accurate on page 27 said 'there was continuing private sector investments in 2012 evident in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines' that is the Prime Minister's address including further major investment in the development in Canouan that is existing the significant investment in Bequia, Mayreau, Petit St. Vincent, Union Island and Buccuma.

Mr. Speaker, there is no new proposal for any development at least in the old Budgets they used to talk about proposals to development Mt. Wynne and Peter's Hope and that was sort of an annual inclusion, nothing has been said about that this time, Mr. Speaker. So it shows that there is nothing new on the horizon in the tourism investment. And, Mr. Speaker, this is concerning for us because I know as well in my own constituency that the investments in private homes and villas and so on has also reduced over the past few years creating severe hardship for the people working in the construction industry and people who make a living out of servicing these homes and villas. So Mr. Speaker, if there is nothing here in this present budget that means that there is nothing is going to happen that is new in 2012 and 2013 and possibly beyond. So it does not speak of any real great progress in the Ministry of Tourism.

Mr. Speaker, I just wish to urge the Ministry to continue to promote those things that we have to offer on the mainland like Montreal Gardens which is a very good tourism site and one that I know people would visit speak very highly about... [Interruption] yes I have been there. Have you... oh...ok.

Mr. Speaker, other sites like Fort Hamilton in Bequia, I do not know whether to call it a tourism site or an abandoned site because the access is severely restricted by the bad road and when you get there the place is so run down you wonder why you bother. You know the view of the harbour is spectacular but the site itself Mr. Speaker is solely in need of work. The work there was done in the early 1970's by Sir James when he was the

Premier. And nothing, very little has been done to develop it and to maintain it, it needs work, Mr. Speaker. I know that the Minister said that he in a sense acknowledge that they need to improve the access to it in his remarks and he says he is relying on BRAGSA essentially to fix the road to get to the site. Well my...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member you have 10 minutes.

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Thank you. But, Mr. Speaker, it cannot be...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** Are you... well you can check, you started at 10:45...

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Alright well...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** [Laughter]

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, if he is relying on BRAGSA well I think we in serious trouble. Because BRAGSA still has not fixed the road at Friendship and I do not know what is going on there.

Mr. Speaker, one of the issues in tourism that I want to mention is this; as I said I made a lot of remarks in the address in the Estimates but I want to reassure or remind the Minister of this issue that we have with returnees there are many people who return as tourists to Bequia and other parts of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and when they come, Mr. Speaker, they come as if they coming back home and I get complaints I continue even this year from operators of guest houses and villas where the people now have to have the owner of a hotel, or apartment building or a villa to act as a surety for a guest who is coming here to guarantee that they are going to leave the country. I mean this is ridiculous come on. People who coming back here have been here 20, 25 years, they come here spend 5,6 months of the year, 3 months of the year and they have to get somebody to stand, if they staying longer than 4 weeks to stand as a surety to ensure that they leave the country. Why not have the people get a number of weeks or months whatever it is process it one time at the airport, we know that they come back here regularly. Let them just stay if you have to charge them the \$40 or whatever it is to renew it, stay the 3 months, welcome back, Mr. Browne, good to see you, where are you staying this year; you know let them encourage other people to come. We can cultivate an area of tourism here in the retirees and the returnees that is very, very valuable because they stay in guest houses, they stay in villas and they spend a lot of money. It is much more valuable, Mr. Speaker, than the stay-over visitors because they spend a long time, they are like the yachtees. So let us, Mr. Speaker, work on this very assiduously, get rid of the red tape, throw a little party for them from time to time, let them feel that they are special and welcome because they are very important to the economy and we can grow this part of the economy, Mr. Speaker.

The yachtees I have said a lot about this, Mr. Speaker, and again I am very disappointed to hear the Minister that the patrol boat is not going to be there again until the end of January. I cannot take him at his word, Mr. Speaker, because we were told that it would be there at the end of November and it is not and people are very, very upset about it in Bequia and the Minister has to do more than that. The Commissioner of Police was there on the weekend and I hope he had a very rough time a bit from the people who he spoke with because it was promise at the end of November we would have the patrol boat which is needed. There is a patrol boat that has

been in Mayreau for many years now and the Member for Southern Grenadines will, tell you that it works very well. Why is it so difficult to put something like that in Admiralty Bay when it is so essential; excuses, excuses, excuses and we continue to lose out to Grenada and to St. Lucia. The Regatta, Mr. Speaker, Grenada has us in sights, our Regatta we have \$15,000 has been given to that Regatta for the last God knows how many years. In Grenada I was told that they spend over \$100,000 on the Carriacou Regatta. We need to, Mr. Speaker, not only guard our turf but to make sure that we do a lot more to develop the things that work well for us [Applause].

I want to speak, Mr. Speaker, we also have to deal with the vendors in the various spaces in Port Elizabeth provide some better services for them. They sell things that are made essentially a 100% out of local products. We need to make them feel a bit more dignified than looking for a little spot under the Almond Tree and having to move from one place to the next to find a place to sell things that they built or with their own hands, crafts and so on which are highly valued and of course has a 100% local content. Let us do something more than, Mr. Speaker. You talk about Clean Up Kingstown, please Clean Up Port Elizabeth. There is a gutter right there in the middle of town it stinks, Mr. Speaker, I am bringing it here to your attention [knocking on gravel]. You have Town Planning, yes always somebody else's problem. It stinks, Mr. Speaker, and it needs attention, I know there is a local group that is working on it but I think that the Government also has a responsibility to do what it can to improve the situation until that is done. We cannot just pass it off, what am I doing? I am bringing it to your attention; I have asked other people to assist with the matter. You are in Government; if you cannot do it, then get out of the way and I will do it better [Applause].

Mr. Speaker I want to talk about the Property Tax that is being implemented and I would speak more about this outside this Honourable House, but I want to say, Mr. Speaker, in this Honourable House, the Prime Minister said in February 2009 that the Property Tax when introduced would be revenue neutral, I questioned him about it in detail and he said it would not involve an increase in the rate of taxation. We have heard now that the Property tax will increase by between 15% and 25% that is unconscionable, Mr. Speaker. Having detailed all the hardships in this country, the difficulties in the economy and that people are having, the situation in the global economy and the Prime Minister's answer is to say to tell people you must pay more for the Property Taxes. I asked somebody on the streets about this she said that to me 'Mr. Friday that is wicked, is wickedness' he say 'I cannot pay my tax now, where am I going to get money to pay more.' 15% - 25% and for those persons who are paying... whose tax jumps there is a vague reference to capping it as an interim measure as a transitional measure. So what that means next year it going up by 50%.

Mr. Speaker, a tax on the people of this country at this time now is unconscionable [Applause] giving that particularly the Prime Minister is asking for \$80,000 to get a new vehicle for himself, when he has 5 or 6 up there.

Mr. Speaker, we cannot tell people that we having hard times and therefore they must pay more and when the Government is cutting back on what they provide in services...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** Three minutes...

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** ...roads cannot be fixed.

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** Three Minutes

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** [Inaudible] three minutes...

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Give me 5...

[Laughter]

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** [Laughter]

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker finally, I want to... there are many things in my own constituency that I wish to have dealt with. I deal with them in questions in the House Mr. Speaker but I am ignored all the time. I do not know if it is because there are very few votes for the ULP Administration there but I get no attention. If my counterpart Mr. Belmar raises them, it is suddenly 'oh we have a problem,' when Dr. Friday mentions 'ooohhh,' no attention whatsoever; well I am the representative of the people and I bring it here these interests, the concerns of the people. There are roads all over in this community, in Hamilton, in Friendship, in Mt. Pleasant that need attention and nothing is being done.

What I want, Mr. Speaker, this is a plea on behalf of the residence of these areas because they come to me, well at least they go to VINLEC and VINLEC send them to me and I say well I will try but I know sometimes if I ask that is a reason for not granting it rather for granting it. But I want to say as a matter of safety, we need some street lights, Mr. Speaker, in the village of Union Level, I think that there are about 3 or 4 street lights in that entire village. We need some more street lights in Mt. Pleasant, in the area where is a new development where people have built houses in... on a road going up just below where I live, not for me but for people who are in that area, Mr. Speaker, they need street lights. The area near the Almond Tree near the Anglican Church in Port Elizabeth, Mr. Speaker, imagine as a foreigner walking under that area there it is dark and you can feel threatened there needs to be more light in Port Elizabeth. In fact VINLEC needs to make an assessment and the Ministry of Tourism and the Ministry of National Security to see where they can improve the safety and security of the people by providing better lighting throughout that community.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, on the matter of lighting, before I run out of time entirely, I want to thank, Mr. Speaker, the persons who assisted in the lighting up of Port Elizabeth it was a heroic effort.

Mr. Speaker, over the past Christmas season I encouraged a number of people to come together to try and do something under the Almond Tree because the various village communities were unable to do so and the response was overwhelming. We had assistance from the broad range from the community and I want to thank those persons here, Mr. Speaker, and I hope you would give me the time to do it. There were Mr. Lloyd Penniston and Edwin Ollivierre, Jefferson Goodluck these are persons who helped with electrician and doing the work of the running of the lights. Mr. Osten Stowe and Osten we call him '6 piece Jackson' who worked heroically, Mr. Speaker, in building the stage, Anthony Ollivierre, Alana Phillips who also helped in dealing

with almost everything that had to do with the financing of the projects. There are many, many persons, Mr. Speaker, who donated their time and resources. Nikki and Janice Cordice for being there all the time, Chardon Richards for helping out with the signs, Chardon Hercules and his wife Valarie who were there helping us, providing a fork lift to help to reach the higher branches. Albert Andrews, Marsha Tannis, Imron Harris, Desbert Yorke, Rohan Arrindell, Sylvanice James, Glenford Nanton, Bruce Ollivirre, Roland and Nikkie Ollivierre for helping out with the connection, Elsa Patterson, Syl Hazell, Danford Hazell, Steve Sergeant, Ellen Hazell and Roderick McCree, Brent Osborne, Delica Henville, Antoinette Shallow, Shenile Howe, Martin Duncan, Sheve Duncan, Sheve Pierre, Phil Pierre, UK Douglas, Ariel Laidlow, Travis, Zoey Cordice, Relton John, Noel Ollivierre, Paulette Duncan.

Mr. Speaker, these are all the people who came to assist [Interruption] [Knocking on the gravel] Nicole Ollivierre and Brent Gooding. I want to also thank Rason Duncan and Harold Davis, Shane Simmons and Neffe Adams, Eckron [Inaudible] for providing transportation free of cost. For persons, Mr. Speaker, Pastor Graham of the Pentecostal Church for helping us out with the stage, for Caribbean Woods for giving us little bits of wood here and there to help out with the building of the stage, Knights trading for providing carpet, Avel Leslie, Cordel Tannis, Virginia Farrell for lending us her 40 foot ladder.

Mr. Speaker, D' Bistro, Warren Campbell for providing ice from time to time, gifts that were provided, Mr. Speaker, by institutions and individuals to give to Santa Claus on the 24<sup>th</sup> night of the 24<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Speaker, I wish also [knocking on gravel]

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** Sounds like a new speech

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Yes, well, Mr. Speaker, I wish also to thank the people from the Sunny Gutter Lighting up Committee, the Mt. Pleasant Committee [knocking on the gravel] and the Western Carolers because they donated their lights and they came out, members of those Committees came out and helped to make it a spectacular. Now I want to thank VINLEC in advance, Mr. Speaker, because I hear that the bill for the light is somewhere close to \$2000. And I am sure that the Minister responsible will use his influence to ensure we get a significant discount if not an entire waiver of that amount. So finally, Mr. Speaker, [knocking on gravel] Mr. Speaker, the situation in my constituency is one where there is a lot of things that need to be done. I would bring them to the attention of this Government in the House again during the course of the year. The Clive Tannis Playing Field I do not know what else more to be said about it. Saturday I was there with some kids, Mr. Speaker, and they were physically avoiding a particular place to walk because there is a 6 ft piece of the galvanize that is hanging down and it is flapping in the wind and as one of the children told me 'Mr. Friday I afraid to walk there because I think it go fall on me'. If that falls and injure one of those children, Mr. Speaker, there will be hell to pay.

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, your time...your request for 5 minutes has exceeded...

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Ok...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** ...7 minutes has already gone just letting you know...

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Well just round it out to 10 and I will just...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** No sir could you kindly... you have 30 second to wind up...

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Thank you, you have been very indulgent...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** 30 seconds...

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker, now I want to invite everybody down to the Music Fest as you know, the Music Fest starts this month the 26<sup>th</sup> of January. And I want to continue to promote the effort of Amanda Gooding and all the other performers, Mr. Speaker, they do a wonderful job and they have made the Music Fest, not just an event that tourists who are here to participate in, but people actually book...[Interruption]

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** [Inaudible] [Laughter]

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** ...well I would ask them to send you a complimentary.... There are tourists now book, Mr. Speaker, to come back, I know I had friends who were here over the Christmas, two of them they came for Christmas because they normally do, they went away and they say they coming back at the end of the month because of the Music Fest. So it shows that as a tourism event it is very important and the Minister must continue to give support and more support to it and hopefully, Mr. Speaker, this year will have a spectacular event thank you. Thank you very, Mr. Speaker, for your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that we on this Honourable House that the comments that we make are taken in the same serious spirit that they are given, which is that we are concerned about the welfare of this country, we are concerned, Mr. Speaker, about the welfare of our communities and that the Government side does not simply dismiss what we say as playing politics, I do not play politics with these things, Mr. Speaker. And simply I just want to remind the Minister of Education, as I told her I would that my colleague would deal with the substantive issues of education, but I want to reiterate what the Leader of the Opposition said that those three teachers the NDP three as I call them, Mr. Speaker, they are at home suffering because this administration, Mr. Speaker, [knocking on the gravel] is failing to re-employ them and I have not heard the Minister of Education...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister...

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** ...say anything about it publically

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** ...would you please...

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** ...and she ought too because I know she understands the competence of these three teachers and they need our support. You can get leave, the Prime Minister talk about giving leave to teachers...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister...

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** ...to go on leave to study...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** ...Honourable Member...

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** ...but you cannot get leave to run for parliament...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** ...would you please completely finish...

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker, this is something that ought to be addressed...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much...thank you very much...thank you very much sit down now for me please.

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** Thank you very much. Honourable Senator Francis, I recognise you... [Inaudible] I will take you after...oh... Honourable Senator Francis let me, let me... I will tell you when to begin...ok Senator Francis-Minister for Transport and Works, Urban Development and Local Government, you have as a Minister 75 minutes. [Inaudible] Soon as you ready you can begin...when you ready...soon as you ready.

**HONOURABLE SENATOR FRANCIS:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I would just like to end of the presentation of the Honourable Member for Northern Grenadines by including Sir James in the thank you for the lighting up [knocking on gravel] for donating the fireworks in Bequia [Interjection] ... ok that is different...all right, all right I just thought I should do it, I think you forgot, so I thought I should do it on your behalf. [Interjection] it is...do not lose your cool [Interjection] yesss!!! [Laughter]...

**HONOURABLE SENATOR:** Minister you too bright go ahead.

**HONOURABLE SENATOR FRANCIS:** [Laughter] Mr. Speaker, I rise to make my contribution... I think I am having a feedback in the microphone...to make my contribution to the debate on the Appropriation Bill for the fiscal year ending 31<sup>st</sup> of December 2012.

Mr. Speaker, I feel really great standing here today in this the people's House representing a nation of just under 110,000 people spread over 33 islands measuring some 150 sq miles but which has been chosen as number four major destination for 2012 [Applause]. It surely feels good Mr. Speaker and we can see the future coming upon us with great hope and anticipation. The vision is not only seen by us here in St. Vincent but also by *CNN*, *Matt Lauer* of *NBC*, *Travel & Leisure* and *New York Times* among others and Mr. Speaker, I heard this morning the *Toronto Star*. But they seem to look down the road the same as we do, Mr. Speaker, that in a few years time

when the Argyle International Airport becomes a functional, the day in St. Vincent is finally dawning [Applause].

Mr. Speaker, I chose to open my presentation in this manner after listening to four hours of all negatives by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Four hours of predicting doom and gloom; it is time for some positive vibes in this House of Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, in my opinion the budget presented by the Minister of Finance is cut from the right cloth to make the suit to fit the times in which we live [Applause]. Maybe it is appropriate that the photographer to ask me to button my suit at the same time. No extravagance, Mr. Speaker, in this budget presentation but sufficient to carry us in as a modern day society with government as the largest employer, the mover of the economy and fall back for everything and everyone which or who falters along the way, surely so shall democracy in full practice. Surely not an enviable position to be in, Mr. Speaker, and surely times when this country continues to need a man as Ralph Gonsalves to steer the ship through rough seas yet keeping it afloat.

Mr. Speaker, I do not normally read from a text but I prepared this presentation for the opening of my presentation today and I seek permission to read for the next 5 or so minutes.

Could you imagine, Mr. Speaker, what could have happened or what would have become of us if the results of the December 13<sup>th</sup> 2011 elections were different and the NDP with the Honourable Arnhim Eustace as Prime Minister in Government, Mr. Speaker, I shudder at the thought, '*crapaud would ah smoke we pipe.*'

Mr. Speaker, after listening to all this negatives I want to give my view on what I saw in 2011. I see them through the eyes of Julian Francis and I see them through the eye of many other people that I interact with on a daily basis on the streets of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. The year opened with the New Democratic Party unsuccessfully trying to overturn the results of the democratically held elections of 2010. When the ULP won the majority of seats 8/7 and the popular vote; there was a mini political campaign lasting the entire first quarter which ended on March 28<sup>th</sup>, when the supporters of the Unity Labour Party who were put on leash during the chaos created by the NDP over the period. Chaos which saw leading NDP activists ramping the gates of this compound, smashing windshields of police vehicles and just being very sour losers. Our political leader took charge, the Honourable Prime Minister and despite my threats to whistle, he kept our supporters away from the maddening crowd. That is why on that special day the March 28<sup>th</sup> 2011, exactly ten years of the date of the 2001 victory over the NDP. Over ten thousand persons dressed in all red, swarmed the streets to show full support for their democratically elected government [Applause]. That ended it all. As the NDP feebly returned to the streets on April 5<sup>th</sup> with threats to close down the city and bring down the government with a crowd of a mere two hundred strong. They left with their tails behind them never to be heard from again. That was the first quarter, Mr. Speaker, March 28<sup>th</sup> first three months of the year.

Mr. Speaker, as if by some supernatural power, a short six days after that, torrents and torrents of rain fell in the North Eastern part of the country which immediately brought sobriety to everyone, damage was everywhere and the government lead by Prime Minister Gonsalves took charge to try to return the country to normalcy. A country which was just recovering from \$130 million damage by hurricane Tomas...remember, Mr. Speaker,

this is how I see 2011. Prime Minister Gonsalves refused to cancel a pre-planned trip to Taiwan despite mouthing by the Opposition, he felt confident that the Recovery and Reconstruction Program could have been started by his able deputy and Ministers and on his return he brought additional resources with which to work. That work kept us very busy for that entire quarter. Then came another successful carnival and that was the end of more than half of the year 2011.

Mr. Speaker, the rest of 2011 ended as appeared in the PMs Budget Address on page 95 and I which to read that, Mr. Speaker, those of you who have the Prime Minister's Budget Address turn to page 95:

*'Further, Mr. Speaker, my government ensured in 2011, by its activist public policy, that workers who rely on seasonal public works to augment their income were accorded their usual commendable support. For example, in the last four months of 2011, between September and December, my government allocated and spent \$10 million for routine road works: \$2 million in road-coinciding with "back-to-school" in September; \$5 million in a special road repairs programme between October and early December; and a \$3 million road-cleaning programme for Christmas. These road programmes carried out by BRAGSA were additional to the major capital projects of the central government and public enterprises executed during the year. In 2011, too, there were extra special public works done in the aftermath of Hurricane Tomas in late 2010 and the April flash-flood in April 2011. Much more work in these respects are to be done in 2012.*

*Mr. Speaker, 2011 was also a year of especial expenditure for farmers, especially banana and plantain farmers who suffered greatly from natural disasters: over \$4 million were expended on this cause in 2011.*

*It must not be forgotten, too, that thousands of Vincentians took the opportunity to benefit from the "duty-free" Christmas barrels. Some 18,000 such barrels were cleared by Customs between mid-November and Christmas 2011.'*

[Applause]

Mr. Speaker, I say all this to respond to the negative statements and presentations of the Leader of the Opposition. All he is seeing at the end of the year is another year of negative growth.

Mr. Speaker, leaders must take their cue from the people. Mr. Speaker, I do not know how many of us realise it, but this was the first year since the ULP has been in office that a bonus was not paid. Mr. Speaker, did we hear anyone complain? I did not. Do you know why, Mr. Speaker, they did not complain? The people understand the times in which we live [Applause] and they are satisfied that Prime Minister Gonsalves and the ULP government are managing in their best interests. Why we did not have any outcry? They understand that this is a sacrifice that they are making because we are living in these times and I want to thank the people of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for understanding [Applause] the times in which we live [Applause] and the efforts of this Unity Labour Party Administration.

Mr. Speaker, they have been sacrificing for the last two and a half years as well. They have been making sacrifices for us to get an Argyle International Airport [Applause]. When you building a project like that you do utilise resources that maybe have been taken from other areas, but the people of this country have been steadfast. I have said before on public radio and I would say again, I believe in my interactions with people that close to 95% of the people of this country support the Argyle International Airport. And the great majority of the majority or the minority that the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines spoke too on that side of the House, the great Majority of their supporters also support the Argyle International Airport.

So Mr. Speaker, what did I see at the end of the year? Starting September all our children return to school in fine style and before the end of the term a total of some 15,000 laptops were given to them free of cost [Applause]. This is a country that carries it deficit according to the Leader of the Opposition three years, but carrying the deficit is one thing, managing the economy, managing your resources is another thing. Sunday shopping for the Christmas season was phenomenal, especially so on Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> of December, the last Sunday before Christmas, the crowds in the city were unprecedented even comparing to carnival Monday and Tuesday in Kingstown. And I saw over 80% of the people walking the streets with bags in their hand, indicate that there were shopping. The owners of the store indicated to me that they did as well as 2010 and we must remember that 2009 and 2010 coming onto end of year, one was Referendum, one was the national election. And whenever you have those activities plenty money does store. So if you compare the sales in 2011 to the sales in 2010 when both parties were spending millions of dollars for election, Mr. Speaker, something had to be done right, was done right during the year and I applaud [Applause] the Minister of Finance for this interjections. Well the people them who vote that is why we still get the majority of support in this country. Monday the 19<sup>th</sup> of December, Mr. Speaker, even made Sunday look small. The first time in the history of our country KFC sell out and close their doors to the greater part of the day [Applause] not just two you know all three stores, they open a new one in Arnos Vale. Kentucky Chicken sell out Ken Boyea had to go and borrow chicken to fry [laughter] [knocking on gravel].

Mr. Speaker, I never hear of it in my whole life. Kentucky came in 1985 when I open a place call Stoplight, remember it. The best air-conditioned operations in town at the time. Stoplight Restaurant fully air conditioned cocktail bar and Kentucky one of the first fast food air conditioned outlet in St. Vincent.

Mr. Speaker, so somebody had to have plenty to spend, the people of this country as I say in one of my paragraphs before, you must take our cue from the people. They understand why we have to go into deficit, they understand why we have to put resources into the Argyle International Airport, they understand that they could not get a bonus this Christmas but the government put sufficient resources into the economy to make them have a happy Christmas [Applause] and they buy out Kentucky. I hear the discussion over there, primarily from the Leader of the Opposition asking for the Special Audit and he referred to the debacle as some 'KFC thing'.

[Interjection]

**HONOURABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, let me say this, let me say this; in that Special Audit, there is no difference between the funds utilised through the Leader of the Opposition Office and that exercise of the Ministry of Health. It is utilising funds from one part of a vote into another vote. It is

utilising money that you should have been spending for a Research Officer and the Gallery is absent now of a certain individual. A Research Officer, Mr. Speaker, in the Estimates for the Leader of the Opposition and the Leader of the House runs about \$5000 a month you know. That is the salary, so if you do not have a Research Officer for eight of the twelve months, I understand Bash is now the Research Officer. But all of the money goes to the Office of the Leader of the Opposition and it is spent for other things other than the salary of the Research Officer. It is the same, breaking the same financial rule as using monies from one vote in the Ministry of Health to buy tires for one jeep and using money from one vote to buy Kentucky on the other side, similar thing. So if you want the Special Audit on the Health, well we want a Special Audit on the Office of the Leader of the Opposition [Applause]...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** [Knocking on gravel] Point of Order

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know if the Honourable Minister recognises that the Office of the Leader of the Opposition now only has a one line budget. I do not know whether he knows that the salary of the Research Officer is \$3500 not \$5000 he is misrepresenting this, Mr. Speaker, the position.

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** Honourable....

**HONOURABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, I am not misrepresenting the facts. I am sticking to my position on this one.

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** Tell us...

**HONOURABLE SEANTOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** Fortunately, Mr. Speaker, I am and have always been the General Secretary of the Unity Labour Party. I was at the Office of the Leader of the Opposition when Sir Vincent Beache was the Leader of the Opposition. I know what the Research Officer then got, Robby Fitzpatrick. I know what our Research Officer is getting now in the Office of the Leader of the House, the salary is between \$4500 and \$5000 a month. The fact... the matter that the Leader of the Opposition is bring forward that he now gets money in bulk, you see he used to get quarterly allocation and bills used to be paid out of the House of the Clerk, right,...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** Wait just a minute...

**HONOURABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** Now he gets his quarterly allocation and he pays out the monies....

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** Listen to me...

**HONOURABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** The Leader of, the Clerk of the House does not pay the monies anymore...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** Just a minute, Honourable Member, I think the Leader of the Opposition wants to move a Point of Order...

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, he is misrepresenting the situation the Honourable Minister. At no time since I am Leader of the Opposition did the salary of the Research Officer exceed \$3500 at no time...

**HONOURABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** Ok take the figure at \$3500... it is the...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** Just a minute he is not complete...

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** There is also, Mr. Speaker, because of our one line allocation, there is much more discretion given to the Leader of the Opposition in the use of the resources as long as it fell within certain confines and that is how we have operated...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** Alright could we please...

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** I think, Mr. Speaker, that is a misrepresentation of the situation.

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** ...to sort of approve of this matter it means that we would have to do some extra... so let us just move on...

**HONOURABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** What would settle it is a Special Audit on the Office of the Leader of the Opposition [laughter] [Applause] that is all. He has one view, I have one view; he is on one side of the House, I am on one side of the House. I am misrepresenting the facts, I am stating clearly, Mr. Speaker, according to the finance rules of this country that the funds through that process is equal to what happened with the Special Audit why the Special Audit was taken in the Ministry of Health. That is my position, Mr. Speaker, might say it is an opinion but the point has been made. And it is about time that we air these things publically in front of one another and not come to the bulks of Parliament. I heard the Parliamentary Representative for the Northern Grenadines... I heard the Parliamentary Representative for the Northern Grenadines...

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Da one bun all yo eh... da one bun all yo...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** Honourable Member let us just move on from that...since to prove we would have too [Inaudible]

**Dr. HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Truth hurts

**HONOURABLE SEANTOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** So Mr. Speaker, I heard the Honourable Parliamentary Representative for the Northern Grenadines jumped up on a Point of Order or something yesterday for a rule

that does not exist in the rules, in the Standing Orders of this Parliament. I will never do that [Laughter]...you have to have a Special Audit to [Laughter]...

Mr. Speaker, so I was saying that on December 19<sup>th</sup> KFC sell out. And I want to go back on page 95 of the Honourable Prime Minister's Budget Address to the last paragraph on that page:

*'Mr. Speaker, in a small, resource-challenged country like St. Vincent and the Grenadines at a stage of developmental transition, it is necessary and desirable to mount specially-targeted interventions for the poor, the under-employed, the unemployed, and producers of goods and services, generally. These interventions must always be credible and focused; and they must be integrated within the overall strategic, developmental thrust in the country. Social engineering and sustainable, developmental economic policy, conjoined with effective multi-sectoral implementation, ought always to go hand in hand.'*

End of the quote. Mr. Speaker, that is what I saw for 2011. I saw a man almost single-handedly at the financial end of the spectrum manage this country through some of the roughest times we have ever had economically in this country [Applause]. When we took office, Mr. Speaker, 2001, there was 9/11 you know, there was 9/11 and we went through that. And I will show you later on that in the days when...and the Leader of the Opposition speaks to Cash Deficit every year he comes in here and I hear the Honourable Representative for the Northern Grenadines also quote it.

Mr. Speaker on top of all that I have said here at the end of the year, Poverty which we met at 37.5%, was down to 30.2%, Indigent Poor we met at 25.7%, was down to 2.9% [Applause] and the gini coefficient which is the way you equalise and create equality in the society moved from 0.56 to 0.42 with zero being the most equal and one being the most unequal so we moved down from 0.56 to 0.42. That is what we did, that is what the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves Prime Minister of this country has been doing for the last 10 years...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister just give me a second let me just, because I heard a question was asked. It was not directed to me but I think it is best to put things in context. And I am referring to Rule 62 (3):

*'After the Minister of Finance has budget speech the motion for second reading of the Bill shall be seconded formally and the debate thereon shall commence the following day and shall be confined to the financial and economic state of the Country and the general principles of Government policy and administration as indicated in the bill and the Estimates.'*

So I just want it to be known that you are doing is in fact in relation in to 62(3). Go right ahead.

**HONOURABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, well you know they will ask the question because the lyrics does bun; when the lyrics bun, Mr. Speaker, they have to ask the question.

Mr. Speaker, one other thing, you know where, Mr. Speaker, in the history of this country you ever heard of public works being done up to the 16<sup>th</sup> of December, up to the 20<sup>th</sup> of December and starting back 6 days after the beginning of a financial year only under the Unity Labour Party Government with the implementation of BRAGSA [Applause]

Mr. Speaker, let me, let me just read two notices from BRAGSA for you...I have them here do not worry...just minus the time when I spend looking for papers...just as I say minus the time.

Mr. Speaker, on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December, BRAGSA sent out a notice saying:

*'Kindly hear the following notice during your public service announcement from Monday the 12<sup>th</sup> to the 16<sup>th</sup> of December. The Roads, Building and General Services Authority (BRAGSA) is currently carrying out road repairs in the following areas...'*

I would not call them out because it would take away a lot of my time. Twenty different road repair project [Applause]. From Chile in the hospital in Georgetown down to Chapmans Hill close to Sandra Sampson residence, Calder, Quick Corner, Richland Park near sports man, road near Potmore Wallace and Letchmore, Ollivierre in Friendship Bay Bequia; all these were being done in December close up to Christmas. Now this is a Notice that comes out on the 10<sup>th</sup> of January, Mr. Speaker. BRAGSA is working [Applause] that is what happens at the end of the year, the \$3 million BRAGSA. In other words you have your Statutory Body; you move your resources into that Statutory Body at the end of the year, so they do not have to wait until the end of the quarter, first quarter to get releases for the first quarter because you have working money inside your account already [Applause]. The minute the guys get over there little spree over the Christmas and New Year's holiday, they are prepared to work again because the first fortnight come money is in BRAGSA account to carry out the works and they would get paid.

Mr. Speaker, BRAGSA is my brainchild. When I took over the Ministry in 2001 after the second year, the Prime Minister ask me what are we going this roads division with all this talk about corruption and no work and so on. So I said Prime Minister I think the best thing we could do is turn the roads division into a statutory body so we could manage it outside the public service and we would get a more efficient operation [Applause]. So said, so done; it came eight years later but better late than never. *'On the 10<sup>th</sup> of January, kindly hear the following notice during the public service announcement'* that went on radio you know *'The Roads, Building and General Services Authority (BRAGSA) is currently carrying out road repairs in the following areas...'* eighteen of them. Road from the Low income housing in Brighton to the Brighton Community Center, Central Leeward Highway from Kingstown to Barrouallie, Sion Hill Bay, Walvarou road, just below Audain's residence, Quick Corner Acres, Glen road above the Mental Health, Dorsetshire Hill from the TV station. I get a lot licks for that during the Christmas you know. They had one of the best lighting systems in St. Vincent, the lighting up and every night somebody else calling me about the potholes in the road from Sion Hill up to Dorsetshire Hill. I say Brian come January first thing we do, we have to patch out Dorsetshire Hill road them roads up there real bad; So these roads they are working, Mr. Speaker, and I want to thank the staff of BRAGSA and that ends my presentation here.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the condemnations, serious condemnation by the Leader of the Opposition about our Prime Minister. And I was just to read one contribution to a Facebook account called 'Vincy Callaloo' and a contributor to Vincy Callaloo. We all know who the operatives of Vincy Callaloo are, we know them, I want to read this Mr. Speaker:

*'Ralph Gonsalves still the best man for St. Vincent by Leslie Patterson...'*

I do not know who Leslie Patterson is eh, if is a man or a woman I forgive the matter for calling their name inside the House of Parliament. But it is a public social network, I download it and I am going to read it. Printed on January 4<sup>th</sup> by Vincy Callaloo in politics and tagged to Dr. Ralph Gonsalves.

*'Dr. Ralph Gonsalves, love him or hate him, Ralph Gonsalves is the best man for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines at this time. Indeed should elections be called next month, next year or in the next four years, Dr. Gonsalves should be returned as Prime Minister with an overwhelming majority... [Applause] mandate; I am one of comrades biggest critics but even as I critique some of his policies, his politics and general approach to governance. I do so knowing fully well that the alternatives, Eustace and the NDP are patently worse. My differences with Gonsalves are deeply philosophical and ideological. While he espouses a social democratic approach to governance that is grounded in the core applicable tenets of the Marxist remedies for addressing social iniquities, I am a classical liberal who forever preaches the paramountcy of the market and the purely capitalist path to social and economic development. So they are worlds apart, deep differences of this nature are difficult to overcome. However, in the context of political discourse on issues related to state craft one is still able to find some common ground...'*

Though they are miles apart ideologically and philosophically she can see through or he whoever it is...

*'Recognising that ideology must be tempered by the harsh and the unforgiving of the times. One must be pragmatic in addressing the extant socio-economic issues. It is his commitment to embracing pragmatism that has led me to be an admirer of the comrade, despite our ideological differences. I therefore declare Ralph Gonsalves as the best for Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for a number of reasons...'*

It aint done yet...

*'...given his intellectual depth and academic acuity more than any of his contemporaries, Gonsalves has a grasp of a complex and challenging issues impinging on the development of the country. Gonsalves is prepared to take risks that are necessary to ensure that SVG can leap beyond its present state despite the difficulties. The comrade has the capacity to envision a desired reality and possess the force of discipline, commitment and dedication to create that reality in the face of insurmountable obstacles. No one has demonstrated the depths of love and the breadth of understanding of the people known as Vincentians. Comrade is a political genius; love him or hate him he knows how to win national elections. [Applause] I envision that Dr. Gonsalves and his party would be in his office for a very long*

*time. Should he demit office, it would be on his own terms and in his own time. The comrade will play very long innings, he will retire not out and proudly walk back to the pavilion with his bat held high and tons on runs on the board [Applause] ...'*

It ended '*there is none like comrade.*'

Mr. Speaker, yea man I know you go say so it dey pon Wikileaks...it dey pon Vincy Callaloo as your contemporaries over there, ask your contemporaries, ask your contemporaries who is the contributor, I do not know who the contributor is. But I sat here yesterday and I listened to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition tell us 45 years experience.

Mr. Speaker, 28 years in the Civil Service and in parliament, and 17 years at CDB and he could have been in a more lucrative job, I have heard it many more times from him already, he did not have to come back here but he come back here. And he is most qualified in this House to analyse the Budget. Now if my political leader makes that statement on this side of the House, there would be thunderous applause. What shocked me yesterday is when the Leader of the Opposition finished, one person over there do so [knocking on desk]. A hollow chair on the other side, nobody clapping over there you know, I am not... I take what the Leader of the Opposition, I have known him long you know, I went to parties at his house in Barbados when both of us worked in Barbados together. He worked for CDB I worked for CIBC; it is not now I know him. Then he compete in East Kingstown, he beat me in East Kingstown [laughter]. But it is the first time I am hearing the Leader of the Opposition blow his trumpet so loud and he blew his trumpet so loud and none of his followers clap you. I really found it strange, a light, light, light tap over there I heard, I say but what is this at all, *nah* man, give the man a better round of applause than that man.

Mr. Speaker, so while...I know our Prime Minister does blow his trumpet too we all know that, but whenever he blow his trumpet there is a loud, loud round of applause. But this is Leslie Patterson talking about good things [Laughter]...over there you do not have to right...over there you do not have too because all of you want to be leader, I know over there have 5 leaders anyway [Laughter].

Mr. Speaker I referred earlier...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** Let us get back to the debate

**HONOURABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** ...Speaker always stand on time...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** You have until 1:55...

**HONOURABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** I have not touched my ministry yet but I will...

**HONOURABLE SPEAKER:** You have until 1:55...12:55

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, on this matter of Cash Deficit and Other Receipts, Mr. Speaker, I am tired of hearing it in this House, every year, through the Estimates, through the Budget is the same thing. Mr. Speaker through a very good friend of mine and colleague, I got print out photocopied of the financial summaries of the Estimates from 1989-90 until 2011...no I do not want those I done get my thing already, I done do my homework, I aint want those right now, you gimme them, so I done do my homework since last night.

Mr. Speaker, there is no difference between the accounting method under the NDP and the accounting method under the ULP. Under their method, they accounted for dept servicing in the recurrent revenue in the recurrent expenditure, so there things would sound like this: Wages & Salaries, Pensions & NIS, Other Transfers, Dept Servicing including interests and principal payment and Goods and Services. Under ours it would sound like this: Wages & Salaries, Pensions & NIS, Other Transfers, Interest Payments, Goods & Services, that gives you the current expenditure, and then you have Amortisation which is repaying your loans and Sinking Fund Contributions and which is what you put aside to pay people for their bonds and so on and what not. I cannot remember if Treasury Bills are including in Sinking Funds Contributions but they might be. So our system is acceptable under...including the IMF they have accepted it, they do not question it. In ordinary accounts interest becomes a recurrent expenditure but some in the accounting rules capital payments, payments on capital and payment on loans, do not necessarily come under recurrent expenditure that is the basic difference. But hear what happens in the end you have to balance back the budget and the NDP keep saying that we are balancing our budget through Other Receipts and that our figures are inflated. I want to show you that they are similar to us, because when they put in their figures, whether they put it in recurrent expenditure or they defer it like us, they still have to balance their budget with Other Receipts. So I checked, the average percentage of the figure Other Receipts from 1989 of the NDP until 2001 was 7.44% of the total budget, so the figures would range from \$22 million in one year, \$31 million in one year, \$26 million in one year, \$30 million and so on. So that their... the percentage in other words I am giving you a figure that balancing figure that they are accusing us of is equal in both system. In our case it is 8.46% of the total budget. And remember the NDP during the 1989-2001 governed through the lower oil prices and high banana sales, 1992 we exported \$130 million worth of bananas them days banana was green gold, every farmer was almost a millionaire, money used to flow through the streets of Kingstown. Those of you who come from Kingstown, when I say so, I know what I am talking about. I hear some of you spreading alarm, when I say farmers was almost millionaire that is a fact.

Today in our times, Mr. Speaker, oil prices have moved from the 20s to \$147.00 per barrel in 2008, but yet our balancing figure of our budget is 1 percent difference. What is the nonsense in coming to this House of Parliament and telling me about cash deficit and you are using your other receipts to balance your budget. They used it and we use it, equal [applause].

When the Leader of the Opposition does his wrap up speech in 2025 he can possibly deal with it [laughter] that is the..., so Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that one of the lucrative jobs that the Leader of the Opposition spoke to during his presentation was..., I am sure he would have had an offer Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs from the IMF [interjection] yes, yes I think when he was at CDB instead of coming here. I believe the IMF had made him a very lucrative offer, but he chose to come here [laughter] all right. So Mr. Speaker, I am there with that aspect of it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, just one or two things on some statements made by the Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Speaker, I dealt with the cash deficit already. Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition spoke to the Prime Minister going to Bethlehem as being insensitive, Mr. Speaker, oh come on, I mean here is a man who has done so much for this country, visiting leading nations in this world, nations that are very well off in their economies and from whom we can get..., Christmas time is the best time to visit them. Mr. Speaker, Christmas time is the best time. Sometimes when you are working a deal and discussing, the best time is over a couple of glasses of wine and some food and some dessert and good talk afterwards. I am sure, Mr. Speaker, that within a very short space of time; you will see the results of this trip [applause]. Leading officials from this country will visit this country. It ain't no question in my mind about that. All of them and they will bring with them their commitment and contributions to helping us in these perilous times.

I am proud of my Prime Minister for going [applause]. Insensitivity I refer to when the teachers were in negotiation with the then Leader of the Opposition as Minister of Finance and when they got down to the tail end, he said, "Not one more cent for you all". That is what I call insensitivity. Not a Prime Minister going overseas to look for resources, Denniston Douglas just walked in, God works in mysterious ways. Leading teachers in the days, not one more cent for teachers, well you are paying the price and you are still paying the price for it today [applause] that is insensitivity.

Mr. Speaker, parents cannot pay to get their children to school from the rural areas. Mr. Speaker, we must not come to this Honourable House and mislead the House. Mr. Speaker, I have here, the Prime Minister spoke to it, Permanent Secretary and members of my staff are here, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 buses that are employed by this Government, the ULP Government to transport school children from the most rural areas [applause]. North Leeward, North Windward, North Central Windward with some coming from South Central Windward and South Windward, you want more rural than that, Mr. Speaker? So I do not know, what is the rural areas, the Leader of the Opposition is speaking about. Mr. Speaker, you know what it cost this Government. I just took this to Cabinet and got it approved. I upgraded it because it was kind a little bit chaotic, I mean we brought some more order to it. It is going to cost us from this financial \$66,000 a month. Nearly \$600,000 a year subsidizing transport for school children from rural areas to secondary schools [applause] \$66,000 per month, not per year you know, not per year [interjection] well no, remember they have some holidays, so it is nine months. Using the nine months here, because remember school off for holidays so we do not pay them during that period. Some of these buses have duty-free concessions seven years old, eight years old, some do not have duty-free concessions.

So Mr. Speaker, [interjection] yes, so you could afford to pay. I pay also you know. Mr. Speaker, I got about 33 school children that I pay..., I give assistance to personally from different areas in St. Vincent, 33 of them. I do not come in this House here and brag about it, I am saying what the Government is doing, what the Leader of the Opposition is saying that we are not doing, I am showing you that we are doing it that is all I want to do [applause] we are doing it, we are subsidizing school children, we are subsidizing their transport to school. Mr. Speaker, this is all part of the Education Revolution [applause].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Okay, a point of order Honourable Member.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Yes.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, when I spoke yesterday on that matter I said I am sure that every single Member of this House, every single Member makes a contribution in that regard. I did not..., I was not blowing any trumpet of my own. I said, "Every single Member of this House I am sure makes a contribution in that regard", and I went on to say that businesses also are doing that. So I do not know what he is talking about.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** I will tell you when I come back.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** It is a misrepresentation.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member was speaking to the cash deficit which I just dealt with and then he said, this thing about things so bad..., that is how he presented it you know, things so bad in this country, parents cannot even pay to get their children to school from the rural areas that is was the statement. I wrote it down that is the context within which you presented it. All I am doing, Mr. Speaker, is presenting to this Honourable House...,

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Striking of the gavel.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** All I am doing is presenting to this Honourable House and to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines that in fact, the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, the Unity Labour Party administration is spending \$66,000 per month, \$600,000 a year to assist in this area as part of our giving to the less fortunate people [applause] of this country, social democracy in practice [applause] that is what it is. [Interjection] I know, the lyrics does bun all you man. Is all right!

**HONOURABLE DR. DOUGLAS SLATER:** Any state could meet the need of every single person, eh, which country could meet the need of every single citizen?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Striking of the gavel.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** All right, all yo done. All right good.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Could the Member please make his presentation in silence?

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Well, Mr. Speaker, anytime I speak, it is impossible for me to speak in silence, because the lyrics do bun them you know [laughter]. I am grateful for your support on the matter.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition spoke to the sale of the NCB and he said, "we mash it up do not give me nuttin about smart move and being creative", but Mr. Speaker, the bank of St. Vincent and the Grenadines has brightened the streets of Kingstown. It has reinvigorated the banking sector in St. Vincent. So

much so that the other banks are now spending money to spruce up their premises to see if they can look nearly as good. But he said absolutely nothing about Save a Lot, Marketing Board, Super J and Aunt Jobe. Why? When other Members from the Opposition speak we may find out why. He did not go to make the comments at the opening, other persons went. But he was saying up and down the streets of this country that St. Lucians, we are selling out our birth right to St. Lucians, St. Lucians coming here and taking away our businesses.

Mr. Speaker, we are talking OECS unity, we talking integration and the Leader of the Opposition is spurting this. But when the things become successful, he becomes mute. Mr. Speaker, I will now deal with some aspects of my Ministry. I do not have a constituency. The Leader of the Opposition never fails to remind this Honourable House that he beat me in East Kingstown, but I tip my hat to you since then. Since 2005 oh God done with that now nah, you know what I mean. Every year you have to tell them how you beat me [interjection] that is why I beat up on you son. I cannot beat you at the polls; I beat you in here, all right.

Mr. Speaker, the result indicators for my Ministry spread between pages 419 and 425 of the Estimates, but I want to deal with a couple areas. First of all the year 2011 was a distracting year, very distracting and when I went through my review I did say some of that that the first three months of the year naturally was taken up with a lot of political activities and I do not want to recite all that was said before. But I want to thank the operatives in the Ministry, in fact, I want to use this forum to express thanks and congratulations to PS Glynn who is now retired and has gone on preretirement leave [applause] and I have a young bright person who has just taken over, PS Hudson Nedd, acting PS Hudson Nedd and he is here in the gallery with us today. I want to thank PS Glynn for his holding the fort for the days when I could not be there and for steering the Ministry through a very rough year. Mr. Speaker, one of the challenges of my Ministry this year is to clean up the city of Kingstown. Mr. Speaker, how much time I have?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** you in your 49 minutes.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** I have 49 minutes?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You are in your 49 minutes.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** So I still have 25 minutes.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yes, go ahead.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** 26 minutes. Mr. Speaker, we have been talking about cleaning up of the city for the longest while. I just want to paint a picture of what is in the city. The major operative in the city is the Kingstown Board. The Kingstown Board is the largest landlord in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. They take care or they rent out 194 shops and 379 stalls making a total of 573. Their monthly income from rental of all these areas, well I will exclude the stalls, I cannot say that I have the figures for the stalls, but for the 194 shops their total takings is only \$35,000 monthly. It is a serious case. Kingstown Central Market \$16,000 for 65 shops, Little Tokyo \$7000 a month for 35 shops, China Town \$2,850 per month for 38 shops, Temporary Market \$2,400 for 25 shops, George Mc Intosh Market \$4,500 a month for 18 shops and the Bay Fore Shore

which is just in front of the Police Station \$1,820 per month for 13 shops and you have a large staff to supervise and manage, dance cannot pay for light. Basically what is happening, dance cannot pay for light.

Mr. Speaker, shop arrears right now stand at \$500,000; Kingstown Market \$161,000; Little Tokyo \$222,000; these figures were of the 31<sup>st</sup> October last year. I did not get up-to-date figures. China Town \$26,000; Temporary Market \$22,000; George Mc Intosh Market \$26,000; and Bay Fore Shore \$41,000; everybody owing. I see one or two people who are above the zero line, \$500,000 outstanding but \$35,000 a month, Mr. Speaker, surely cannot run the show to manage and supervise 194 shops, so that is the angle we are going to start at. I am not saying we are going increase rent, there are different ways. Ralph Gonsalves did it one way this year to make sure we have resources, maybe I could try some of his moves and see if we can be as his heir and I know he is listening intently.

Mr. Speaker, besides that in Kingstown you have 1,061 vendors. You have 8 trailers and 168 trolleys that is what we have for the operation of Kingstown. That I suppose is why Kingstown is so dirty. That is why we have to clean up the city. Mr. Speaker, in the Estimates you would see \$3.74 million for this exercise and in the Prime Minister's comments I believe he said that he knows that this is insufficient, but if the people ain't get their bonus, make the sacrifice first in the Ministry of Works to make some sacrifice and try to use the \$3.7 million as best as possible. But last time I presented I believe in this Parliament, a programme for the clean up of Tokyo and the town, I think we bit off more than we can chew and they choked us, but right now the approach to the clean up of the city is to take it piece by piece. Chew that swallow that and move on to another corner. But there has to be a significant rearranging of the city.

There are two commercial houses in the city that have pledged their support to this exercise and I am hoping that between the two of them, I would get another \$3 million. So with \$6.74 million I believe that we can do a significant clean up in the city this year. It may be slow in the beginning, but as the funds start to flow we could see some movement. It is our intention to build what is called "A Vendors Market" and the area that we have identified for it is the area of the Temporary Market and where the Temporary Fisheries is right now or where the meat market is temporarily now. That whole set of different looking buildings thrown together, but I am thinking of it and the designers and architects are already putting their minds to it to come up with a Caribbean Flavour, a West Indian Flavour and more than likely a wooden design. So we get something nice, pretty with a nice façade capable of holding a lot of the vendors. The idea being that we will reduce substantially the amount of vending on the streets. There will be designated areas and we would prepare this place for the persons.

Also I had spoken about the first plan to have the verandas of the existing market utilised that time we were talking of shedding them and put on a steel cover. That was in itself \$1.5 million. One of the business houses is looking closely at a module for a vendors table with covering and everything included so that we can put people on top of those verandas. We have insisted that no new vending must take place in Kingstown right now. Everybody who come to vend, we have divided the town into zones and they have individuals who will be supervising those areas and they will find you as a new vendor, they would say, "I am sorry, you cannot sell on the streets, space is available in the market building.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Point of order you say?

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Mr. Speaker, I simply want to raise with the Honourable Member, with the Honourable Minister for the city as it is now really whether he considers to the extent that there is three representatives in this Honourable House they are representative for Kingstown and they should have been consulted on the development plan for the city.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** All right, Honourable Minister.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, I am not unaware of that, I am not unaware of that at all.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** So you do intend to do it?

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Of course.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Okay.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** They shall be briefed regularly as to...

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** In due course.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** I do not want, Mr. Speaker, to start all this big set of consultations and meetings and discussions until I have the skeleton in place ready to go. Contributions from them will influence and I am sure that their input will be helpful. So they will not be left out.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You have 15 minutes.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Okay. Mr. Speaker, transport, Mr. Speaker, when we speak of transport in this country, people immediately go to mini buses and fare increase. Up to this morning I am driving up in traffic coming to Parliament and the President of NOBA asked me when is the next meeting and I say, "soon" but I am not going to have meetings just to discuss fares, that is not the purpose of our discussion in the New Year. I put together a committee including Bona Fide Mini Van Passengers, in other words, members of the travelling public must be included in these discussions and those meetings immediately following this budget and maybe towards the end of January I will have.

Mr. Speaker, traffic, transport, Mr. Speaker I want to shock you with some figures. I deliberately want to do it and I [interjection] I know, I know, I know, yes, I showed earlier on and I was going to use it then, but I decided to use it in my Ministry. Mr. Speaker, the amount of vehicles on the road of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Do you know and again with all these deficits that we are hearing about and the banks not lending money because the economy is so bad, it must be the Credit Unions according to the Leader of the Opposition who is lending these monies. It is either that or people have money saved and they are buying vehicles. Because he says the banks are not lending, he say there is a bad economy, there is a deficit..., we are moving on a point of

order? [Interjection] oh okay. I have the figures here because in the study for South Leeward we have to go through and get figures from the Licensing Department.

Motor vehicle registration by class between January the 1<sup>st</sup> 1900; 1900 and December 31<sup>st</sup> 2001, 6048; end of December, we took over in March 2001; 6048 from the year 1900 registration 1900. From the time they start registering vehicles or keeping the register that is the figure that they have up there. It could be a computer thing that may have gone over with the 2K thing with some computers doing that, but that is what is labelled. At the end of December 31<sup>st</sup> 2010 not 2011 Mr. Speaker, 24,770 vehicles, 18,722 more vehicles registered since the Unity Labour Party has been in office. Private motor cars moved from 3162 to 15,595. Now the bank ain't lending money, the economy bad, Ralph Gonsalves not managing the economy properly, the Credit Unions must be lending it or people have money in their savings account or they have in their pocket and they are buying their own motor car. I believe the latter.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, the Leader of the Opposition is...

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** I know, I know that is why I asked him just now if he want to intervene.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** No Mr. Speaker, I mean I understand what the Minister is trying to do. I just want to say yesterday when I made my presentation I was speaking, I made it very clear of the year 2011 in terms of the banks relative unwillingness to lend.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, he said this will be our fourth year in deficit. Right, okay, 2000 vehicles come in between 2009 and 2010. It was 18,000 I ain't just have the figures at the beginning and at the end you know, it was 21,000 at the end of 2009; 3000 vehicles came in during 2010 year of a deficit, there was a deficit in that year, 2008 was 21,000 in 2009; 2007 was 16,000 so 8000 vehicles come in between 2007 and now. Mr. Speaker, you see having been caught with this type of presentation that I am doing that is why I asked him if he was going to ask for an intervention, which he did eventually. He had to intervene, had to intervene because everything is so negative...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Striking of the gavel.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Everything in such deficit, the banks ain't lending money, we give away the..., you done, so what they buy it with? They have money [laughter] that is the point I am making. If the banks not lending as you say, the people them have money that is why they shop so much at the end of the year. The people have money. Explain to me how else you can have so many vehicles being bought and Mr. Speaker, let me tell you, you know, the larger the engine, the more vehicles being bought in. That means more expensive vehicles are being bought. You see the vehicles the fellers driving on the road today.

I saw a guy last night riding a 1300 CC motor cycle. That is the size of a vehicle engine you know. Motor cycles, Mr. Speaker, motor cycle without side car...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** 10 minutes Honourable Member.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** was 306; motor cycle without street car 1251; nine hundred and something motor cycles more you know. Mr. Speaker, people must have been getting monies from somewhere and I sure it ain't marijuana, sure it is not. I am sure it is not illegal activities, I am sure it is legal activities, the banks not lending, the people them therefore have money. Everything is negative, negative, negative, nothing happening under this administration, nothing [interjection] I know, I know, I know.

Mr. Speaker, the work in the year is going to be a heavy work for the Ministry of Works. Mr. Speaker, we have a lot of money to spend, we have a lot of projects to carry out, all the rehabilitation work from the two disasters. The Government has secured funds for the rehabilitation works in the aftermath of Hurricane Tomas and the April Flash Floods, US\$1.5 million in grant funds which is provided by the Republic of China on Taiwan for the rehabilitation of works to the Langley Park River; \$12.6 million loan is obtained from the Caribbean Development Bank, the same bank that we borrow the \$100,000 from to pay off some of the debts, \$100,000 million from, we still have credibility with them [laughter] we still get a loan of \$12.6 million from them.

The picture that was painted at the time when the bank was being sold and when we borrowed that \$100,000 million is that this country was bankrupt. Well the bank was bankrupt, the bank ain't bankrupt. The Government ain't bankrupt. I said to you earlier on that the Government is the mover in this economy and when we make a move like that, we refurbished the capital position of the National Commercial Bank and we are still shareholders of the bank. We still own 49 percent of the shares. You were going to sell them to P. H. Veira, C. K. Greaves and Randy Supermarket. You were going to get them to buy the shares and give it to their employees, laughable, laughable [interjection] you do not say anything about that you, because you do not know a thing about that. He is the one who made all the statements about it because he is the economist with 45 years experience, 17 years at CDB and 28 in the...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable that sounds like an attack on the Honourable Member.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** No, no, no, no, Mr. Speaker, he was smiling when I spoke to him. It cannot be an attack.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** When you say, you do not do this and you do not do that [laughter].

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** The Honourable Member for Northern Grenadines was smiling when I said that to him, Mr. Speaker and he is still smiling, my good friend [laughter] [interjection] I know, I know, I know, that is why you are interrupting me so much. So \$12.6 million from the CDB, US\$5 million obtained from the World Bank for the rehabilitation of the Teviot River and the rehabilitation of the road in Hope Well. Teviot River is basically below across from the Latham Health Centre in Mesopotamia where you see some gabion works being done there and the European Union Development Fund has given us a grant of Euros \$1.4 million for the rehabilitation works along the road to Mount Young and up to Congo Valley. These funds exceed \$56 million to be implemented over the next three years. So we have some trying times ahead of us in the..., time Mr. Speaker, I am just about 3 minutes left?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yes, just about that.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** So Mr. Speaker, the Modern Medical Complex in Georgetown, so far we have put about \$9.7 million in it. Things were slow this year because of the tight situation and the funds did not flow as they should have, but the monies are in the Estimates for this year and we expect that the Modern and Medical Complex in Georgetown will be complete before the end of 2012.

Mr. Speaker, on the matter of property taxes, I am not running from it, but I sat down over the last year listening to talks shows, and listening to the Leader of the Opposition and listening to Members of the Opposition about property tax and what it is going to do to Vincentians and how we are going to come with a market based valuation instead of the annual rental value and so on and what not. Mr. Speaker, in my humble opinion on this matter, a market value, it is a reasonable compromise. Where the additional revenue is going to come from is because with the valuation you are trapping more properties, because it is difficult to assess an ARV outside of commercial centres and rural areas. Now when you go for market value, you can value all the properties and put them on the list.

So in the Prime Minister's presentation he said that we would be capturing another 10 to 15 thousand properties that is where the additional revenue. There is no substantial increase. I did some calculations. Property tax up to 25,000 is free you do not have pay any tax on it if your property value 25,000. Let us say you value 30,000; .08 percent of 30,000 is \$24 a year you know, \$24; \$50,000 property \$40 a year; \$100,000 property \$80 a year; 150,000 property \$120.00 per year, we are not talking here of any extravagant substantial increases you know and there is a cap. If you feel that your tax is gone up more than 25 percent you can go and have it reviewed [interjection] you have your presentation already, let me finish mine nah. I am not begging for no more time you know, you were begging for 10 minutes to talk about three teachers. I ain't ready to talk about them.

Houses of \$200,000 Mr. Speaker, what I listened to in the past I thought that Prime Minister was coming with \$2,400 a year and so and whatnot in house tax. A million house, Mr. Speaker, a million dollar property the tax on it will be \$800 for the year. How could that be unreasonable? A \$500,000 property now, \$300,000 to \$500,000 property at annual rental value in the rural area may run..., that person may be paying about \$240.00 in property tax right now and at \$300,000 is \$240.00 at \$500,000 property \$400. So it is not an unreasonable, it is not an excessive, exorbitant increase and to be able to catch more properties, because many persons in the past were not paying property tax and that is what the problem is, so we were gaining about \$3.5 million per year, with this exercise the Government will get about \$6.7 million a year, because you are catching more properties that is it.

Mr. Speaker, I think I have done justice, I think I have presented my case well, Christmas is gone it is New Year and as I have said before, I do not have a constituency, but I have a very large one in my capacity as the General Secretary of the Unity Labour Party and I always say in this House of Parliament that is the reason I am here. As General Secretary of the Unity Labour Party and as..., which I have been since 1994, I want to thank the people of that organisation who have kept me there. I have made my contribution there very significantly; I want to wish everybody in this Parliament you, Mr. Speaker, your family, the Leader of the Opposition and

Members on the other side, we will be having lots of discussions this year in connection to road works and so on and I am sure that some other resources would be handed out by the Honourable Prime Minister during the course of the year as the funds improve, the cash flow improves. So Mr. Speaker, I give this Appropriation Bill and this budget my full support and wish it safe passage through this Honourable House [applause] thank you.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Any further debate, Honourable Member for Central Leeward I recognise you. Well I think we due suspension at this time.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Yes Mr. Speaker, it seems an appropriate time for us to take the lunch break so I move that we suspend until 3 O'clock.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**House suspended at 11:55 a. m. (Luncheon)**

**Until 3:00 p. m.**

**House Resumed at 3:05 p. m.**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Pray be seated. When we broke for lunch I acknowledged the Member for Central Leeward, I think it was. Just give me a minute I will take you just now. All right, Honourable Member, if you are ready, as soon as you are, you can begin.

**HONOURABLE MAXWELL CHARLES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to make my contribution to the budgetary proposals for 2012. Mr. Speaker, this budget was made amid the economic uncertainty in the rest of the world, in Europe, in North America. As politicians we follow the progress of the EU states, those who are in the Eurozone and the troubles, the economic woes that came their way during the past few months. We think that the austerity measures that they are adopting to survive would indeed affect the rest of the world, the Caribbean and St. Vincent and the Grenadines being no exception. Of course we get aid from the UK, from the EU and the countries of the Eurozone. So quite naturally, if they are affected by anything, we too would be affected. Because if we look at the budgetary proposals we would see that quite a substantial amount of aid comes our way from these countries. So of the ones financially secured institutions like the banks, insurance companies, CLICO, British American, banks like Barclays have had their problems and they had to be bailed out on a few occasions.

Mr. Speaker, this is the background against which we have crafted the national budget for 2012. We would also remember that we had quite an eventful year in 2011. We ended the year with Tomas to be followed by the General Elections and then before we settle down, we had to deal with the Flash Flooding in April of 2011. Mr. Speaker, despite all these apparent setbacks and disadvantages we are able to bring to this House the budgetary proposals for 2012. I want to quote a section of the Prime Minister's speech taken from page 94, the budget address, it says, "Despite the challenging economic and fiscal circumstances, my Government has not cut jobs in the public service; has not reduced its expenditure and delivery of services in education, health, law and order; and has not whittled down one iota its social safety net or public assistance to the indigent poor and the economically disadvantaged, including students attending primary, secondary and post secondary educational institutions. As a matter of fact, we were able to increase by 25 percent the value of monthly public assistance

payment and widen the net of recipients and noncontributory payments through the NIS.” We were able to do that despite.\*

Mr. Speaker, it goes on to note that, “between September and December, our Government allocated and spent \$10 million for routine road works, \$2 million of which dealt with the road cleaning to coincide with the back-to-school, \$5 million in a special road repairs programme between October and early December; and another \$3 million road cleaning programme for the Christmas.” We were able to do this despite all the economic woes that the rest of the world is subject to and we even felt the pinch, but we were able to deliver to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, just after the General Elections, I was given the responsibility for National Reconciliation, the public Service, Labour, Information and Ecclesiastical Affairs. Reconciliation being a new area that was introduced, Mr. Speaker, I would say to this Honourable House that all of the objectives that was cited and were made during the last year were not all realised, not all came to fruition, but some progress was indeed made and I will be the first to say that more should have been done.

Mr. Speaker, Cabinet approved the nine-member committee for the NRAC (the National Reconciliation Advisory Council). During the year, Mr. Speaker, a composition of this committee has been decided upon by my Ministry. So far we have also crafted a concept paper and this concept paper has been presented to Cabinet during the month of December and within the next two to three weeks Cabinet will give us the green light or the okay on this concept paper. During the year I have had consultations and reconciliations with different organisations, Set Free, Prison Ministries, Mr. Speaker, I have also had consultation with the Council of Churches when we were talking about Bills, the so-called controversial Bill. I have also had consultations with the Evangelical Churches and with other individuals, some giving negative suggestions, positive and otherwise.

Mr. Speaker, reconciliation is a long-term process of overcoming I say, belligerence or hostility and mistrust between divided peoples. I do hope that as this paper was presented to Cabinet that it would have the approval and that the processes will begin as far as national reconciliation is concerned. That concept paper does not only deal with the political nature of things, but it has to do with things like gang violence, other conflicts, revenge, trauma, the generation divide, domestic violence, poverty, etc. the members of that committee would also include a wide range of individuals including at least one representative from each of about 3 political parties. Mr. Speaker, [interjection] three political parties that is right, did I say two? No it is three.

Mr. Speaker, the public service also part of my Ministry, Mr. Speaker, through the Public Sector Reform Unit we continue to play a pivotal role in the performance management of our civil servants, the public service. There are of course other areas of focus, the development of standardised job descriptions, the Public Sector Reform Unit has worked on that, also in collaboration with CARICAD to conduct the monitoring and the evaluation activities.

You would agree with me, Mr. Speaker, that we all need a more efficient civil service to deliver the goods to our nation. There would also be the continuation of the training in customer service by the PS RU. We have also participated in the training in strategic planning for all key line Ministries, staff members, permanent

secretaries and heads of department. During 2011, my Ministry through the PS RU conducted a series of workshops in customer service, civil service procedures, government financial procedures, conflict resolution and office etiquette and with CARICAD and in conjunction with the Service Commission the unit hosted a Business Process Reengineering Workshop for senior officials where they learnt and were trained in ICT application.

As a follow-up for 2012 this unit would continue to assist these Ministries in reengineering these processes and also in helping to modernise our civil service by creating a professionally organised public sector. Of course, Mr. Speaker, you would agree with me that no amount of training can replace a positive work attitude in our country of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, I was also given the responsibility for labour matters. Last year 2011 marked the 35<sup>th</sup> year since a Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the Government of Canada and the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines as far as the recruitment of our farm workers is concerned. The Ministry of Labour views very seriously this Memorandum. Why? Because it creates employment for our males, a little later on I will give you some statistics, but suffice me to say that year before the last 2010 remittances as a result of this programme came up to EC\$1.8 million as a result of our males going to Canada. So far for 2011 about 48 of our workers have received their compulsory savings and this has come to about \$253,473.00 the rest would be processed in the coming week.

Mr. Speaker, during the month of December, I attended a meeting in Canada, Niagara Falls that area of Canada, a very cold area and their Minister of Labour met with those who are responsible for recruiting our farm workers not only in St. Vincent but in the four other OECS nations that supply workers and there we were given reports and I made an observation that for every one OECS worker that we have in the system up there in the farm programme, we have 13 Jamaicans. So they outnumbered us, the OECS 13:1. We are thankful and grateful for the work that has been done by the OECS desk. Our liaison officer, we know him E. B. John, he did a fantastic work not only for St. Vincent and the Grenadines but for the OECS. But our workers, the OECS workers including the Vincentians, they are mostly in the Ontario area and we are making plans to get our workers to go to other states, British Columbia and New Brunswick etc. we proudly say that so far, in the Calvary area we as a result of our efforts have six trailer drivers who work in that area. Small amount but we are making some progress.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes when you attend these meetings you have to guard what you do in the corridors and sometimes you have to be friendly with some people, I think the Prime Minister is very good at this, and sometimes you can get benefits by how you conduct yourselves in the corridors [interjection] we call it diplomacy, yes thank you. During that meeting I was able to touch base with a friendly source that would help us to get more of our workers outside of Ontario. But of course I was warned that anything that comes out of this, we would have to share with the four OECS nations who are involved in the programme.

Mr. Speaker, I would like at this point to give you just a few statistics on the farm programme. We have 24 farmers in the Ontario area who recruit Vincentian workers or where Vincentian workers are involved, 24 such farmers and they go from the period of January to September each year; 186 workers were requested or named

by farmers during the last year and some of these have been working with the same farmers for over 20 years. You see what happens here is that the farmers if you do work satisfactorily, they will send back for you and we call these workers in our local parlance, "request men". So last season we sent 186 such workers, sorry, that is the year before. We were only able to get seven new workers and this is what we are trying to change so that more of our workers in the OECS and St. Vincent and the Grenadines can get to go to Canada to participate in the farm programme. This year we made an improvement instead of seven we got 13 new ones in addition to the 188 that we sent, a slight improvement from the last year.

Mr. Speaker, I would end this section by saying, we are encouraging our workers to go to Canada to do a good job so that the name of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the OECS can continue to be a good name in the minds of the mouths of our recruiters in Canada. Remember you go on a contract and you should come back at the end of the contract and not to run off, because it would do badly for the OECS workers who would want to go for the next year. So please conduct yourselves wisely and do not run away. Of course I would urge our workers those who have been going year after year, there are benefits for your children. Some of you have not been tapping in on this. If you think that you can be in for some benefits for your children, children of school age I urge you to call on our department during this month so that we can explain certain things to you.

From the Department of Labour Mr. Speaker there is an organisation we call "The MAMPA" Employment Agency" based in St. Lucia. It has recruited some of our sailors who work on the Disney Cruise. I do not have all the statistics here, but they have been successful in doing this during the past year 2011. This organisation is also the recruiting agent for Royal Caribbean and the Norwegian Cruise Lines. We have received confirmation that this organisation is going to do more recruitment here in St. Vincent during 2012 and we would tell you exactly when they are coming. Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the day when we can do our own recruitment here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, when we can do our own recruitment again.

Mr. Speaker, the Department of Labour also is in close contact with the ILO and our decent worker gender is being implemented here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Tripartism is encouraged and we indeed follow this concept which I will explain in a while from now for some of our hearers. It is fully operational here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, we have been reviewing and updating our labour legislations to come in line with international standards, we have so far last year have consultations to review the occupational safety and health issue. The ILO has contracted a consultant to assist us in drafting an OSH Bill and consultation on this draft Bill would be ready for February of this year and when everything is completed and it becomes law, it would replace the old factory's act which has been alive since the mid 1950s.

Mr. Speaker we are bringing this country labour law in line with ILO and international standards. Workplace policies have also come under consideration during 2011. The ILO has contracted a local barrister which is Rene Baptiste who was also a former Minister of Labour to draft a national policy on HIV/AIDS and non-communicable diseases. Ms. Baptiste has done a very good job. She has drafted the policy already and during the month of October we had a national consultation and this involved along with the social partners and other stakeholders. This done, my Ministry is now awaiting the final comments from the specialist, from the ILO specialist following which the document would be presented to Cabinet for approval.

Mr. Speaker, I spoke about tripartism a while ago and what this concept is all about, what it is all about. It is simply the Government, the employers and the employees working together, I am tempted to say, in perfect harmony, but in harmony. You see, no country can develop in a harmonious manner if the labour climate is not a good one and so if Government can sit with employers and employees, this would all go good for..., a good and a healthy labour climate. Mr. Speaker, I beg to differ with the Opposition by saying that this is a good relationship between Government employers and employees and during the budget proposals, the Government actually sat with workers with the unions and discussed with them, show them the situation, the climate in which we are living, local, regional, international and most of the unions I would say perhaps all, I am tempted to say, all with the exception of one, but I will say all, they saw with us and this is why if we do not pay a bonus this year nobody is going to quarrel because when Government, employers and employees sit together and discuss, it could only go for a vibrant labour climate where people understand each other.

We have also in this department been training civil servants in the art of negotiation and a workshop on mediation and negotiation skills was conducted some months ago. Mr. Speaker, we here in St. Vincent have recently ratified three priority conventions: 1. the employment policy, 2. the labour inspection and 3. the tripartite consultation, all leading to a solid framework so that we can have decent work here, work climate here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, I will now make a few comments on the LMIS (the Labour Market Information System). Mr. Speaker, I am proud to announce that St. Vincent and the Grenadines is a leader when it comes to LMIS which we have instituted here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines during the month of April 2011. We launched this system, we computerised where we have computerised admin records and St. Vincent and the Grenadines LMIS we did so in April as I have said before. We had technical help from the ILO and a decent work team from Trinidad and Tobago. We also had an input from the Government of EC\$180,000. It is a useful thing. It ensures that our statistical indicators on employment, industrial relations, and wages all this information would now be available for our policy makers and other stakeholders. We also want to recognise the role of the NIS in helping us to have this system.

Mr. Speaker, I want at this moment, as I close my comments on the Labour Department, to recognise the contribution of our Labour Commissioner who would be leaving us soon. I speak of no other person but Mrs. Patricia Robert-Samuel [applause] who has served the department with great distinction. During the past 12 months I have worked together with her and being a new Minister, I have learnt from her. This department, the Labour Department has been doing a very good job in fostering, in ensuring that we have a proper work climate here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. So I want to take this opportunity to thank our outgoing Labour Commissioner for her contribution to this department [applause]. Of course we are going to have somebody new and I want to assure you, someone who has been born and bred in the Labour Movement and I look forward to working with such a person.

Mr. Speaker, the Post Office, or I should say, the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Postal Corporation is part of my portfolio and during the past years, this corporation has been attempting to reorganise things. As a matter of fact, since 2003 we have continued to pursue a path of sustainable postal reform and I would say, modernisation, because gone are the days when people used to go to the post office for their mails, yes they still

do, but that has been drastically cut, been cut during the past many years. These are the days of the internet and so you would know that during the past years, during the past 7, 8 years we have had to close some of our post offices. During this period the reform efforts of the postal corporation, they were designed around the integrated postal reform plan which featured some broad objectives, at least five objectives to provide the society with a more efficient postal service to facilitate civic participation in economic activities, to provide employees with better working conditions.

Mr. Speaker, the activities of the integrated postal reform plan was grouped under four broad areas and I will take a minute or two to comment on each of these areas: one, the postal market study and sector policy definition. We were able to scientifically determine the size of our postal market. The mail generating sectors, the varying needs of our customers and to ascertain the potential for growth and of this corporation. This was done during the past few years. We had persons from overseas coming here to help us gather this information. Mr. Speaker, the gathered information was then used to form the basis for the development of a postal sector policy which would soon be adopted by Cabinet and would guide the functions of all the operations of the corporation.

Mr. Speaker, universal service definition and costing. The St. Vincent and the Grenadines post has now defined its universal service under five broad heads, the scope, delivery standards, access, pricing and security.

Three, to review and modernise the Legal and Regulatory Framework, the results of our market study that were obtained told us which, are best practices in the system. Also the policy..., many proposals and revisions would be done and this would include the expansion of the purpose of the act, the redefining of the Universal Postal Service and the Universal Service Obligation among others. Mr. Speaker, we are in the process of modernising our operation at the postal corporation, because just as I said before, it is no longer the Post Office with people going to post letters, receiving letters and so on. Gone are those days because of the internet and so we are in the process of modernising this system. One, our hours of operation at the Head Office in Kingstown will revise to accommodate customers. The cash office, the general delivery and the parcel sections now opened a little earlier at 8:00 a. m. because we have to be competitive as a corporation. The postal receptacle at the Head Office was relocated to provide greater security for outgoing mails and more space in the lobby for our customers. Three, we have formed an alliance with the international company DHL to provide agency services for outgoing courier items.

There has been an improved signage at all our district offices. Five, the SVG Post is now second in the region for on time delivery for incoming PMS items and for this we say, congratulations to [applause] those who run the corporation. Mr. Speaker, in addition to the regular postal services we do bill payments for most utility bills and for all utility bills, cell phones top ups etc and we do hope that during the year 2012 we would be responsible for the distribution of all utility bills in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. We have a functioning website [www.sgvpost.gov.vc](http://www.sgvpost.gov.vc) and this site allows us customers to get information and to acquaint themselves with our services, to relocate hubs and matching spoke areas, to identify post codes for our offices and they can also use the links to track all recorded mails registered, express and parcels going to Canada, the United States and also England. You can also download your postal forms.

In closing comments on the postal corporation, we have a few plans for 2012. One, full computerisation of all counter services at Head Office and district offices by the use of hardware and software that would integrate counter services, mail operations and financial statements. Two, handwritten receipts will give way to computer generated receipts at all offices. Three, the expansion of the Money Gram services to at least three other district offices; four, the expansion of tourist services through at least three district offices. The local post box expansion and finally the US mail box expansion and online shopping assistance.

Mr. Speaker, more companies will soon be joining the bill payment facility and we hope to raise more needed funds here. The training and the capacity building for all staff members, the improvement in mail delivery options and finally the quality of service improvements through continuous mail testing among other Caribbean countries, tracking and tracing of all recording items and a prompt response to enquires.

In closing these comments on the Postal Corporation during the month of December, I think the 31<sup>st</sup> of December, we also say goodbye to a stalwart, none other but Ms. Celene Jack who headed the Postal Corporation [applause] from its inception 2003 and had done an extremely good job. I worked with her for one year and again as a new Minister taught me some of the ropes. As you go into retirement, because these people never retire, these stalwart of people never retire. I am sure that she is going to find..., will be cooperated into some thing in the near future, but I want to thank her for the services to the Postal Corporation and for the cooperation that was given me during the past 12 months. Of course at the helm that we have Mrs. Jacqueline Adams-Ollivierre, another very good and outstanding worker and I know we shall continue to have good relations as we try our utmost best to make the best of this corporation.

Under my Ministry also is the NBC, our National Broadcasting Corporation and this has been supported by Government over the years to the tune of \$0.6 million in subventions. This station continues to provide a platform for the realisation of good governance policies and also it carries live coverage even of our proceedings today and we must not forget that long ago, this was never so. Proceedings in the House, we used to hear it afterwards, we used to have to come to the House to hear, but these days we take it for granted, NBC is in the forefront in covering the events of this House [applause].

The 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary we celebrated last year and we were rebranded, “the family station.” We would remember our wellness walk and I think I got a prize there as having the biggest foot and the corporation also assists persons with medical problems. Raise funds through the “Love Boogie” and other programmes and they have been involved in helping people to go overseas to see about themselves as far as their medicals are concerned. NBC continues to be a leader in this nation of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, the API continues to cover..., well of course they are here today and to cover all government programmes throughout the length and breadth of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. We were not able to house them in better quarters during 2011, but we do hope that 2012 would be a better year. Of course we are going to get them out of cramped conditions and get them up to where the NBC is, but NBC would have to have their quarters. We, during the year there was a halt, there was some problems with that building and construction was halted. As a result of the length of time, construction was halted; we in the Ministry have instructed our engineers to examine the structural integrity of the building. Before we start we believe that there might be

certain legal implications and so the Attorney General's Office is helping us in this regard. As soon as these are completed we are going to start again on that building so that our API and NBC can be properly housed. We were not able to get the cable television facility for the API, but during 2012 we are going to give it another shot.

As I close the comments on my Ministry I would just like to bring to our attention once again the concept of a code of practice for broadcasting. Mr. Speaker, you would agree with me..., I think most Members of the House that we need to up our game as far as broadcasting in this nation is concerned [applause]. Mr. Speaker, sometime during the year 2011 I was giving a feature address I think up at the NBC and I told our listening audience that somewhere along the line we would have to have some sort of code that would guide our programmes that we air not only on the internet, but on the airwaves in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and beyond. I think there was perhaps one or two negative comments, persons who felt that maybe I was about to propose some sort of code or law to muzzle persons, no, far from this. We are in a democracy, but we need to be more responsible with the things that we say over the airwaves and little did I know that the St. Vincent Bureau of Standards took me up on it and at present, no well not at present, last year October to be specific that department, the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Bureau of Standards called the different stakeholders together to establish a technical committee that will talk about the code of practices for broadcasters in St. Vincent and the Grenadines [applause]. I commend them for this. Because you see, Mr. Speaker, whatever comes out..., and by the way we are not saying that it is going to come overnight, it is going to be a work in progress perhaps for the next year or two.

Mr. Speaker, whatever comes out of this would not be coming from Government per se, but it would be coming from the bowels of those who conduct broadcasting in St. Vincent on a regular basis. It would be coming from you out there who are listening, it would be coming from you who participate in broadcasting on a daily basis and I do urge and encourage this committee to continue to work, continue to consult, continue to talk and get a paper going so that we can up the game on broadcasting here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that as a new Minister of Government, I have had a year in which civil servants, the permanent secretaries alike, heads of departments I have had their cooperation and during the year I have dealt with three different permanent secretaries and they have taught me a lot and I want to use this forum to express thanks to all the workers in the Ministry of National Reconciliation, Public Service, Labour, Information and Ecclesiastical Affairs, I want to say thank you. You have done a good job, you have taught me a lot and I look forward to working with you in 2012, of course I have begun that already.

Mr. Speaker, I would take the next few minutes in addressing some of the issues in my constituency, Central Leeward. I want to first begin by thanking all those persons in Central Leeward who would have supported me during the last General Elections. Buccament Bay, Layou, Barrouallie and its environs, I have had a good year with you. I was not able to deliver all the goods because of certain reasons, but nonetheless, we have done some good working together. It is a great constituency, it is a constituency where I have lived for the past many years, not only lived for the past many years, but I have worked with you as a teacher twenty odd years in Barrouallie, I have worked at the Anglican School, the Secondary School, and lastly the Buccament Bay Secondary School. So I am indeed a Central Leeward man. Again thank you for delivering the goods, thank you for having faith in me and I will continue to work with you as the years come and go.

Mr. Speaker, before I go any further, Friday and I know you are listening, [interjection] no it is the day I am talking about, sorry, is my constituency day and it would continue to be but [interjection] yes, [laughter] it is my constituency day when I go through the constituency I am with you, but even that one day is not sufficient. I am going to make certain changes in 2012. Friday would continue to be the constituency day for Barrouallie and its environs and for some of the Tuesdays would be for Buccament Bay and Layou. So you are going to see more of me, you would continue to meet me at the places you normally meet me and I will continue to be with you on the ground in your homes, on the block [interjection] eh? No, no it is not a secret, they all know, the constituency office etc. etc. thank you.

Mr. Speaker, in Central Leeward, we continue to reap the benefits of the Education Revolution. Mr. Speaker, there are two secondary schools, one in Buccament and one in Peter's Hope. Most of them have had their netbooks and they are making good use of the netbooks. I remember going on the day when they were distributing them and they are very thankful and they had been put to use, Central Leeward say thanks to Central Government for supplying us with the netbooks [applause].

Mr. Speaker, in Central Leeward we have our constituency council going. They have been elected during the past I think, four, five months ago and we are working together, we would like to have other areas of the constituency having their local councils so that we can consult on a better basis. Buccament Bay, I know you have elected a council, the Buccament Bay Development Organisation and we have been working together. I was away on vacation in the United Kingdom but I know that you did your food baskets, I saw the photographs and I thank you Buccament for working together with me in the organisation. We are just beginning to have a Youth Arm and I ask that you continue to cooperate, continue to be vibrant so that Central Leeward would continue to be in the camp of the Unity Labour Party for years to come [applause].

Mr. Speaker, roads, in Central Leeward, we had quite a lot proposals for the fixing of our roads, but due to certain circumstances we were not able to do all that we proposed. Mr. Speaker, I refer to Macca Ground, you know it is interesting, during the campaign I remember I met a group of persons and they say, you got to come to Macca Ground you know and I do not want you to walk, I want you to drive so that your spring can get broken on that road. Well I took up the challenge and being a good driver I went through you know, and I felt what they were feeling. Mr. Speaker, not too long ago I had the opportunity of not only driving on Macca Ground, a well done road by one of our contractors in Keartons [applause] I not only drove on it, but I came out and I jumped up on it. Well done, congratulations to that contractor in Keartons who did the Macca Ground road, well done piece of road.

Also in Barrouallie there was a piece of road with a crowbar or something like that, I am not a very good engineer, but it was getting pretty dangerous in Glebe Hill there and I am proud to announce that one of our contractors has fixed that during the December holidays and you can now not only walk on it, but you can prance on it and you can drive on it. Congratulations to that contractor, you have done very well and the people of Glebe Hill are proud of you.

Mr. Speaker, quite a lot of proposals are made for Layou, but we got at least two pieces done, over at Rutland Vale the road there has been well done and another piece has been done in that same area which I have not examined because I was away and I understand that it was well done. Also a piece of road in Bottle and Glass was done and also the Reversion Road that was also well done. It was properly pitched and the people of Reversion are well pleased.

Mr. Speaker, we witness also the completion of a very famous bridge in Layou, the Swamp Gut Bridge. That bridge is going to link the rest of Layou around the cemetery area with Rutland Vale. Again it was a masterpiece in engineering, but that bridge is completed, well done, but it needs an access and an existing road. We are going to see about in the year 2012, I promise you. Just as how we found the means to build the bridge, we are going to get the road done. I know a lot of you are talking about it and when it is finished [interjection] [laughter] all right, we normally deliver you know comrade, we normally deliver.

Mr. Speaker, sports have been alive in Central Leeward. The netball competition in Layou has been revived and congratulations to the team that won. I think it was the team from the plan area and of course, Texier Road came second. Then also the competition in Barrouallie the football and the netball, I was not able to be so much part of it because I have to travel on most of those occasions and I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Barrouallie Secondary School, the Central Leeward Secondary School. As far as football in the junior division is concerned we are number one and as far as football in the senior division is concerned we are also number one. We did the double [applause]. I was there to witness it, shouting my boys on, they did well. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Central Leeward Secondary School; I am always saying the Barrouallie Secondary School because I had 28 years there, so the concept is still in my brain. I want to congratulate the Central Leeward Secondary School for doing the double. Guys I will be with you some time, we got to celebrate.

The grounds would be improved at Pete's Hope because I know of the slippage there and I spoke to the relevant Minister and he has assured me that something would be done in the year 2012. We continue to improve our grounds in Layou, Keartons and we have a promise for Buccament Bay that we hope would come to fruition. We have improved our park in the middle of Barrouallie, we did a light up during the Christmas vacation, it is now connected, we have water going there now, we have our electricity also connected and we are hoping to get a worker there soon so that when the children and the older ones come to that beautiful park, they can have an easy time. We congratulate and we thank all those who helped with the park. I want to take this opportunity also to congratulate our sportsmen in Central Leeward who are doing very good on the football and also with athletics.

Mr. Speaker, there are two projects that we hope would come to fruition in Central Leeward in 2012. It is not that anything was not done during 2011, but you would agree with me, Mr. Speaker, that the red tape in some of these organisations can get very red indeed and very long and so I know that you would be patient with us..., I am talking about a piece of road in Wallilabou. We are working together with the BNTF who is working together with a regional organisation so that we can have that road done. I have already suggested somebody in the community to be a liaison person with the BNTF and we are hoping that 2012 would be a good year and that that road in Wallilabou would come to fruition. I know it is bad, I know it is rugged, but work together with

me, have patience and 2012 is going to be better as we continue the process, it is a work in progress and we would get our road. Progress has been made in that course that we want to offer our boatmen and those who deal with lawnmowers, with small engines. I have already seen a proposal, but it needs money and we are getting someone, and an organisation to fund that project that I know would come to fruition in the year 2012.

Mr. Speaker, the problem of lands in Central Leeward and getting the piece of paper in your hand that we call the Deed. I know this has been a problem and I know that you are listening to hear something today. I want to start with Buccament Bay. I know you are living near to the river, I know we have promised to move you nearer to Cane Grove, nearer to me, nearer to where I live. We are working on this. Some progress has been made. You see what has happened here where we are going to put you; we have a little legal problem that we are working on. I had been given the assurance that that problem would be solved in 2012 and we are going to move you from the river side, occupants there at Buccament and bring you up in the Cane Grove area to live, because we need that section of the park there when we expand it and when the teams come from England that I heard of, the football teams to play, so we will need you to move in a while, so do have patience with us.

Also in Layou in the First River area we have completed during 2011 where marking out of the 20 pieces of land for the people of Layou. To date we have attached the names and the names together with your IDs etc. are now with the relevant Government Department and I have been told this week that during the month of February the relevant documentation would be brought to Cabinet and you would get your piece of paper in your hand. Of course you would have to pay a fee, I have not made it known as yet, but you would have to pay something. So progress has been made on that in Central Leeward. Also other plots of lands in the Layou area with people with no Deeds and so on, we are working on it and also last but not least, the vexing problem in Glebe Hill, people without their Deeds for the 40 or 50 years and they have been telling me, comrade what has been done in 40 or 50 years, we expect you to do in a year or two, otherwise...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Ten minutes.

**HONOURABLE MAXWELL CHARLES:** Mr. Speaker, I will end up before that time hopefully. I am proud to announce that some of the lands have been surveyed in Glebe at least 26 pieces during the Christmas vacation. Your names have been attached to the plots of lands, when say your names have been attached, your names were there before, but the correct spelling with your ID numbers and so on etc and the document is in the..., yes in the Surveyor Department and they are working on it [applause]. I will be with them everyday, I promised to call them everyday until the relevant document gets to Cabinet [applause]. In the next few weeks I do hope that I would be able to report to the people, not all of the people, but all those that have been surveyed in Glebe Hill I will be able to report success and victory and of course on that day we got to have a little ceremony and a little eat up and a little drink up, because you have waited long and I am going to continue to work for the people of Glebe Hill and its environs [applause] [interjection] a piece of? No we will use beef.

Mr. Speaker, in Buccament area near to the Golden Years Centre my Government has given a piece of land to the Salvation Army and there the Salvation Army is going to construct a building there, a building that would house young ladies who may fall into certain kinds of trouble and we applaud the efforts of the Salvation Army. It was a very ambitious project, but because of financial constraints the plan has to be drawn over and because

of this we are having a little delay. It is in with the Planning and it is soon to be released. So far we have made progressed. I met on several occasions with Major Antoine, not only Major Antoine but with some of his bosses as the man for the area. We have also met with the Honourable Frederick Stephenson, to date we have promised them concessions on some of the equipment that they would bring in to build that structure there in the Cane Grove area, 2012 should be a good year for that project.

Mr. Speaker, we continue with our organisations in Buccament to work together with the hotel, Buccama on the Bay. Mr. Speaker, during the year 2012 regrettably, 2011 yes, I am not yet adjusted to 2012, during the year 2011 the hotel there has had problems with persons who come in there to give trouble, very bad thing to happen. But I want to announce at this point that we have worked together with the returnees which are an organisation in the Vermont/Buccament Bay area along with citizens of Buccament Bay to bring the situation under control. We would continue to do so because we recognize the benefits that that hotel can bring to Buccament, its environs and the island on a whole.

Mr. Speaker, as I close I want again to congratulate the Minister of Finance, Doctor the Honourable Ralph Gonsalves for bringing to us another budget 2012 and again as I have said before, despite the conditions in the capitalist world, despite the conditions in all the multinational corporations, we are able as a nation of 110,000 a small Parliament we are able to hold our own. Despite this, all these disadvantages, all these bad things so to speak that are happening in the world, we are able to bring a budget here in which there is no cutting off, there is no downsizing of the civil service, we still are able to see about our Education Revolution, we still are able to see to it that the poor and needy would be getting their monies when the month ends. Ladies and gentlemen I wish this budget a successful passage through this Honourable House. I thank you [applause].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** [Inaudible] All right, okay, [inaudible] okay, you have 45 minutes. [Interjection] for what?

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** The time afforded to Members, this is [inaudible] I understand that the Ministers would require additional time and especially for those Members who are on the Government side who would soon be on the Opposition side [laughter] it is in their interest to agree to these changes. With all honesty Mr. Speaker, Members on this side have to shadow..., and I am speaking of elected Members, have to shadow a number of Ministries and they also have to look after the needs of constituents and I would suggest that at least one hour is a reasonable change for elected representatives instead of the current 45 minutes which goes like 15. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I would presume that you would start with this one [laughter] but of course I am very presumptuous, Mr. Speaker [laughter].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I am confident that you are aware that is it a part of the law and I just cannot change it like that.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, well Mr. Speaker, if you would kindly advise me when 15 minutes left I will appreciate that.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yes, I will do that.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** During this presentation, Mr. Speaker, it is my intention to address the areas of infrastructure, housing, energy, port. Mr. Speaker, I wish to start by recognizing as all of us have thus far that we are in very troubled financial times, which requires a significant amount of belt tightening. We have heard that there is no bonus for the first time in ten years, we have heard of the deferring of the 3 percent that civil servants should have had for some time now and there is no indication unless there is a miracle in the corner that they may get it. We have heard, Mr. Speaker, that three Members on this side, three candidates on this side who were teachers of repute have not been given an opportunity to be reemployed following the last elections and over a year have passed.

On the other side, Mr. Speaker, all of the Members of the ULP who have contested the elections or who have retired from contesting the elections have been gainfully employed. Contracts continues for persons in the public service who have passed their retirement age and who have no known particular skills that is in market square. Contracts remain for persons....,

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my Honourable friend would just give way....,

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Contracts remain for persons....,

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Point of order.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** The Honourable Member is misleading this House. The point in which he is misleading the House, he said that the other Members who ran on this side and he is talking about teachers are now being fully employed. The only person on this side who was a school teacher who run and who resigned and he is not a teacher, he is a senator. It was open to the Opposition to appoint two of those teachers as senators [applause].

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I am saying persons continue to be employed by the state to go on radio and do all kinds of mischief. I am saying that this budget provides for an additional vehicle for the Prime Minister that this budget provides for the renovation of the Prime Minister's Residence that this budget provides for the renovation of the security booth for the Prime Minister's Residence, again I am saying, Mr. Speaker, on top of all of this, this budget provides for increased taxes on the houses together with broadening the network to bring into the tax fold houses that hitherto were not included. I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that this budget provides for the repeat of a census. In my mind not because of a fire, but because proper steps were not taken to store the data collected in the centre electronically in a day and age when we talk about being IT savvy. For weeks and instances months the data was collected and not properly stored so that this country has to spend millions of dollars to redo a census and we talking belt tightening.

More so, Mr. Speaker, we are told that we are going to get an increase in water rates. We are not told how much the increase is going to be, but, Mr. Speaker, I want to let our people know, I want to let our people know the reason why there must be an increase in water rates. I want to let our people know why because it is not dissimilar to what has happened to what was the National Commercial Bank, the Government of this country does not pay its bill to the CWSA [interjection] thank you, Mr. Speaker, thank you [laughter]. The Government of this country owes the CWSA in excess of three and a half million dollars [applause], in excess of three and a half million dollars so when they want to talk about loans, we who pay water rates are being asked, we are being asked to subsidise the Government. We must pay higher rates because the Government is not paying for an excellent service provided by the institution. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, and I speak not of monies owed by the state corporations; I am speaking of Government accounts to the Water and Sewerage Authority in excess of three and one half million dollars.

Mr. Speaker, I turn my attention to the Ministry of Transport and Works and Mr. Speaker, one of the things in the CWSA Solid Waste and the Government really has not carried on the policies started under the World Bank Project with respect to the effective management of Solid Waste and so the CWSA also bleeding because of the burden of Solid Waste Management which should not have been. But Mr. Speaker, really and truly I listened to my leader discuss why this document will not work from a fiscal and monetary point of view.

Mr. Speaker, as an engineer I tend to zero in on issues very specific and I have taken time out to go through this entire document, I have gone through this document very deliberately, I have paid particular attention, Mr. Speaker, to the sections where they talk about result indicators and I relate this to the capital and other expenditures and you would wonder if anybody took time to review any aspect of this document. I submit very respectfully that this is nothing but 'bledy' solid waste Mr. Speaker, total garbage. My apologies, Mr. Speaker, unadulterated solid waste, Mr. Speaker, solid waste, it is solid waste in essence.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** [Inaudible]..., and the context in which it is being used, you have to bear it careful with the language used and the context it is being used.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** I will show, Mr. Speaker, I will show why I have categorized it as absolute solid waste, I would show.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, just a minute.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** I would stop using it for now. But I will show you.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yes, I want to at least give you an example. I remember when I was senator here and Mr. Douglas Williams was the Speaker of the House...,

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** A very good man.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** A certain gentleman was speaking and another feller brought a roll of toilet paper and put it on the desk and he was pulled up by the Speaker because of the implication of that and that is why I am saying that to you. I was here before and I experienced all of those.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** I think, Mr. Speaker, you are confusing solid waste with liquid waste [laughter] but...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Whatever, it is the same thing it is talking about.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Anyway as I said, Mr. Speaker, I respect your point of view and I will explain my rationale. [Cross talking, inaudible]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** All right, Honourable Members, please, allow the Minister to continue.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Mr. Speaker, if we look at the South Leeward Highway, Mr. Speaker, on page 419 and I am looking at the Ministry of Transport etc. eh, which says under result indicators for 2012 eh, it says, South Leeward Highway, tender for the construction of 11 kilometers of Leeward Highway from Milton Cato Memorial Hospital to Layou. Mr. Speaker, on page 419 the results indicators for 2011 design and rehabilitate 9 miles of Leeward Highway from Milton Cato Memorial Hospital to Layou achieved a 10 percent completion by December 2011, comments – consultancy contract signed and advance payment issued. Work expected to conclude by the end of the first quarter of 2012 and we go, Mr. Speaker, to page 636 under the Capital Estimates 636 and when you see..., while the indicator is to have the road complete by the first quarter, on page 636 you have sums of money under that project which goes forward into a number of years are rehabilitation 550704: \$850,000 in 2012; \$2 million in 2013; \$5 million in 2014; the total budget is \$13,000,500.

Mr. Speaker, which is right? Is it the Capital Estimates ain't good? is it that what they have on the front page nobody checked it, what am I suppose to believe? Is that a document to be presented to this Honourable House for expenditures in this country, what is this? What on earth is this?

The Cross-Country road, Mr. Speaker, the Cross-Country road, the same thing, why is the Government not telling the people the truth about the Cross-Country road? On one hand in the Capital Estimate, they say the project is on hold, on one hand the project is on hold, but in the projection what they want to accomplish they are going to complete some feasibility study and something else. Is it on hold or is it continuing? Are you ashamed to tell the people that it was never a real project? Tell us what is real. The documents [interjection] you have time through your leader.

Mr. Speaker, the Vigie Highway, the Vigie Highway and you know..., let me go to the medical centre in Georgetown. I listened to the Honourable Minister of Transport earlier today telling this Parliament that that centre will be completed in 2012 and I said to him, he should not say that, but he ain't look at what he put down in this document? He ain't look at it. This project has been in every budget for the last six years. I remember a few years ago I talked about them talking about staffing for the last quarter of a year ago when it should have

been operationalised. But when you look at the estimate, Mr. Speaker, it has several million dollars of expenditure to go, only a small fraction of it is in the estimate for 2012, the majority is in 2013, but we know it ain't happening in 2012 or 2013 based on what has transpired. So who fooling who? What is the purpose of this document? Why have result indicators that are at such variance with what is wherever else in the document? The same thing with the Vigie Highway.

The Learning Resource Centres, Mr. Speaker, an item of capital expenditure, the result indicators have to construct Learning Resource Centres in West Kingstown, Central Kingstown and North Leeward. When you look at the Capital Estimates \$1 million out of \$3 million and we know they spend \$1 million and could not build a retaining wall. So they could not possibly, they could not possibly put down one of these centres for that. Mr. Speaker, this is..., you see and what is painful you know, the Minister is laughing and giggling, when this document is making this country look like a Mickey Mouse. This document is riddled with comments statistics that make no sense whatsoever. This is not a laughing matter. This is the budget that determines the direction of our state for the next year. It is something that should be prepared by public officers, revised. When it comes here, it should have been scrutinized. This document is not worth the paper it is written on.

Bridges, Mr. Speaker, under the Ministry of Works, we see year after year, after year, after year reconstruction of bridges and if I refer particularly to West Kingstown which I have the honour and privilege to represent, Mr. Speaker, West Kingstown. Mr. Speaker, the bridge leading to Fort Charlotte is a critical bridge because for tourism purposes the Fort Charlotte is a very popular place that tourists visit, well used to Mr. Speaker, but it is perhaps because Fort Charlotte is virtually a derelict now, it is because perhaps, Mr. Speaker, that if you go to Fort Charlotte and visit where the pictures and so on used to be, you better put something over your nose for the faeces from cats and other stray animals and urine, you will not want to be there.

So Mr. Speaker, that Fort Charlotte is not being done and all that the Government says with respect to the Fort Charlotte Bridge now is that they have a weight restriction on the bridge. We see the sign and if we judge what happen with embankments over the years that sign would be there for the next several years, it means we ain't getting the bridge in Fort Charlotte. And I must say, Mr. Speaker, you know of all the Members on that side, I have an excellent rapport with the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works, and indeed his predecessor, we always had excellent relationships and I go to him regularly and he speaks with me candidly some of the time, most of the times. He speaks with me, so I get a clearer understanding. I am a reasonable person you know, I am a reasonable person.

But Mr. Speaker, when I sit here and I listen to what the Honourable Representative for South Leeward says about how many roads he got fixed, or Central Leeward in his constituency, I said, "oh Lord boy, I cannot count one in West Kingstown you know" [interjection] yes, but I cannot count one. I went with the Honourable Minister to Buddy Gutter Mr. Speaker, the people of Buddy Gutter volunteered their labour, their heavy equipment, their trucks to bring in materials, all the Government has to do is provide some technical and other assistance, the Minister told me, "yes before the year out we will talk with the comrade and we will get it", Mr. Speaker, today before I came up here I met him downstairs, I say, "I hope we have it in 2012", he say, "Well boy I no, I cannot get nuttin in that". You cannot get nuttin in that Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in like manner in this year gone, Mr. Speaker, I came to the Honourable House and asked the Minister of Education if she would permit me to work with parents and teachers of students of the Kingstown Government School at Stoney Grounds to do some much needed work on the yard, the Minister rejected my proposal flatly. So I looked, Mr. Speaker, in the Estimates under the Ministry of Education to see what they will do to improve schools, Mr. Speaker, I ain't see a penny for Stoney Grounds School. I see other schools there; I ain't see a penny for Stoney Grounds School. So on the one hand the Minister has flatly rejects the offer from the [interjection] do not counteract me, flatly rejects..., all Ministries projects are handled through BRAGSA and but they are listed under the Ministry. Mr. Speaker, having rejected the offer of the people of West Kingstown to help in a belt tightening thing, not a penny, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to turn to energy, I wish to turn to energy. In the Prime Minister's Budget Address, Mr. Speaker, when he was giving it you know I heard something and I said, "Boy my ears like it giving me trouble", so I went back and I revisited the document which we got towards the end, but in the section relating to energy page 80 Mr. Speaker, this is what the Prime Minister had to say, the second paragraph in response to this challenge, we have fashioned a comprehensive and modern National Energy Policy which has as it central features, the sourcing of significant quantity of energy products under the PetroCaribe Agreement, further development of renewable energy sources, energy conservation etc., etc.

Mr. Speaker, on the following page the Prime Minister says, "Despite..." it is the third paragraph on that page, "Despite the reduction in the tariff for industrial and commercial consumers in 2011, net earnings to VINLEC have increased", 2011 VINLEC increased their earnings in 2011 despite reduction in tariff, but on the bottom last paragraph of this, Mr. Speaker, this is one that makes me wonder if I live in a strange territory, very strange territory you know. "accordingly", the Prime Minister said, "in order to have successful expansion of renewable energy in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, there is need for a restructuring of the rates", for restructuring of the rates, now you pause and you think now well the consumers are going to get some benefits, but I go on, "for restructuring of the rates" Mr. Speaker, "such that some of the savings in the fuel surcharge will accrue to VINLEC", not to the consumer, to VINLEC who already have increased earnings in 2011, despite the reduction in some charges, eh, eh, and then I asked myself, Mr. Speaker, I asked myself very seriously then, is this Government seriously interested in and making efforts at green energy, and unfortunately, I have a negative conclusion.

Why do I say that, Mr. Speaker, why do I say that? I have before me a number of documents, Mr. Speaker, you see and do not be fooled by the colour, it is just a paper is that colour, nice colour though, eh [interjection] sure, have hope man, yes, prepared by me, Mr. Speaker, this document was signed on the 30<sup>th</sup> May 2008 by a gentleman called "Ralph E. Gonsalves" for the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and by a person called, "Robert Rohan" for the developer of CGE Limited. You hear the date Mr. Speaker? 30<sup>th</sup> May 2008.

Mr. Speaker, repeatedly in this Parliament, I have been making the case that I am worried about a Government's lack of focus on alternative energy. I have been speaking repeatedly about geothermal energy in particular. I have been noting that as tiny island like Nevis is well on the way. In this budget, the Prime Minister makes reference to a wind farm, a wind farm at Ribishi for which work started sometime in the same

2008. Mr. Speaker, you know when this kind of information comes to me by angel, whatever colour you call them, sometimes my heart sinks you know. In this country we have been talking about alternative energy, Nevis Government in 2008 June conceptualised a wind farm, in 2010 the wind farm is operational in Nevis. Mr. Speaker, this is 2012, this Government entered into agreement in 2008 and all we are hearing is something might happen. We have gone nowhere. Are we serious about alternative energy? Are we for real, Mr. Speaker? Nevis started 2007 June, it operational in 2010, a year later we started, this is 2012 nothing, nothing.

But Mr. Speaker, I peruse this document you know, a company call “CGE” and the memorandum speaks of a company registered in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and you know there is not only my colleague the Honourable Senator Frederick who is computer savvy, I used it, Mr. Speaker, so I Google CGE, I Google, Mr. Speaker there ain’t no company in anything named geothermal energy name CGE, but I found, Mr. Speaker, [interjection] wait, wait, wait, I found a gentleman under a university in Canada who is doing some desktop research and who was based in St. Lucia, who is doing studies, researching information like I am doing, has no expertise in the subject at all, but researching and he is doing a course in St. Lucia on the net from the university in St. Lucia.

Mr. Speaker, this is the company, the man behind the company that this Government entered into agreement with in 2008 [interjection] MOU, good, and required within three months, required this company within three months to come up with an agreement. A year passed, Mr. Speaker, zilch; this MOU was extended for another year. Nothing happened, but Mr. Speaker, it gets worse you know, it gets worse, this same gentleman did a similar thing in neighbouring St. Lucia, and so the experience is there. They talked about Ottley Hall and how people get hoodwinked, eh? The point is the company [interjection] I glad you raise that.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Striking of the gavel.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Mr. Speaker, the company that is now about to produce geothermal energy in Nevis also came here and had an agreement with this Government and they throw it out the window and took up this one, eh. So do not tell me you know, take up this one that has no expertise whatsoever in the field and Mr. Speaker, you remember I start by asking is this Government serious about...,

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Wait, just a minute, Honourable Members just allow the Honourable Member to continue, because he is actually shouting and he is affecting my ear, please so allow him to speak so that he can move on. I am serious about that, please allow him to finish. Continue.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** I apologise profusely, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, you know there are certain matters that make me get very angry especially when the people of this country have been ripped off. It makes me get very angry at it because they do not have a lot of resources; this is very serious matter, very serious matter. So you see, Mr. Speaker, the question of green energy and I want to put this into context you know. It is not merely that St. Vincent would achieve a tremendous competitive advantage in certain areas of manufacturing and otherwise if we have cheap renewable energy.

Mr. Speaker, as a Parliament and please this is serious business, as a Parliament and as a people we cannot..., I may not be here for very long, but as a people we have to look down the road. You see in the world today, Mr. Speaker, there is a critical thing. The time is coming soon, energy, non-renewable energy, gas and oil, the time is coming soon, Mr. Speaker, when countries like ours will not be able to pay for this energy because China and other users Brazil will be taking it at rates that we cannot afford because we know the quantum is not a lot. It is in that context, Mr. Speaker, that I have a more than resolute passion, about the urgent need for us to identify and develop alternative energy. It is a serious matter. Venezuela in a few years time with or without Chavez will have no interest in St. Vincent for fuel. Simple reality, we as a people need to look outside the box and think. I am very disappointed that we have wasted ten years when fuel charges have been consistently high. We have done nothing to look at alternative sources. We have achieved zilch. I went to a seminar representing the Honourable Leader of the Opposition where this Government invited the OAS...,

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** 15 minutes.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. This Government invited the OAS to help them on matters related to renewable energy. I listened to the representative of the OAS saying that..., well and this is a lawyer eh, that her role and the objective was legislative framework for renewable energy and she was saying that her role is not to make policy, but a Government must have its policy and the legislative framework would fit around it. Most of the Government representative came to that meeting expecting that the consultants were going to do policy and then draft the legislation.

Mr. Speaker, it tells me that something is grossly wrong. This is serious business. The policy on energy; I finally got a copy at that very meeting, I have been trying repeatedly and when I look at it, I do not believe that it is accidental that the energy policy speaks as a priority of the number one, eh, is sourcing a significant quantity of energy products under PetroCaribe Agreement that is not sustainable, it is not sustainable. We need to exploit our natural resources. We need to give number one priority to green energy. We know we have potential. We know we can extend water, hydro power, we know we can do wind, we know we have good potential for geothermal, why are we sitting on it, why are we not beating this with the urgency that it requires?

Mr. Speaker that is why I asked, "Are we serious?" And you see, Mr. Speaker, that is why I said you know for the past ten years it was very clear that energy cost, fuel cost is not going to go back to where it was in previous years and in all the previous times there had not been..., I had many a conversation with late CEO of VINLEC and other engineers on this matter. The reason why these initiatives were not take then, it was because the cost of fuel then relative to an investment of these options made them nothing to bother about, but we have been living with these for ten years, Mr. Speaker and we did nothing. Instead what we did? We went to a fly by night person..., wait, don't we do due diligence anymore? How could we make a memorandum agreement with a guy who has no expertise on the subject eh, eh? This is a serious Government, this is a serious Government?

Mr. Speaker, the question of energy you know every morning, and I thank God everyday that I live in the humble community of Sharpes, because man, Mr. Speaker, you know I get into town and out of town like in a jiffy. I feel sorry for anybody who comes from the Windward side in the morning time and get into town [interjection] aah, and then they take a half an hour, Mr. Speaker, to get from Arnos Vale to town. What I am

saying, Mr. Speaker, the energy..., you see when we talk about energy you know, when we talk about energy there are so many things that we do not pay particular attention to. The Fenton Road, Mr. Speaker, which has been abandoned, Mr. Speaker, if that road was in existence people coming from parts of the Windward side could get into town through Sharpes, Lodge Village anywhere, and Green Hill. You know Sharpes is one of the most interconnected communities. It is a road that should be given priority.

Remember you know there was a road proposed before this Government got into power to take it across Mc Kies Hill and so on. Instead we wasted years with a cross on the country that they call a road that is now a cross on the backs of the ULP, a real cross that they cannot carry. They are too ashamed now to carry it, Mr. Speaker. They do not even mention it properly you know [applause]. I remember when the Honourable Member for Central Leeward was talking about a bridge I had to remind, Mr. Speaker, that that is how ULP do things. They build the bridge and then look for the road. They start two ends of the Cross Country Road and they have no idea how they are going to connect it. What a country, what a Government that is what they saying eh, what a Government, what a nice statement.

So Mr. Speaker, I wish now to turn to some matters pertinent to the constituency of West Kingstown. Mr. Speaker, that South Leeward Highway is in a very deplorable condition. Not long ago there was an accident on the road and a lot of people realized how many hours they were stuck not being able to move in either direction and you laugh. You know, Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the Honourable House have been making a very serious request of the Government to give priority to an alternative route to South Leeward other than the Leeward Highway. Mr. Speaker, the highway has high traffic in containers and freight vehicles associated with the Industrial Estate. Mr. Speaker, we do not want to wait until someone is trying to get into Kingstown with an ambulance and the road is blocked because a container turns over and it takes hours for the road to be cleared. When I speak, Mr. Speaker, I speak with a passion because this is real.

There is an urgent need in this country to have an alternative route to the Leeward side of the island to the South Leeward Highway. For you to pass from the dangerous holes..., that road in itself, Mr. Speaker, is not really suited for the kind of trailers and so on. You know a lot of people who come here for the first time marvel that a trailer would go on that road. I urge that very serious consideration be given to that. Likewise, Mr. Speaker, the same thing goes for people in the..., by extension, in the Ottley Hall and Edinboro area, with the one road through the cemetery. Again many a times there is a funeral and the traffic is stalled. Fortunately most times vehicles out there do not respect the funerals you know; they drive through them like nobody business. But that I believe is a conditioned response, because you really should not have a situation where everybody is held up for whatever purpose for that length of time. We need to develop the road from Edinboro to Montrose and to continue that main road all the way to Ottley Hall, Buddy Gutter, Lowmans Bay onto the Leeward Highway as a priority, I plead.

Mr. Speaker, there are so many areas of concern in my constituency but I will not do justice to the constituency if I did not through this media appeal to the Minister responsible for VINLEC to consider the people in Ottley Hall in the area where the road leads from Ottley Hall to Buddy Gutter. The road should have been built for some time now, but we know the reasons why it has not built. The conditions under which people have to get to their homes to which the children have to pass day and night is atrocious but in the evening, Mr. Speaker, when

the night comes and when the rains come it takes more than a miracle for them to get home. All I am asking in the interim is a couple of street lights. On the road from Ottley Hall to Buddy Gutter the track, the access path, the gouti track put a couple of street lights to make it a little easier until such time as the road can fix. It is nothing much to ask, couple of street lights.

Mr. Speaker, the same in Edinboro, we have a good new secondary school there, but the people in Edinboro are suffering because the link road from the school to middle road, retaining walls were built by the past administration, it is just to be filled, Mr. Speaker, 100 feet and just a yard and year after year we plead with this Government to do that piece of road, what it would mean is that the vehicle, the vans which go into that community, they have to walk all through the top of Edinboro up and down because the vans cannot make the circle. If that simple piece of road is built the vans could come in one way and go through the three division of Edinboro and service the people. Mr. Speaker, it is not a lot to ask for. So I plead with the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works. The people are again prepared to put some assistance if you provide the materials they will give the labour. We understand the conditions under which we exist; we are prepared to tighten our belts. The people..., nothing professional about that, all I am asking is for your support. Is that too much to ask?

Mr. Speaker, recently there was a shooting in Ottley Hall and I went to visit that scene and I could not stay long, it is really a sad state of affairs. There are in Ottley Hall as I believe in most constituencies in most parts of the country a significant number, but I believe it is most so in Ottley Hall and Edinboro, a significant number of young people who sit on the block day and night playing cards, smoking every conceivable thing and plotting all kinds of evil doings. It is no wonder that they get into difficulties. You see, Mr. Speaker, I listen to my leader speak about crime and I could not be in more agreement with him. Time is not something that we must talk about from a political point, I have had many a discussion with these young people, it is not that they are unwilling to work, it is not that they are without a certain amount of skill and even education or certain O' Levels. A number of them are pretty well..., they have people in those groups who have six and seven O' Levels and they have nothing to do.

Mr. Speaker, as the representative for this constituency I am powerless to do anything for these people and I am proposing that an allocation of \$200,000 to repair the security booth at the Prime Minister's Residence be allocated to West Kingstown to be executed under the auspices of BRAGSA for the purpose of constructing a building with self help from those young people, a building that those people are prepared to help build for which we can seek and we can find funds to bring in some equipment to get these people meaningfully employed in crafts and other initiatives [applause].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Three more generous minutes.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, \$200,000 I repeat is all I am asking and I do not want it for Daniel Cummings, I do not want to have anything to do with money, I am asking the BRAGSA be the agency that oversea and execute the project. Mr. Speaker, you know I say and I say again, when a crime like that happen in Ottley Hall you cannot fool people you know, band-aid ain't good for that, do not carry no mobile police in the day and tek it out in the night, what is the good of that? Those people

most of them are not..., Mr. Speaker, there are elements there that need rehabilitation, but by and large experience has taught me that if you treat people like people they transformed. I always go back to CWSA; we know how misbehaved people were, before that institution was transferred. It is how you treat them, is how you empower them, it is how you respect them. The people in Ottley Hall can change but they want when they get up in the morning to feel like a human being.

Mr. Speaker, I crave your indulgence, I hope my time is not out as yet. I want to raise a matter...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yes your time is out.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Well I crave a few minutes of your indulgence. Mr. Speaker, I want to raise a matter that pains me and I am glad that the Minister of Health is here. This one of all makes me sick to the core. Mr. Speaker, there is a gentleman in Edinboro, a well-known taxi driver who fell ill, did an operation here and the thing got worse. He had to rake and scrape and go to Trinidad for another operation, Mr. Speaker, the problem got progressively worst. I personally went and spoke with the Chief Medical Officer and the Honourable Minister of Health, my good veteran friend, and I was asked to let the gentleman write a letter seeking assistance in whatever kind. Whether it be assistance to go back to Trinidad or link up with a Cuban expert or whatever kind, everyday as I look at the gentleman, Mr. Speaker, you can see the progressive deterioration.

The letter was done, the letter was taken in person by the gentleman to the Minister of Health who was not there, it was left for him, a copy was sent to the Chief Medical Officer, Mr. Speaker, this is last year October/November, that gentleman has not had the courtesy of the response to date when the letter clearly pointed out the urgency of the situation. Is life and death, is a life and death. I listened to a radio station where Government employees are paid to talk, Mr. Speaker, you know what they said? That gentleman used to support the comrade, and he stop and he had the Gall to come to the comrade for help. I heard that, Mr. Speaker. In this our country and Mr. Speaker, I know that the gentleman went to the Prime Minister on more than one occasion and I know that the Minister received a letter and I want to end by saying, Mr. Speaker, I was fortunate to be able to facilitate the gentleman going to Barbados and getting a Visa and he has a son in the States who just before Christmas brought him up and I pray God he will get the treatment he deserves. Mr. Speaker, we pass this world, we pass this world but once, I rest my case there [applause].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable, just a minute. I have recognised you but..., okay when you are ready, Honourable Member.

**HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you very much for giving me this opportunity to make my contribution to this 2012 debate. Mr. Speaker, the last General Elections in St. Vincent and the Grenadines were concluded in 2010 and understanding the Constitution, my expectation of the next General Elections would be in 2015 and so Mr. Speaker, if I as an individual if I as an individual is being affected terribly by back pains and there are four years to come to run for another election, I am not growing younger I am growing older and so my condition would deteriorate and

deteriorate worse in the next four years. Mr. Speaker, is it that I want to make history to be the second wheelchair candidate for the next General Elections coming?

Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the various debates from the Opposition side, Mr. Speaker, and I was surprised at the level of debate that I am hearing. Mr. Speaker, I heard the comment a while ago that the road to Campden Park to the Container Port...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I hope that Members are not setting a precedent that by the time others come round there is no quorum. All right, okay, I am just giving that warning, okay.

**HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL:** Mr. Speaker, I heard the comment that the Container Port, that the road leading to the Container Port in Campden Park is that that road is not fit for container traffic and something must be done immediately about it. Mr. Speaker, the question comes to mind when that project was identified and done, was any analysis done to that road as part of the overall project where millions of dollars were spent in that project and this is why I say, Mr. Speaker, the comments I heard from the other side of this Parliament is why I always keep asking the question, who is really fooling who?

Mr. Speaker, I have heard the comments several times of victimisation and not giving back the three teachers their jobs having resigned their jobs for the General Elections. Mr. Speaker, for the first time I am saying this, I was a candidate in the General Elections in 1989. I resigned my job at the Ministry of Agriculture and the party that I ran for lost in the General Elections, I reapplied for my job; I am still waiting up until today to be answered. Further, Mr. Speaker, and in the gathering there are colleagues from the Ministry of Agriculture.

In 1990, I saw an advertisement in the Vincentian seeking to have Extension Officers in the Banana Growers Association; in 1991 I got a job as an Extension Officer in the St. Vincent Banana Growers Association, the very first board meeting when I became a member of staff, the very first board meeting was attended by the Minister then who recommended my dismissal from the St. Vincent Banana Association. Members of the Board of Directors then indicated to the then Minister that he was going down the wrong road, but I have survived the test of times and I came back in 2001 and I won in the constituency of North Windward. I contested against Mrs. Ruth Woods, Mrs. Ruth Woods lost, she lost at the polls, but Ruth Woods and I we have gone back a long way and she said to me, "Minister, you are the representative now, I expect you to assist me", and I assisted Ruth Woods in getting back her job after she said, "no together now".

I went to the Cabinet and sought the support of my colleagues. In 2005 Mr. Elvis Daniel ran against me and he lost, again I went to the Cabinet and I asked the support of my colleagues for him to have his job. But in 2009 there was the introduction of the new Constitution which would have given teachers the right to have their jobs back, but it is the same NDP that run up and down this country, indicating to the general public to vote "NO" against these conditions. Yet you are coming day by day to say to this Parliament that the teachers must get back their jobs. Well, what controversy?

Mr. Speaker, this side of the House is very consistent, very consistent in its policies and so because of that, Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to commend the Honourable Prime Minister and the Ministry of Finance to putting together this year's budget 2012, a budget that can once again meet the necessary goods and

services for Vincentians for this year 2012. Mr. Speaker, when one looks at the turbulent economic climate that swept the shores of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in 2010 and in 2011, and creating such economic difficulties, putting this budget together, Mr. Speaker, for those who would have done the work, I commend them very highly at this time [applause].

Mr. Speaker, I believe that putting national budget for small open economies like St. Vincent and the Grenadines is not an easy task. Why? Because resources are limited and that the general public is demanding more and more every time. I believe the Prime Minister in all honesty may have had significant nightmares in putting a budget to meet the needs of Vincentians in 2012. Mr. Speaker, I want to take a cue from the Prime Minister's Budget Address, on page 3 of the document, quoting from a publication of the IMF World Economic Outlook, Slowing Growth, Rising Risks. I quote Mr. Speaker; "the global economy is in a dangerous new phase. Global activity has weakened and has become more uneven, confidence has fallen sharply recently, and downside risks are growing."

Mr. Speaker, within this context of what is happening internationally; I see hope being very gloomy, but on the contrary, the Honourable Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in this budget has created hope for all of us [applause]. I have heard negative comments coming from the Leader of the Opposition about the weakening economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, yet recognising the financial woes that exist, world over. Mr. Speaker, internationally, there was the Wall Street Financial problem causing the financial meltdown in the US. Did that affect our economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines? Yes it did.

Mr. Speaker, there were financial problems in the Eurozone, did that affect our economy here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines? Yes it did. Regionally, Mr. Speaker, there was the CLICO and the BAICO situation affecting negatively over \$350 million within the region, did that affect our economy here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines? Yes it did. Locally Mr. Speaker, there was several natural disasters that hit our shores, there was Hurricane Tomas ravaging the agricultural sector and the housing stock, there was the April floods in the North Eastern end of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and there was the Black Sigatoka Leaf Spot Disease Problems in bananas, as bananas being one our major agricultural export crop, did these disasters affect our economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines? Certainly, Mr. Speaker, because over \$250 million of damaged was done to the agricultural sector and so having had all of those financial difficulties and even where farmers/homeowners who were affected, Mr. Speaker, none of our farmers or house owners were left adrift [applause]. Their problems were addressed though the availability of funding was difficult. That is the difference with this administration and that of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, I heard the comments coming from the Opposition Leader, the negative comments in relation to the performance of the economy and even what he would have been exposed to when he worked with the CDB and was sent to Belize where subsequently 1000 persons lose their jobs. It immediately told me, Mr. Speaker, if the NDP party was in government and what would have been happening to the economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Certainly hundreds if not thousands of persons would have been losing their jobs.

Mr. Speaker, I am no economist, I am an agriculturist and I heard the Opposition Leader boast of his 45 years of economic experience and to question his experience I believe I would be out of order, because I am no

economist, but certainly I am sure that I can understand what factors impinges on economies to cause economic growth or economic downfall and I heard the Foreign Minister in his presentation also indicated that he is not an economist, but he has been reading enough to understand the basic things in economics and so I too Mr. Speaker, I am not an economist.

But Mr. Speaker, I ask the question having heard the Opposition Leader, having been an economic guru in that..., are these factors applicable, really applicable under the circumstances to which St. Vincent and the Grenadines economy is going through? He has made a lot of negative comments but I cannot recall hearing any recommendations whatsoever coming forth. Mr. Speaker, you know when I was younger and used to be going to Sunday school, I learnt of a story of a little boy David, who was sent to fight a mighty giant, a giant who boasted of his strength, but David a small man used only his width and so David fell one of the mightiest giant. I asked the Opposition Leader to be aware. Because we all understand what is happening in the international world as it relates to finances and this administration, is using targeted strategic approaches to create the environment that is best for St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, they are all in turn with international affairs and we would have seen many economic giants in France, in Italy, in Germany, in Spain, in Portugal, in Great Britain, in the USA we have seen many giants fall to their knees and so Mr. Speaker, I am sure that in these countries, I am sure all of these individuals would have been concerned about peoples jobs. They would have been concerned about money supply, they would have been concerned about standard of living, but we would have seen greed and selfishness taking over the world.

Mr. Speaker, almost eleven years ago I was elected to this Parliament and Mr. Speaker, today I am receiving basically the same salary as what I worked for almost eleven years ago, except for the basic increments. Mr. Speaker, I have heard that things are worse off today than before, but Mr. Speaker, since the last eleven years I am here, I would have seen increases in wages and salaries for public servants, for daily paid workers and for even the pensioners of this country. There would not have been any direct increase salaries for Parliamentarians and so I believe the Opposition Leader is really referring to this class of workers in this country.

Mr. Speaker, I now turn to the agricultural sector. This year 2012 the Ministry of Agriculture would spend \$27.9 million. Surely, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture can do with more. The Ministry of Education would spend \$134 million for this year 2012, the Ministry of Agriculture can do with that money, but if the Ministry of Agriculture must have taken away \$134 million from the Education Ministry, what will happen to the 980 Primary School Teachers we have in the school system? What will happen to the 600 hundred students we have studying in the various universities? Those are the questions that are before us. But understanding the need for all of the different Ministries and Departments, this Government would make the best decisions for the future of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the Ministry of Agriculture will get \$27.9 million for the next 12 months of 2012.

But Mr. Speaker, it is always the concern of the Ministry and its performance for quite some time and the Prime Minister in his budget address made reference to it. Mr. Speaker, the declining position of the sector has not just started. When the NDP administration came to office in 1984 Agriculture's contribution to the GDP was

approximately 18 percent. Mr. Speaker, by 1990 the GDP contribution went up to 21.19 percent something that is very encouraging. Banana at that time in 1990 contributed 10.4 percent. Mr. Speaker, other crops contributed 7.77 percent, but 1994 Mr. Speaker, the contribution of Agriculture to the GDP by 1994 fell to 11.87 percent in a matter of four years. Agriculture contribution from 1990 was at 21.19 percent and then fell by 1994 to 11.37 percent where bananas at that time were now contributing 3.4 percent.

Mr. Speaker, those are the facts and so Mr. Speaker, one would ask the question, what is really responsible for such a drastic decline? One can recall that there were no major diseases affecting the agricultural sector at that time. There were no major storms affecting up to 98 point..., almost 99 percent of the bananas been blown down? At that time, Mr. Speaker, there was no oil crisis and what is still going good is that the preferential market was still in place bearing in mind the European Union came together in 1993, but the first challenge of the MFN countries came in 1994. So the preferential treatment was still in place by 1994.

Mr. Speaker, was there an analysis done at that time? Did anyone look at the sector to see what the problems were? Who was the adviser to the Government at that time? Because to move from 21 percent to 11.2 percent in a matter of four years must be cause for concern, at the same time, Mr. Speaker, bananas traded in the supermarkets in the UK was being traded at 1 pound 16 pence per kilogram, one of the best prices ever within the Banana Industry. Today banana price trading in the supermarket is 58 pence per kilogram, less than half of what it was in 1994.

Mr. Speaker, in 2001 when the ULP administration came to Government, the GDP contribution was 11.3 percent. And by 2010 the GDP contribution stands at 6.27 percent, despite all of what would have happened to the sector within the last couple of years. Mr. Speaker, the last five years really was terrible. It was the worst in the history of the Agriculture Sector in this country of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. When one look and see there was a total change in the market regime and the market conditions which indeed required competitiveness, global gap standards and certification. These are conditions that were very difficult for our farmers. We would have also seen oil prices at its highest creating the situation where inputs were basically unaffordable. We would have seen major storms affecting the banana, tree crop and planting industry. We would have seen the attach of new diseases both Moko and Black Sigatoka, we would have seen the increase of tremendous labour problems. These are the experiences within the last five years and so Mr. Speaker, despite the difficulty and the sector is still being able to perform creditably giving 6.24 percent to the economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, I must congratulate the farmers of this country for responding very well under these circumstances [applause].

Mr. Speaker, our next door neighbour, the Dominican Republic, they are one of the better banana producing countries competitively in the world. Black Sigatoka is at their door step and the data has shown that their production is down by more than 20 percent of their exports and the company that is producing bananas in the DR is now considering what would be their fate, yet this Government continues to support and support the Banana Industry despite the difficulties that has been experienced.

Mr. Speaker, this administration recognised very much the importance of Agriculture to not only the sector, but to the rural economies of this country and so understanding the difficulty that the Banana Industry would have

been facing over the years came to the policy position that we must diversify within the sector and so there was several initiatives that were introduced during the last eleven or so years. These included the food production plan, the revitalisation of the Arrowroot Industry, the establishment of a Hatchery, the establishment of a Cassava Factory, a Coconut Water Bottling Plant, the Lauders Ago Processing Plant, and direct support to the Banana Industry as well as establishing a unit to drive the Agricultural Diversification Project.

Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, this would not have been the focus of the last administration, because I recall when I worked with the Ministry of Agriculture as an Extension Officer where for the first month of each year in January where the Minister, the Permanent Secretary would meet with the staff, in 1986 the information came to the Ministry's staff indicating the position that by 1992 Europe would have one union and therefore the Ministry through the Government needed to have looked at its position with a view of diversifying the economy. Well that very year 1986 was the closure of the Sugar Industry. By 1987 they introduced the Winter Vegetables, but that did not last as long as Ms Janie fire. As a matter of fact, Rabacca River was the market place for Winter Vegetables.

Mr. Speaker, having worked in the Ministry of Agriculture and particularly with the Banana Growers Association, one of the most difficult times for banana sales in the UK is in December and January in the height of the winter season and to take a policy position to produce and sell vegetables in the winter in the UK, one seems not to understand the business of trading in fruits in Europe. But that was the decision then. There was also the decision to close the Diamond Dairy, the closure of the Coconut Oil Industry, all these were done, what was produced, absolutely nothing. The question is, the chicken has now come home to roost. The agricultural sector though the general support been given by this administration, the chicken has now come home to roost. We are now saying that what should have been done before, nothing would have been done.

Mr. Speaker, there are several initiatives that were initiated, well I must say to you Mr. Speaker, some have not done well, but some are already bearing fruit and so Mr. Speaker, moving forward in 2012, having identified all of those initiatives, this Government is adding a new initiative to that list and that is "The Cocoa Production Programme." Mr. Speaker, this Government has entered into an agreement with Armajaro, a company that would trade with cocoa internationally. Mr. Speaker, with this cocoa production initiative, farmers will now be exposed to another crop. They can plant cocoa and now be able to sell their crop as Armajaro would be the purchaser. Some seven acres are being earmarked for production and work is already ongoing with the Ministry of Agriculture. Planting of the crop is expected to get underway by June/July this year where equally some 12 demonstration plots will be established so that farmers can be exposed to the practices that would be required for effective cocoa production.

In the budget there is a sum of \$150,000 to assist in the production of this crop, bearing in mind that Armajaro is a private company and they are here to be involved in business. The MOU has given some 40 or so years of exclusivity of cocoa production in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. So that, Mr. Speaker, the farmers will now have another crop that they can turn to as the Banana Industry faces more and more difficulty.

Mr. Speaker, for 2012 the Ministry of Agriculture will continue to give outstanding support to the banana sector. The banana unit will have at its disposal approximately \$4.3 million to assist in its work including the

control of the dreaded problem of Black Sigatoka disease. Mr. Speaker, of course I am sure you are aware of the problems that existed in the Ministry of Agriculture in terms of the timeliness of the application of the chemicals for the control of the Black Sigatoka disease. This year monies are identified in the budget and the documentation has already been placed before the Ministry of Finance to ensure this work is being done on a timely basis.

Mr. Speaker, there should have been a cycle that should have been in place now, but over the last couple of days, the last week or so into the Christmas season, there has been excessively high winds which would have created some problems of the aircraft going up into the sky. But as soon as the wind ceases to the extent where the aircraft can operate that will be done at that time. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that the ground crew that supports the aircraft, there are two teams and there would be a third team that will be placed with the other two teams so as to ensure that the back up is much more efficient [applause]. We want to make sure, though we understand the difficulty of controlling the disease, we in the Ministry of Agriculture; we want to make sure that we improve on our work to ensure better efficiency in the banana business.

Mr. Speaker, I want to indicate that even in the Estimates of 2012 on page 415 Mr. Speaker, there is a... , page 415, there is a typographical error there, Mr. Speaker, where under the programme head, "Banana Services, Programme Objectives" where number 4 indicates "To maintain an average of 17 healthy leaves on each banana plant." Mr. Speaker, 17 really should be 9. There is a typographical error there, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, last year the Ministry of Agriculture came to the assistance to many of the planting and banana farmers who were affected from the Black Sigatoka disease. Also Mr. Speaker, for planting farmers who were affected by Hurricane Tomas, Mr. Speaker, the sum of some \$4.583 million were paid to farmers who would have cut back bananas that were affected by Black Sigatoka. There was also income support to farmers, a total of some \$2.86 million and planting farmers received some \$538,846 dollars, Mr. Speaker, a total of some \$4.583 million.

Mr. Speaker, though this money was not in the budget of course, again due to the caring policies of this Government, the farmers were compensated and they were given assistance not only in cash, but also in kind where fertilisers were also given to our farmers [applause]. Mr. Speaker, as the Ministry seeks to enhance the diversification process, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry is also seeking to improve the marketing aspect and so work has been going on with a couple institutions so as to assist in the marketing of produce. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture would have been working with Vincy Fresh which was at one time Lauders Ago Processing Plant. Mr. Speaker, Vincy Fresh is indeed ramping up on its productions.

The Lauders Agro Processing Plant was doing basically dasheens packing pack and a few root crops. But today Vincy Fresh is producing pawpaw juice, mango juice, mango tango, it is even producing pepper sauces, jams and jellies and so Vincy Fresh is now in high demand for crops like pawpaw, chive, pepper, ginger, mango, limes, dasheens, sweet potatoes and plantains. Mr. Speaker, in one presentation yesterday, I heard Senator Charles boasting of being a farmer and he is a ginger producer. I want to say to him that Lauders which is now Vincy Fresh is now buying ginger at \$2.00 per pound and so he can see whether or not if it is a lucrative business in selling ginger to Vincy Fresh.

Mr. Speaker, added to that list, Vincy Fresh will also require bananas and eddoes because Vincy Fresh is targeting a lot of crisps. Banana crisps, plantain crisps, or chips, plantain chips, banana chips, eddo chips, sweet potato chips all of that will be produced and the targeted market for these chips, Mr. Speaker, is in the UK. Mr. Speaker, here is where the International Airport is going to be meaningful for the St. Vincent and the Grenadines as we produce more and more of these crops for international markets.

Mr. Speaker, one of the other market outlets that we have identified is within the Venezuelan initiative. Mr. Speaker, this initiative also will complement the diversification programme and that a number of crops are required for this market place. Mr. Speaker, the person that is working on this project at this time is Doctor Jerrol Thompson and I want to thank him very much for the work that he is doing [applause]. He is really doing the work at this time until the Embassy is being established in Venezuela and so the crops identified for the Venezuelan initiative Mr. Speaker are carrots, tomatoes, cabbages, cauliflower, sweet potatoes and plantains. Mr. Speaker, this initiative is expected to get underway in the very first half of this year.

I also want to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that in working with the Ministry of Tourism the market position would have been identified where with the number of hotels and particularly the new hotel that has been established at Buccama that the management of these hotels have been seeking to have fresh produce and so the Ministry of Agriculture has been working with the Ministry of Tourism in this regard and this year it is expected that we would have these hotels as outlets for agricultural produce [applause].

Mr. Speaker, the traffickers is also an outlet for farmers produce and so it was last week Thursday I met with the farmers at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Conference Room. Mr. Speaker, I want to say, the traffickers over the years have been doing an excellent job and I want to commend them very much for the work they have been doing [applause]. But there has been a few operational issues both here in St. Vincent and in Trinidad and the issues have been identified and the Ministry of Agriculture is now working more assiduously to help to bring relief to these concerns. As a matter of fact...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, you have 15 minutes remaining.

**HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL:** Mr. Speaker, by my watch I think I have 35 minutes. Mr. Speaker, I met with the traffickers and they do have concerns and really the Ministry of Agriculture would be working with them to reduce the problems that exist. They themselves want to form themselves into an association; we are working with them in that regard. But one interesting feature, Mr. Speaker, is that they having learnt of the Venezuelan initiative, they themselves want to become part of the initiative and so I really... I did indicated to them that of course at the moment it is more public initiative than a private initiative and so we will have to work out the differences as we move forward in this regard.

Mr. Speaker, in the Ministry of Agriculture is the Planning Unit and the Planning Unit is going to be very meaningful this year. As a matter of fact, in the Estimates a post has been made available for an Economic one position and so that will strengthen the unit to the extent whereby that data that is required for decision making in the Ministry that unit will have its hands full for this year. Mr. Speaker, the farmers' registration programme will have to intensify bearing in mind that all of the farmers would not have been registered and to be involved

in what is fair and authentic production in Agriculture. We want to make sure that all the farmers are registered. We have been working well with the police and the legal system, but we want to ask all parties to step up on their work this year to make sure that for the farmers who have been crying out for their number of losses can we can reduce those losses as much as possible.

Mr. Speaker, there are monies in the budget where through the ALBA Initiative we would have seen through the Petro Alimentos Programme where US1.3 million would have been given to the Ministry of Agriculture and this really has come at a time when we really need it and this money would assist our farmers very much with equipment and machinery because we realise the labour productivity, the productivity as it relates to Agriculture, labour productivity in itself, we would have to look at that very squarely to see how we can improve on general productivity on the farms. But last year we would have assisted approximately farmers operation on the farm with over 500 acres of operation and we are hoping this year to assist equally 500 acres more where tractor service will be made available to farmers. Mr. Speaker, for those farmers who were affected by Hurricane Tomas, surely there is assistance to be obtained under this year's budget. Those farmers who suffered with livestock and other crop production, we would assist you this year as well.

Mr. Speaker, the Arrowroot Industry this year will begin its harvesting for this 2011/2012 season next week. Mr. Speaker, like anything else in the agricultural sector as it relates to exportation and particularly where food is being done, the Arrowroot Association has to meet the HACCP requirements as its relates to food and so some work is being done both at the factory and at the pulverizing plant particularly the pulverizing plant and of the monies that we would have received under the Petro Alimentos we are utilizing \$300,000 to ensure that the operations are HACCP compliant.

Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture would have been working with its partners over the years and last year 2011 was indeed a good year in the working relationships with our partners. Mr. Speaker, FAO is one of those partners and FAO would have assisted tremendously with seeds, fertilisers, tools, implements and even assisted 25 farmers with \$500 each after the freak storm occurred in Georgetown. Mr. Speaker, FAO has done well for the agricultural sector here and I want to thank the FAO very much [applause].

IICA Mr. Speaker is also..., IICA has been doing well. They have been working very hard with the Ministry of Agriculture giving technical support. Many youths and farmers organisations have benefitted tremendously. I want to thank IICA for the work they have done so far. CARDI in itself Mr. Speaker, is also working well with the Ministry of Agriculture and at the moment they are executing a project of some \$1.3 million where we are renovating the Bio lab in Orange Hill to improve the work that is required as we target more and more planting material for this year. Also of that \$1.3 million Mr. Speaker, is the improvement of the Perseverance Agricultural Station.

Mr. Speaker, the Taiwanese too, we have worked well with them over the years. They were able in 2011 to assist our vegetable farmers in Georgetown and Orange Hill area and they were able to even provide cooling systems for the farmers in that area to expand the shelf life of vegetables. Mr. Speaker, this is indeed tremendous work and I want to thank the Taiwanese [applause] for the work they have been doing with us. The Mustique Charitable Trust, Mr. Speaker, has assisted quite well after Hurricane Tomas. They would have

assisted us with seeds, some fertilisers and I also want to thank the Mustique Charitable Trust [applause]. Mr. Speaker, Forestry Department will continue to do extensive work in this year. As you know with Hurricane Tomas vast amount of the forest would have been destroyed including the nesting areas for our parrot, the Amazona Guildingii. Mr. Speaker, because of what would have happened of course, the Forestry Department had to ensure that a more improved programme would have been done and so I want to say to you Mr. Speaker that it was in 2006, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Rural Transformation would have entered into some discussions with an organisation known as ACTP (the Association for the Conservation of Threatened Parrots) though earlier discussions was being done with another organization ACTP really started this discussion in 2006 and so after many technical and legal discussions, Cabinet granted approval for a loan leased programme with ACTP to work with St. Vincent parrot.

Mr. Speaker, on the 7<sup>th</sup> November the agreement was signed with ACTP and the Ministry of Agriculture and immediately following, the week following the sum of \$120,000 Euros was delivered for work to begin with the Ministry of Agriculture through the Forestry Department which including where 15 parrots would have left the shores of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to go to Germany where those parrots will be twined with parrots in the Aviary in Germany to look at the offspring and equally 15 parrots from the Aviary in Germany will come to St. Vincent and be twined with another 15 parrots here to look and improve the offspring of the St. Vincent parrot the Amazona Guildingii. Mr. Speaker, the ACTP is [interjection] thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, the ACTP is responsible for feeding of the parrots both here and in Germany and they will also improve on the Nicholls Wildlife Aviary that we have in the Gardens.

Mr. Speaker, fisheries will continue to do their work including where the fleet expansion will continue. Work will continue on the high seas and so one of their main areas they will be targeting the management of the Fisheries Centres in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, the Agriculture Training Institute will come into effect and three main programmes will be done and I will speak more about that. Mr. Speaker, through Rural Transformation the unit will continue to meet with..., but particularly Mr. Speaker, BNTF which is part of that unit has been doing work under BNTF 6. In the areas of health the Bequia Hospital Port Elizabeth Clinic; those are being done at the moment, in the area of access, Wallilabou that is out for tender but the top hill road is now in progress, work is being done there. In terms of skills training, the Langley Park Vegetable Production Project is being approved. Unfortunately Fancy Small Scale Income Generating Project has not started yet, but in terms of the education aspect of it, the Spring Village Primary School rehabilitation that is in progress. The Grammar School Multipurpose Classroom is completed. The Evesham Primary School that one is approved. The Questelles Primary School that has not started, but the Barrouallie Primary School and the Belmont Primary School those are approved. Mr. Speaker, work will continue with BNTF in this year at a cost of some \$4.93 million and there are a number of projects that we will see this year.

Mr. Speaker, for the last five minutes let me say, Mr. Speaker, that I am very grateful to the constituency of North Windward [applause]. It is a constituency that is very dear to my heart. The constituency has elected me three consecutive terms and I intend to do my best for that constituency. I know that in Fancy the Cottage Road has always been a problem, but under the BNTF 7, I want to assure the residents of Cottage in Fancy that their road will be done. Of course there are problems with street lights and so on in Fancy as the village extend,

particularly going up in village like Cane Garden and so on. I hope to have areas lighted in..., lights in that area this year.

Mr. Speaker, in Owia we will continue to do the work on the Owia Factory of course. Work will be done at the Fisheries Complex developing products that will be used. Already some work is being done where those products are being sold in the schools and so on, but we will continue to do work there. But Mr. Speaker, Point which is part of Owia, for the first time in the Christmas Lighting that village would have done exceedingly well and I want to thank point massive for the work they would have done during the Christmas lighting [applause].

Mr. Speaker, they came third overall in the national competition. They have not been able to meet the New Grounds Lighting nor that in the North Leeward area, but of course they were extremely good and so I want to thank those who were involved for the work they would have done so far. Of course I indicated to them, Mr. Speaker, that of course we will be going for the number one position next year. Mr. Speaker, [interjection] for this year of course, yes. Mr. Speaker, of course some work would be done on the Owia Playing Field, the Primary School has asked for work to be done there and we are going to start some work there next week in terms of cutting the grass and so on and the general cleaning up.

In Sandy Bay of course, Mr. Speaker, this is the hub for labour. Sandy Bay is what it takes for me to be here in the sense that 80 percent of that village supports me wholeheartedly and so the hard court will be done this year. Of course the damaged work that is being done at London Jack again work would be done on that. The Big Sand Project of course we realise the difficulty in terms of the funding, but we are hoping to have some work being done on the Big Sand Project. The school has asked for a band to begin music in the school and I will be working to ensure that the school gets a band this year. In terms of Orange Hill, Overland of course, the village roads are of concern and so I will be working to see how we can improve on some those roads this year. Again street lights have problems there and so that too I will be working towards ensuring that we have some improvements there.

In Langley Park, Mr. Speaker, work has started on the houses that would have been destroyed by the flash floods. Work is ongoing there. The National Park for Rabacca of course, the Ministry of Tourism, some monies are in their budget for us to start to do some work, but the long awaited housing lots that the Surveys Department has just completed is surveying and as soon as the survey plan is being made available, I intend to have the lots distributed to the persons in that area.

Mr. Speaker, in Dickson I know that the hard court we will have to do some work there and to put on the lights. We do the remedial work on the hard court, but the long awaited playing field for Dickson we will continue to do some work there. Mr. Speaker, Caratal, Spring Village of course, again we will have started some work there in terms of the houses that were affected and so we will continue to do that work, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say to you that at the time of my start of my speech, I would have made the unfortunate remark of my back, but of course, a few years ago as everyone knows I produced a lot of cows, bulls. I sold two for the Christmas season and all of that money went in for Christmas parties for the children in that

constituency [applause], but I am to have had unfortunate situation where one year I was about to..., for the very last time I was staking my cattle before I killed it the next morning, I had a situation where I hurt my back as well and I want to say what I said a while ago is not in any way any malice for anyone...,

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Could you wind now Honourable Member?

**HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL:** If what I said Mr. Speaker that the individuals take it as though I did it with malice, I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that I did not do it so, Mr. Speaker and so as a matter of fact even when the representative for West Kingstown, when he got up of course to talk, I was already on my feet and you ask that I give way and so I give way, because of it and so, I do not have anything against the Honourable gentleman. So with that Mr. Speaker, I just want to wish all of us the very best for this New Year. I have worked very well with the Ministry of Agriculture over the years and so I want to thank the ministry staff for the work they have been doing and will continue to do for 2012. Mr. Speaker, I now give my full support to this budget that is before us and seek to have an easy passage for it. Thank you very much Mr. Speaker [applause].

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, in as much that there is no one else who wants to speak, I think this is an appropriate time for me to wind up. Perhaps Mr. Speaker, we should probably have a break and have time for Members convenience and have...,

Accordingly, I beg to move that this Honourable House do stand suspended for 15 minutes until 7 O'clock Mr. Speaker, for Members convenience.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**House suspended at 6:37 p. m.**

**House resumed at 7:13 p. m.**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, it does appear as though we may have an early night tonight again. I was hoping that we would have been going much further...,

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Where we could have completed at 10:00 p.m.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Yes, well we will certainly have to do that tomorrow night. We would have to go quite late tomorrow night. Mr. Speaker, I think as Leader of the House I should address a matter which arose later today. I know the Honourable Minister of Agriculture has expressed regret or indicated regret for a statement which he made about the Honourable Member for West Kingstown back injury, we sure as he said, he meant no malice and I know him as a person without..., the Honourable Minister.

Mr. Speaker, it is my duty as Leader of the House that even within the cut and thrust we have to follow the injunction of His Excellency the Governor General and his request made to both Leaders in your presence, Mr. Speaker, before the commencement of the Throne Speech that while we have our cut and thrust and while we have our differences, we must seek as far as possible to be less divisive. This does not mean that we must not

be sharp in our comments. In short have our differences but do not be intolerant with each other and I believe that we heard this morning similar sentiments expressed by the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Industry, we have heard the comments by the Honourable Minister for National Reconciliation who made an excellent speech on the subject.

Mr. Speaker, in light of all the circumstances and my own judgement on the matter, it is my duty to exercise some leadership and not simply to have a regret indicated, but to apologise to the Honourable Member for West Kingstown that the unfortunate statement was made and I so apologise on behalf of all of us unequivocally and I have the permission of my dear brother, the Honourable Minister so to do.

Mr. Speaker, I would want to go further in the matter of reconciliation, it is often said in the good book out of evil cometh good, there was no evil here this evening because I do not think there is any malice and I heard the further explanation by the Honourable Minister, his own circumstance. Mr. Speaker, I personally have two judgements against the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and the Honourable Member for West Kingstown, two High Court judgements in relation to defamation actions which I brought. Claims that I have been defamed, I want tonight to indicate to this Honourable House and to the Nation that as part of the process of reconciliation I shall tomorrow instruct my lawyers to indicate to the High Court that I shall not proceed in any action in relation to those judgements [applause].

Mr. Speaker, we have to make sure that we send the signals for some healing and I hope that tonight that process would be accelerated. You know there is a lot of prayer on it and Mr. Speaker, I will tell you, I thought a lot about these matters when I went to Bethlehem and on the day when I was..., the night when I was in church for nativity and the next morning when I visited where Christ was born I got the feeling that I should ensure as far as is possible within the cut and thrust of competitive democratic politics for us to just lessen the harshness of language and whenever it comes, it would be a process, but whenever it comes, it should not be too difficult to say, well we are sorry in moving forward. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that you are a witness to His Excellency's request.

You would notice, Mr. Speaker, that in my own budget speech I referred on many occasions, the foundations which have been laid by preceding administrations for work on which we have built and apparently that signal had not been picked up by everyone and I am not saying just on this side, Mr. Speaker, because certain comments made by the other side and I feel particularly sensitive about this matter too, Mr. Speaker, because when I had a foot injury you may recall that I had to say one day when one Member from the Opposition was... well two really, but one in particular was not making a joke about my injury but speaking about it in a cross talk in a manner which I did not myself think it was appropriate and I said, "that is where we reach".

And this Government has a very good record for persons..., how we relate to persons with disabilities. Of course the Honourable Member for West Kingstown does not have any disability other than he has indicated that he has a bad back and I hope and pray that he recovers and I say so with all honesty. I think tonight, Mr. Speaker, that the country would feel that we have made a giant step forward. I am sorry that Honourable Members of the Opposition are not here. I do not know what the reason is because I know that there were two Members present here when the Honourable Minister of Agriculture was speaking. I do not now whether they

decided to take an early evening. But I think when we come back tomorrow we come back in a sense refreshed to continue the business of the people and if fully instructions that I will give to me my lawyers on the two matters that I have indicated, not that they are just claims, judgements have been received, had been obtained sorry that I shall instruct that nothing be done in relation to effect those judgements and then certainly I will instruct my lawyers to withdraw the matters. Withdraw the claims against my two Honourable friends. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker [applause]. Mr. Speaker, we will come back at 9 O'clock tomorrow.

I beg to move Mr. Speaker that this Honourable House do stand suspended until 9 O'clock tomorrow.

**Question put and agreed to.  
House suspended at 7:20 p. m. until  
Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> January 2012 at 9:00 a.m.**