

No. 6

Friday

Second Session

13th 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.

SIXTH SITTING

13TH JANUARY 2012

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

The Honourable House of Assembly met at 9:10 a.m. in the Assembly Chamber, Court House, Kingstown.

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER IN THE CHAIR

Honourable Hendrick Alexander

Present

MEMBERS OF CABINET

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

Member for North Central Windward

Attorney General
Honourable Judith Jones-Morgan

Minister of Education/ Deputy
Prime Minister
Honourable Girlyn Miguel

Member for Marriaqua

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

Member for East St. George

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

Member for North Windward

Minister of Tourism and Industry
Honourable Saboto Caesar

Member for South Central Windward

Minister of Health, Wellness and
The Environment
Honourable Cecil McKie

Member for West St. George

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

Member for Central Leeward

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

Member for South Windward

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

Government Senator

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

Government Senator

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

Government Senator

Honourable David Browne

Government Senator/ Deputy Speaker

OTHER MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE

Honourable St. Claire Leacock

Member for Central Kingstown

Honourable Daniel Cummings

Member for West Kingstown

Honourable Roland Matthews

Member for North Leeward

Honourable Nigel Stephenson

Member for South Leeward

Honourable Anesia Baptiste

Opposition Senator

ABSENT

Honourable Arnhim Eustace
Leader of the Opposition

Member for East Kingstown

Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday

Member for Northern Grenadines

Honourable Vynnette Frederick

Opposition Senator

Honourable Terrance Ollivierre

Member for Southern Grenadines

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

BUDGET DEBATE

FRIDAY 13TH JANUARY, 2012

PRAYERS

The Honourable Speaker read the prayer of the House.

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Out of an abundance of caution, I beg to move that the proceedings of today's sitting be exempted from the provisions of the Standing Order hours of sitting in accordance with Section 12(5).

Questions put and agreed to

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable [inaudible]

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: Mr. Speaker, if we use the word [inaudible]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Just use the mike for me, please.

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: If we use the word "man" generally or "mankind" which generally refers to all people, when you say, "The just government of men" it gives the impression that it does not include "women". I would respectfully suggest that that word, "Just government of *men*" be changed either to the "Just government of *mankind or man*" because when you say, "men" it gives the distinct impression that you are speaking to a particular gender and not "mankind" which is not the intention, just an observation.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay, I will have a look at it, [inaudible] I know we also sometimes understand when these terms are made in a general way which also is inclusive ...

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: Not "men", "men" that is the difference.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yea, as I said, I would look at the thing of course; very often I know that it is a very inclusive term [inaudible]. Yea, okay, all right, fair enough.

When we broke last night at the suspension, I recognised the Member for Central Kingstown, the Honourable St Clair Leacock as indicating that he wants to be the next person to debate. At this point I would invite the Honourable Member to begin his presentation, and I note that he is beginning at 9:-- it is really 9:14, I will say 9:15 a.m. and he has 45 minutes to conclude. Okay, thank you very much.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before you press that [stopwatch] I was hoping that you would give me some preliminaries. There are just two I wanted to get out of the way, Mr. Speaker, namely to say my little bit on the teachers to the extent that the Prime Minister in his redemptive mood - I just want to join the exhortation of others that he extends it to [striking of gavel] the rehiring of those three illustrious teachers and I leave it as simple as that.

And a little longer, Mr. Speaker, on a debate that took place yesterday, between Honourable Senator Baptiste and the Honourable Prime Minister on the welfare issue: poor relief issue. It is an issue which I have been advised to speak on, but I chose not to intervene at the time when both Members were on the floor, but sufficiently please allow me to say that we have to work to correct it. I in fact, visited the welfare officer last year, as it is now, we as representatives have absolutely no say, absolutely no say in who appoints and who dis-appoints, who receives and who does not receive. I do not think that was the intention, certainly it will be an improvement if we can address the culture that people who make representation to us elected Members in the parliament that we are in fact able to go and add a voice to the Board when such assistance ought to be offered. As it is we have no say, we can improve on that and that is sufficient for me to say. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, good morning, my earlier salutation was good evening [laughs] and I am hoping that my voice holds out having had the advice of my second opinion last evening on the state of my throat. I rise to make my contribution to the debate on the 2012 Appropriation Bill better referred to as the Budget. Mr. Speaker, if I had spoken yesterday I would have addressed the fact that in my coming here I left my beautiful granddaughter at home this morning, I still want to say so and I want to add to that that just about this time my mother of 89 years old, 89 years, yes, is on her way to the Enhams Clinic where she is going to have some assistance in having her nails clipped. Being a diabetic you have to be so careful with that exercise and I could not get it by Kingstown or Sion Hill Centres, you have to make that appointment. But she too is at home living with me at this time, so I have those two windows looking at a seven month old, and looking at an 89 year old. And sometimes the contrast is so helpful in positioning ourselves towards our special privileges here on this earth and how we approach and do things, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker if I came to this parliament and I placed an object in the middle of this Chamber and ask you or Honourable Members on the other side to move it I submit they would do so at the basis of an evaluation of the size of the object, maybe its shape, weight, its design or any other noticeable feature. And having made that observation maybe if it was round members may decide to roll it away, if it were square they may push it, if it were tall they may rock it away, if it was heavy they might decide that they might pull it, and if it was light enough they may even lift it away but their action, Mr. Speaker, would be guided by the state of affairs immediately before them. Mr. Speaker, the point I want to make with that simple analogy is that whatever is the choice different muscles of the body would be employed in different ratios; different postures and different energies will be employed. Mr. Speaker, that analogy is also very relevant to the way we approach this Budget discussion. We have to be very clear as to what the problem is before us and what would provide us with the best result.

Mr. Speaker, therefore in that regard and I do so very quickly; I really do have a personal disappointment with the scant regard of some of us especially on the other side who choose to display with respect to the economics of the Budget choosing instead to go for the politics of the situation. And they have been very good exceptions

to that observation, Mr. Speaker and I salute those Members. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition in contrast to the Honourable Prime Minister has been trying to get the parliament to understand the significance and the importance that we have not had growth over the last four years and while there has been some acceptance of no growth in year one, two and three there is some debate by the Honourable Prime Minister as to whether that applies to year four. In fact, when the Honourable Leader of the Opposition mentioned that he in fact had admitted that there would be no growth in 2011 he being the Prime Minister, he said he said that only to get the RCF money from the IMF; well that has to be a tongue in the cheek statement; because you cannot as a Prime Minister say that you are being untruthful with respect to your representation to an international body to the extent ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member I am wondering if that is what [interjection] just a minute; let me hear your point of order.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Mr. Speaker, I was coming to the same subject matter. I never got that interpretation that the Prime Minister

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Neither did I.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: said that he was fooling the IMF.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Neither did I, I did not get that.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: I think the Member should withdraw that statement.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: All he said was he wanted the IMF money, he never said that he is fooling them. He never said that so I really think it's a

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: I am not withdrawing Mr. Speaker,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Well, then it is a mis...

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Well, that is my interpretation so we have a difference of interpretation.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No! No! I am saying because of that; because of that as Speaker of the House I am asking you to withdraw the statement because I do not think that is what he indicated and as Speaker of the House I am advising you so to do. And if you are going to disobey my advice as Speaker, then there is no way you should be able to continue your debate. I am the Speaker of the House and I am saying that I do not agree with your interpretation as Speaker and I am asking you to withdraw it and failing so to do I would have to ask you to discontinue your address this morning.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister in response [I am making my point], the Honourable Prime Minister in response to the charge that in the letter he had admitted that there was four years of negative growth indicated that his reference was solely directed towards acquiring the RCF funds that is what and I leave my statement. He indicated ...

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yea, but I want the earlier ...

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: I said he indicated.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I want the earliest ...

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: I have restated my position.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I want the earlier statement withdrawn first before you ...

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: I have restated my position.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I want the earlier one withdrawn.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: I have restated my position.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: I have restated my position and replaced the earlier position.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No! I want you say that you have withdrawn your earlier statement.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Which is?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: The one where you said that he said he fooled the IMF.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Well, he did not have to use the language he fooled them.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Well, I want that withdrawn.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Well I have addressed that.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, Honourable Member, listen I am not in the best of situation today to play around.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Well, I am not responsible for your situation.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I know that; so I am please asking for your cooperation, you withdraw or you sit down. If you do not do it I will call the Honourable Nigel Stephenson to debate. I am not here this morning to fool around.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: I am not fooling around, I removed the statement as you requested.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I said what I want.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: I said I removed the statement.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I want a total unqualified ...

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: I said I have removed the statement.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: [Striking gavel] Honourable Member, could you please take your seat. I said I want a total statement.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: But that is what I said; I said I have withdrawn the statement.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Please sit down. Honourable Nigel Stephenson I would acknowledge you at this time. [Striking gavel] I mean we cannot be too proud to do certain things. [Interjection] I said what I want; I told you what I want.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Well; that is fine.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Nigel Stephenson would you please, I would acknowledge you at this time.

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: Mr. Speaker, I have listened to your ruling and I have followed the discussion. My Honourable colleague has indicated categorically that he has both clarified his statement and in accordance with your request he has withdrawn the previous statement.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I have not heard that.

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: Mr. Speaker, it has been repeated by my colleague a few minutes ago that he has withdrawn the statement.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I said I have not heard that. Is there any ...

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: Well Mr. Speaker, could you kindly ask the stenographer to get the record, I heard my colleague said he has withdrawn the statement.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I told your colleague what I want to hear. I want him to say that I have ... [interjection] no! Eh!

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: Speaker, I repeat

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay! Okay! [Striking gavel]

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: my colleague said he has withdrawn the statement.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: All right, let me hear you Honourable Member. Let me hear you Honourable Member.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR: Mr. Speaker, if I may, I was following and during the cross talk and all of us missed things from time to time, but I did hear him say that he withdraws. But I mean I am here this morning and I would like to hear the Honourable Member and if he may just get up and just make it clear that he withdraws the statement which he made. I mean, I will like him [interjection] No! No! He said, "Withdraw" the word "withdraw" was used.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I want it to be said.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR: Right.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I have to be satisfied

HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR: Yes.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: with the withdrawal and I am not satisfied with what he has said, that is all I am saying and the Honourable Member for West Kingstown getting up here and making the statement he made does not convince me. I know what I want and what I am expecting and if he is not going to do it then I am not going to allow him to continue to speak and this is done without any prejudice.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Minister Saboto Caesar is absolutely correct, and I think I said so about three times, I have withdrawn the statement.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: But I said that.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you, continue your debate.

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: Repeatedly it was said.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Continue your debate. Okay Honourable Member, continue your debate you have not lost any time, you are 5mins *551/3secs into your speech and you may continue from there.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: The point I was making, Mr. Speaker,

HONOURABLE ANESIA BAPTISTE: That is right.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: [Striking gavel]

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: we need to be crystal clear in this House and in this parliament on the question of the state of affairs of St Vincent and the Grenadines that our economy had declined in performance over the last four years. And I want to make a simple analogy of the importance of that decline to us here in this House and to all of us those who are listening, namely that if we picture a situation let us choose Pizza Party down the road and Back Street providing the 12” Pizza to the Salvation Army who on a daily basis giving it away to needy people and the next day they go for the Pizza they get a 10” and the day after there is an 8” and the next day there is a 6” and they are sharing the Pizza to the same needy people around the corner, it could only mean that people are getting smaller slices or some are getting none at all. And so Mr. Speaker, I submit to you that the experience of negative growth in St Vincent and the Grenadines is exactly that; many Vincentians are having smaller slices of the pie and some in fact are having none at all.

Mr. Speaker, it brings me to the point of supporting the argument of the Honourable Member for North Leeward that when we look at this budget and what it means to the ordinary man and woman it is precious little. It does not change in any real way the quality of life of people in the rural St Vincent or urban St Vincent. It is not even running fast to stay the same place; it is more like marking time and perhaps buying time. So, to go

back to the earlier analogy as to where we are, Mr. Speaker, and where we go, my suspicion is that as a government we need to see more push forces at work; more supply side economics for growing the economy of St Vincent and the Grenadines.

And that is why, Mr. Speaker, on this occasion I submit very humbly that we be not dismissive of the advice of the International Monetary Fund the IMF, but be very careful with their descriptive and prescriptive positions on the way forward. And indeed Mr. Speaker, there is little difference between the analysis of the IMF and of our own ECCB (Eastern Caribbean Central Bank), and the Caribbean Development Bank reports; as well as, Mr. Speaker, that of our own local statistical unit on some matter of the economic performance.

But Mr. Speaker, to return just briefly to the Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure for 2012 for a simple mathematical exercise; I want just to go back to Roman numeral (i) where we looked at the Current Expenditure because this brings home the point very forcibly. Roman numerals (i) where we see that our Current Expenditure for wages and salaries, pension and NIS, Other Transfers, Interest Payments, Goods and Services amount to [and I am rounding figures] to roughly speaking \$529 million. That is for in simple language, our every day expense: \$529 million. And we are satisfied on our passed records which have been fairly accurate here in St Vincent that of that \$529 million that we need for every day business, I am not dealing with Amortization and Sinking Fund we can raise \$507million. In other words we are \$22 million short of that target. If we want to draw that to our own home experience, Mr. Speaker, we are saying that if we want to find out if we have enough money from our monthly salary to buy our bread, our butter our chicken back, our turkey, our pork, our fish, our tea bags, our juice, our water and pay our light bill every month we can have a shortage, and in fact, many Vincentians are like that and they feel it very, very hard.

Many of us know the consequences of that, they come to us for a little help a top up for a water bill, top up for light bill, top up with all sorts of assistance; one of the most excruciating pressures you can face as a Representative and it is the same thing for a government. If the truth be told, Mr. Speaker, if the truth be told while every Member of the Parliament especially those on the government side do not have to come to grips with this reality on a monthly basis; it is no secret that very often the month would come and a Prime Minister or a Minister of Finance would have to be pulling his hairs whether there is the money available to deal with the wages, because it depends on the activity at the various revenue resources of the government. That is the cut and thrust of things, so, it is an uncomfortable way to live and to do business, it is stressful and we therefore have to have an obligation that we must get ourselves out of that; a simple point we want to make and that with respect to the Current Expenditure. So, you cannot ignore, Mr. Speaker, it is right there in your face.

Mr. Speaker, let us go to the IMF Report page 14 and I do not know if it was made a document of this House before, to the extent that I want to quote and neither the Honourable Member, the Opposition or the Prime Minister has so done, I am going to be prepared to make this a document of the House, so you would allow me to use it for my presentation.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Go ahead.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Page 14 of the IMF Report, Mr. Speaker, read previously by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition says emphatically:

“Growth is expected to remain negative for a fourth year in a row

and it goes on to say,

with a pick up next year, largely reflecting the implementation of reconstruction projects”

Page 8, Mr. Speaker of the same IMF Report and I am going back to points Mr. Eustace have made before, it states that:

“Lower than expected revenues and the delay in disbursement on the large expected concession loan will result in a significant shortfall and limit fiscal spending this year.

It goes on to make the point that:

The already high debt and debt service debt is expected to rise in this year by 2.4, and finally that at the same time there was broad agreement within the staff and the authorities,

That is the government.

that a number of measures to enhance revenues and rationalised current expenditures will have to be implemented over the next few years”.

And I want to speak to that; I repeat it because I just made the case on the recurrent side where we are short by \$22 million. I am not getting into the other things the extraneous because the fact is, Mr. Speaker, we in this parliament have to get to that comfort zone where when we come here annually for the budget exercise and we look at the left hand side of the financial summary at the very minimum we should see that our Current Revenue is greater than our Current Expenditure. We do not have to trust our meal, we do not have to trust our way through the month. We can pay our rent, we could buy our gas and we can do all the things that a household would want to do that is basically how we have come, and you do not get that realization, Mr. Speaker, when you listen to the debate from Members from the other side.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am taking that strong position on that numerator denominator position you know, because both sides have not said it in expressed terms but I said so in the Estimates. Not one of us in this House want a single public servant to go home; we do not want the experience of Greece: none of us. It is not that I am sure that if government wants to dig a little deeper they cannot say - they could do without this one and that two or this five or that ten. I am sure they can trim the Public Service if they want without any real impact on the service delivery; but they do it with a heart. Things are bad enough and we need to find more jobs for people, so no one wants to send home anyone. So, if we do not have enough monies to pay salary and wages and so on and so forth then the only thing to do is to find mechanisms Minister Charles where we can improve our tax revenue on the non-tax revenue that it gets over the expenditure. That is fair game.

And how therefore do we do that is subject or ought to be the subject of our debate in this parliament; how we get ourselves out of this malaise. And I would go further to say now, Mr. Speaker, even though we do not want to send home any public servants and we are committed to that on this side of the House, it is also not

acceptable to say that a half loaf is better than no loaf at all, because the fact is that many people already cannot make things meet and a half loaf will simply send a lot of people to the mental home.

Our own persuasion is for social and economic justice and that we are able in all of this to provide a living wage for our people, therefore I support the references on more than one occasion by the Minister of Tourism that productivity and competitiveness ought to be part of the strategy for getting ourselves out of the challenges that have happened. So, we have to walk that talk and see what we are doing for that productivity drive and that competitiveness drive and if it is captured in the budgetary debate.

Mr. Speaker, on previous occasions I have said if we compare our own budget measures to past Trinidad and Tobago, I do not know if it is the case for Barbados but I am sure it might be for other countries. In addition to things like tax revenues and non-tax revenue you might see a little broadening of things like royalties maybe from oil, natural gas and I do not know if in our own situation, and the water man is next to me, geothermal energy, there is any possibility here for us to better trap all that water that we see running down to the river. I do not know I am speaking out of ignorance. I do not know if water is one of the strengths that we have here that we have not fully exploited that can do something for us as a people. Whether our seascape our marine resources, oil research that we can put up some money there for people to spend there for research; or people want to see what medicinal or other purposes could come out of the fauna that is all the way out on the sea bed, whether there are possibilities there. Even like Guyana where they can get money for clean energy by reducing the use of firewood and so on and so forth, another place and selling back to the international agency.

Mr. Speaker, I will go quickly through the Capital side of this debate because we have made that argument over and over again on the Capital Receipts that we have Grants of \$61 million and Capital Revenue of \$20 million that gives us \$81 million. That is fairly watertight to the extent that we have our administrative machinery in place, but Mr. Speaker, to complete that we have provisions for \$45 million in external loans which we are advised to be very careful with and \$60 million in local loans which we are also advised to be actions of the last resort. So, \$105 million on the Capital side is in a sense iffy, iffy, iffy; iffy, iffy in the sense that it puts pressure on the fiscal; and page 2 of the IMF Report makes that point [turning pages]. It is not page 2. Ah! Ah! But it makes the point ... page 5 perhaps, which says that we have to avoid at all costs getting into more borrowings of a commercial nature if we are to adjust the fiscal challenges that we have in this country.

But you know, Mr. Speaker, on a side that is exactly where many of us as policymakers have a difference because there are in fact Caribbean Countries that have borrowed through their teeth, ridiculous Debt to GDP ratios 156/160 and all that kind of thing. St Kitts a case in point and governments are winning a fourth and fifth term in office. And you heard that argument from Members on the other side that is “If we having negative growth why then did the people put us back”? Amplifying the point that many Vincentians are living for the now quite prepared to ignore the future and are prepared to mortgage their children’s future. But Mr. Speaker, the dilemma that we face of not being able to pay our way through and have to be depending increasingly on Grants and borrowings serves to highlight the need for more foreign direct investments and the Prime Minister himself alludes to this on page 9 of his Address.

Mr. Speaker, a recent World Bank Research Digest Report of 2011, which I may have to make as a document of this House reminds us that international capital flows have paid increasingly important roles in our business

cycle of development and developing societies especially during financial crisis. And it says that if we do not understand the behaviour of the gross capital flows and how crucial they are by foreign and domestic agents, then we would have major problems.

And it goes on to say that gross capital flows are pro-cyclical not countercyclical: pro-cyclical. And during expansions foreign agents increase their purchase of domestic assets and domestic agents increase their purchase of foreign assets. And during crisis especially severe ones both inflows and outflows declined though the inflows tends to fall more. It says,

“Against this background this situation is likely to lead to the fire sales of domestic firms to foreigners”.

You see we had that here with our supermarkets and with our bank. So, there is an urgency, Mr. Speaker, there is an urgency, Mr. Speaker, in the solution to our dilemma to do two things, to add to my initial position: attract more foreign direct investments as we have had. Let us say for example the Buccament experience and the Canouan experience but also to increase the levels of public-private sector partnerships that we are having in St Vincent and the Grenadines. Because either way foreign direct investments or more public-private sector partnership we ultimately would have more firms, more businesses and more enterprises which in turn contributes to more tax revenues and impose the situation of the crises that I identified from the beginning. So, Mr. Speaker, we need to work hard at that.

Mr. Speaker, we have to remember in St Vincent and the Grenadines that we are still essentially a domestic market that is where we are with our export potentials is still ... [interjection] well great! Our performance there is still very, very unsatisfactory, and it is therefore imperative, Mr. Speaker, that we get to the stage where the dance pays for the light. Mr. Speaker, if we do not want to accept the IMF position, let me draw attention to the trade statistics from the ECCB with respect to our balance of payments which is another indicator of the difficulties that we are in. I really want this to get home as to where we are with regards to our solutions.

In 2007, Mr. Speaker, and I am going to do a contrast with neighbouring St Lucia. In 2007 we exported \$128, \$129 million worth of goods and St Lucia did \$205 million. In 2008, we increased that by another \$12 million we went up to \$140 million and St Lucia went from \$205 to \$373 million. In other words we added \$12 million and they added nearly \$170 million. In 2009, Mr. Speaker, we declined in our exports on our 2008 performance from \$140 to \$135 we slipped back by \$5 million but St Lucia that had grown by \$170 million or there about a year before continued to grow to \$448 another \$70 million improvement in their export performance. In 2010, Mr. Speaker, we further declined in our export from \$135 to \$110 another \$25 million decline and what happening now to St Lucia that had been growing to \$448 they got up to \$579, \$48 that is \$50 and ... \$120 million. So what are they doing so right, right across the road the channel 21 miles of us that their increases in export is moving while we are declining?

2011 Mr. Speaker, St Lucia got up to \$582 million we declined a further, Mr. Speaker, to \$102 million that tells the tale. It tells the tale, Mr. Speaker, that our private sector is not picking up the slack and not performing and delivering at a level that will give relief to the revenue stream of the government, and therefore we have to address that. We cannot avoid it by talk about airport, airport is important, I support the airport I have done so

from day one. I have done so by day one but that is also a challenge if you want me to make the diversion; but not in our life time would we get a return in our investment from the airport; but even that is not a reason for not supporting the airport. Even that because it is just one of those things that we have to go for the long, long, long term whatever that is the economic benefits or gain. It has to be a band your belly kind of approach to deal with the airport. Not recklessness, band your belly including preparing the people before to say, let us make some sacrifices for this great airport that we have. That has been my position and I stay there on that.

But I come back to the fundamental, we have to address the fact that our domestic market is not strong enough to take us out of our dilemma and in addition to foreign direct investments, private-public sector partnerships we must be an export oriented economy to dig ourselves out of the hole [knocking the desk] that is the point I want to make and what I want us to come to grips with as a parliament. Not escaping it and like ostriches burying our heads in the sand and leaving our rear exposed or hiding behind constituency performances and ministerial responsibilities; but to address the real fundamentals that people have put us here, real flesh and blood people have put us here and they expect us to provide for them and their future.

Mr. Speaker, the foregoing is a sober reminder for Honourable Members on the other side that much of their ministerial responsibilities especially those on the Capital side are essentially a lottery. That is, you may have all sorts of indicators but it may be wishful thinking because to the extent that we do not have the money in the first case on the recurrent side and we are being optimistic on the capital side what is implemented depends largely on chance. Honourable Member on the other side page 68 of the Estimates, Minister of Tourism and there may be well good explanations for that; you speak about the access roads for example to the tourism sites very important. I did not understand for example why some of the provisions there 901001 and 901003 Capital Expenditure Revenue moves from there to local loans, because I had a greater sense of comfort and reality that if we were going to do it by raising revenues ourselves it may be realized. But the fact that they moved from there to financing through loans, I know some of it is also going to come from the EU [interjection] yes, it is going to give you the biggest chunk of it you know. But that makes me feel uncomfortable that some of these sites will not get the improvement that they needed.

But the point is, Mr. Speaker, is that a lot of the capital programmes will not happen, and if the capital programmes will not happen, it takes us right back to the point of the Honourable Member for North Leeward, more jobs would not be created, more opportunities will not be provided. It will simply be a case of a budget for who have: have; and who do not have continued not to have because we are not in a position to create those jobs. And [inaudible] believe you me and it would help all of us inside of here. That is what most Vincentians are crying for, give me a chance to help myself, I do not want to come at any doorsteps or footsteps of any politician and beg, beg, beg put me in a position where I could help myself. So the clarion call ought to be for jobs, jobs, jobs, work, work and opportunity, opportunity that is what our people want and that is what the Budget ought to be speaking to Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, how much time do I have I have been advised to ask?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: [Inaudible]

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I spent a little longer on the economic argument than I perhaps wanted, in fact I did not intend to this year because I have done so, so many times. I go back to some of what I consider to be parts of the political solution because there is a debate you know, there is a debate as to whether or not policy informs economics or economics informs policy or whether there is a good mix. In the extant circumstances of St Vincent and the Grenadines, I would suggest that our economics really does not inform our policy and we got to get ourselves out of this.

In the New Democratic Party, Mr. Speaker, where we are often accused of not publishing or printing and not having ... we have always addressed this question by what we call our Basic Needs Approach, and this is already documented in the Manifesto of the New Democratic Party now being studied very carefully by Minister Burgin. [Interjection] we agree with that; too late for him in this budget, he will use it for the next budget, I am told; I am advised. I want to quote from it, the autographed copy he has from the Honourable Member from North Leeward.

Our Basic Needs Approach Constituency Development Fund my pet peeve:-

“Consistent with our belief in a Basic Needs Approach the New Democratic Party is satisfied more than ever that we have to revisit our administrative development approach on behalf of our people we therefore propose the constituency development fund.

[Knocking on desk]

If we examine the number of constituency representatives that have been perceived to fail the voters of our blessed land, it is difficult not to conclude that we have witnessed a system’s failure in our political administrative process. The New Democratic Party holds the view that if we approach national development from a constituency point of view we are more likely to have a better result, specifically the following.

- 1. More people will share the national pie.**
- 2. National wealth would be more equitably distributed.**
- 3. More people would get the opportunity to participate in contributing to production at all levels.**
- 4. We will broaden the number of people who own the wealth in the country”.**

And this is fundamental, it is fundamental that we put a greater focus on the capacity of local communities to carry the country forward. I have no doubt that to the extent that the resources are available and Representatives are empowered through the appropriate governmental machinery, we will get more implemented in our constituencies and reach the people who put us here to serve them in the first place [knocking on the desk] than is now the case. And why we are not doing that I cannot begin to understand. So that Mr. Speaker, at the end of this year 2012 as things are the improvement across the constituencies would be marginal if any at all.

The drains would be the same place, the back walls would be the same place, the river defences would be the same place, the same sets of people who cannot pay light, phone and water bills will be experiencing those difficulties. The parents who have to be alternating the children as to which goes to school this week and next because they have no shoes, no clothes, and no transportation would be the same sets of people because the adjustments did not reach down to them. And this calls for a rethink in our public administration approach to development and to the budgetary exercise and I plead, Mr. Speaker, that we move with urgency to address this.

The Prime Minister captured some aspects of this on page 11 of his Address, which I would not go into at this time, but Mr. Speaker, in the less than ten minutes that I have I speak to how some of this budget does not assist the constituency which I have the temporal privilege, and it is indeed a privilege. We are an in and out club to represent Central Kingstown. I do not often refer to the Honourable Senator who has aspirations for Central Kingstown, I was there too and so I understand what that is. I am not going to correct him today that Lodge Village is not the only primary school in Central Kingstown when he so said, because I know that he just had a loss of memory at the time and forgot Catholic School, Peter's Ville and Anglican Schools etcetera, etcetera. It is just that he taught there so long that he forgot the others, temporary loss; he had a temporary loss of memory when he identified those schools.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Do not use those judgmental statements.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Well, I withdraw the judgement, I withdraw the judgement but Central Kingstown is a unique constituency because it is as urban, city base that is, as it is rural. You just have to drive five to ten minutes out of the City into Green Hill and into Trigger Ridge and you find all the same set of similarities and living to people in the rural areas depending very heavily on their land. [Coughs], excuse me Mr. Speaker, [interjection] So, Mr. Speaker ... thank you, I do not normally take your advice. [Interjection] No, there are two other areas in which I take advice from him, but that is not a subject for today's parliament. [Interjection], [laughs] the thing did not work [interjection] I will come for those. Mr. Speaker, I was glad that the Honourable Minister, Minister Francis did catch himself with respect to his proposal for the City of [interjection] Honourable Minister Francis.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Francis?

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Honourable Minister Francis.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: [Inaudible]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Well that is why I called him to draw your attention because you were [inaudible] [laughter]. [Laughs]; that he caught himself on the question of the clean up of the City of Kingstown. It is really an absurdity and it should not have really happened you should not have even come to the budget exercise to speak on the proposal for the City Kingstown clean up without the prior consultations with the duly elected Representatives of East, West and [knocking on desk] Central Kingstown. But I accept in

good faith that post discussions that consultation would take place; but it is not an easy exercise let me accept that.

I am a product of vendoring everybody knows, some people tell me do not say it again that my father was a coconut vendor and my mother was market vendor. So, as the Representative of Central Kingstown, one who slept in boxes under the market shed galleries you know, I know this thing from a-z you know.

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: I have a deep passion and sympathy for how we are going to affect the lives [interjection].

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: What about me?

HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: You want to remind me that *you born a gardens nah* go ahead [laughs] go ahead it is all right; it is all right: all of us are not so privileged. I want to say move circumspectly, gingerly and carefully with how people make their living because it is fraught with danger. For everyone you move and regulate somebody wants to move into that space, and the more people comply is the more opportunity sometimes is created for those who are prepared to take risk and not comply. And within minutes the whole thing could get out of hand. But the City does look unseemly and untidy especially on a Sundays when you are passing through and you see all un-uniform fixtures that are about the place, you know. So, you have our support in the clean up of the City but let there be proper consultation.

The Green Hill low income Housing Scheme is not going to affect the voter's list negatively but I think one of the Ministers made the point that there were about 4,000 applications for low income houses in this country and about 40 is being built at the moment or little bit more. I do not think you can build houses fast enough in St Vincent and the Grenadines; people have great pride in houses and it is one of the great pressures of a politician to address is the quest for houses. So, all we can do is to improve the housing staff, we support. But I want to push a pause button on the question of houses with respect to Central Kingstown and indeed it applies to some other communities. When you see how some people build houses and where they build houses it is a miracle; it is not only that they get the material to where the road is paved but they have to pay people to drogue them up sack by sack for months, which sometimes cost more than the truck itself, to get to the site of the home. And the reality is they will never get back the value of that property if they sold it because it does not have the access roads and other things; and sometimes they have great sites too, you know.

So, when those people have sweat so hard to build those houses in some of those hills I wonder whether it is not a double whammy to then come and charge them a second time to say, "Boy this devalues this property, ah carrying up your taxes" [knocking on the desk] in fact, they probably should be given a tax credit because they relieved the government of the burden of finding houses for them and they added to the GDP by their diligence and their hard work and discipline. So I have a concern as to whether or not we are not punishing certain sectors twice and my appeal is for those people in those circumstances [knocking on the desk] to be exempted and in fact probably to be credited for their contribution to the gross domestic product.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, in support of the Member for West Kingstown for the Leacock, McKie, Fenton Highway or it is McKie, Leacock, and Fenton Highway? How do you want it to be called Honourable Member for West St George [laughs] [knocking on desk]? I just had an indication from the Honourable Member for West St George that he is not committed to the Fenton Road, he is not committed to the Fenton Road so I will stay with those who have given the commitment: the Minister for West Kingstown, the Member for West Kingstown and the Member for Central Kingstown.

Very seriously that Fenton road even though it has been recognised and the Minister of Transport says it cannot be done too soon, it is beautiful land, it is an important access and both in addition easy to the traffic of the Windward getting to the City on mornings and we should do it soonest Minister Francis and I know you are generally speaking on the ball.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, generosity prevails.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: When you find the Honourable Speaker out of an abundance of privileges you speed up. It is still my recollection that I did ask in this House, Mr. Speaker, for some attention to the roads the section called the pan yard and what I call the Ponty Fraser Road; and the Minister of Road Works was so kind to say that he accepted that they were in a bad condition and that he responded. If the Honourable Senator with ambition for Central Kingstown wants to join me he should join me; but do not say in this parliament that you got roads fix in pan yard, government fixed the road and it is the government's responsibility however. The records will speak for themselves, Mr. Speaker.

But I want us to go further with the Starlet, Minister of Tourism, I tried this year and I have not made much progress. I believe that it is possible for cooperation with your Ministry to have the Peace Memorial rented during the cruise season for Starlet and other potential steelbands and others to be able to go and put on pan concerts [knocking on the desk] in the Peace Memorial Hall to be sold as packages to Coreas with whom I have had conversation before. So that it could be an addition to the package tour and strengthen the sale of the culture of St Vincent and the Grenadines. That can be amplified to other areas of culture where we begin to now market and sell our culture and link Carnival to Cruise Tourism. I want us to see what we can do for that for next year. I had discussion of this with Minister Baptiste and she explained to me why it would not have happened yet, but I want us to still explore those possibilities.

Mr. Speaker, the Green Hill Playing field we still want to see the change room there, we still want to see that playing field lit, Charles Playing Field we still want to see that lit as well. I had the same problem with Charles Field as Minister Miguel in Marriaqua, I do not know if we have to asphalt off and those things, to re-grass and re-grass and we are still not going anywhere. But we need to have that lighted as well, so that sports could continue its contribution there to the social development of the people in this constituency.

The Clinic for Central Kingstown to be located in Sharpes perhaps near or adjacent to the Community Center is urgent. We sought not to be competing with the whole country to get medical attention down at the Milton Cato Memorial Hospital; I want to put that very early on the agenda, Mr. Speaker.

Agribusiness: the processing of our gingers and our spices and seasonings that is not just Central Kingstown that is national, Mr. Speaker, because as I said at the beginning it is through the constituency effort our efforts that we will ultimately be able to enlarge the national pie and win ourselves out of the fiscal dilemma in which we now find ourselves. Much obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you very much, Honourable Member, well at least you did not really greet as such your constituent and I am sure that you want a minute to do that.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, I want to give you a unique permission.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay, I will do that. Honourable Member for South Leeward, as soon as you are ready, you can begin. Okay, Honourable Member.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Honourable Members, I rise to make my contribution to this 2012 Appropriation Bill. I had the honour of sitting down for a little while even after the Speaker acknowledged me as the next presenter and that is the privilege that you have when you are batting last there is nobody else that you have to look to your left or your right or in front of you to see who is jumping out before you. So, I took my time and now I am ready to go.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take the opportunity first of all because I believe and I hope, Honourable Members, that I would not ever get weary of the fact that as far as I am concerned acknowledging the presence of Jesus Christ is of paramount importance to me. Because when I do not do that I really feel as though I am gasping for air. So forgive me if I begin my presentation by saying how grateful I am for the privilege to be standing here another day and another year.

When I look around, Mr. Speaker, I recognise that there were many people that I was close to; I knew a lot of people and some of them I did not know them very much but when we consider where they are today they are no longer alive and it makes me, Mr. Speaker, consider my ways. I recognise that it is not anything that I have done that is worthy of the favour of God but indeed his unmerited favour has been given to me and I am alive today and for that I am grateful. Mr. Speaker, I recognize also because I am not my own, I am not the master of my own destiny and therefore I am going to attempt to be an example in this Honourable House.

I want to begin the presentation, Mr. Speaker, by quoting Mathew Chapter 25:29. For those persons who would have read the entire maybe six verses above that it is a story that is very, very familiar to everyone the story of the talents but many people stop short of Mathew chapter 25:29 where it says:

“To him that has more shall be given and to him that has not even that which he appears to have will be taken away”

and that is the basis of my presentation this morning, Mr. Speaker. Because when you look at what is happening in St Vincent and the Grenadines we have two distinct categories of people, we have the poor and we have the

rich. There was a time when we would have had a middle class but when you look around today, Mr. Speaker, it is nowhere to be found. So, the people who were in the middle class now find themselves toeing the poverty line whereas, Mr. Speaker, there are other people who are living life to the fullest. Let us look at the state of the Vincentian people; at least the state of the people that I know in the constituency of South Leeward. When I look around, Mr. Speaker, when I interact with people it is oftentimes heartbreaking when you listen to the plight of the people, when you listen to the fact that these people are literally suffering and I am absolutely sure, Mr. Speaker, that other Members of this Honourable House can attest to that be it on the government side or on the opposition side.

Things are extremely difficult for many, many people, when you look at the state of affairs; poverty is the order of the day. There are many people who do not have the luxury of feeding their children; they do not have the luxury, Mr. Speaker, of paying their bills and I am sure that all of us in this Honourable House are bombarded with people coming to us begging us to help in their respective situation. And whereas I suspect that there [are] one and two people who will be abusive and will come to scrunt a politician because he or she is a politician the vast majority that comes to us have genuine needs. But having said that Mr. Speaker, I look at the Budget presentation by the Honourable Prime Minister, I have to say that I acknowledge the fact that the Prime Minister may be going through the Bethlehem experience and I said this in good faith. I say this, Mr. Speaker, because I am hoping by and large that from that experience we are going to see more equity you know with respect to the distribution of the resources of this country.

But examining the Budget and the excuses that were made for the failure of the economy of St Vincent and the Grenadines to grow for a fourth consecutive year, I could only draw an analogy to a cricket situation and being an old cricketer. I am reminded of an opening batsman who was taking first strike in a match and, Mr. Speaker, in taking ball is served up to him an out swinger that flips the top of his off stump first ball [interjection] definitely, but Mr. Speaker, on the way out that batsman met the incoming batsman and he whispered to the batsman be careful with that bowler I could not play that ball because he is swinging the ball both ways. The irony here Mr. Speaker

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: If the Honourable Member would give way. Mr. Speaker, I think it is in order for him to quote whom the person rather than for it to be presented it as an original joke. It is what the late Scoby Taylor would have said, he having gone on the plane by ... Seymour having sent there by the selector. So, I just want my friend to know that those of us who have been around for a while have heard it many times. Thank you.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Exactly, I did not say it was original at all, Mr. Speaker, I said, I was reminded. But it does not take away from the fact, Mr. Speaker, that that individual was served one ball and he was telling the incoming batsman, "Be careful because he is swinging the ball both ways". The point I am making, Mr. Speaker, is that he was making excuse for his failure and it is the precise thing which is happening here; rather than acknowledging that there may have been adverse circumstances around us that caused us to have negative growth for four consecutive years, we are finding excuses all that happening at a time when the countries, our neighbours around us have returned to growth.

Mr. Speaker, I began by giving an outline and a scenario of the state of affairs of the Vincentian people and I think they are really suffering, and I believe, Mr. Speaker, that we ought to endeavour to lift the standard of living of our people. After all, Mr. Speaker, we or I should say the government has been given a fiduciary responsibility to the people. You have a fiduciary responsibility to the people; you have been elected by the people so that you can run the affairs of St Vincent and the Grenadines in their best interests, so that they, Mr. Speaker, will have some returns. But what are the returns we are having? We are not seeing the jobs, we are not seeing the training that should be provided so that our people can become economically independent so that they can develop their innate ability, acquire a skill and take the burden off the government and find employment for themselves.

We see a lot of young people, Mr. Speaker, and I have spoken to many of them who are at home, many of them with their qualifications; and I want to say yes they may well have been a product of the Education Revolution, but I am concerned, Mr. Speaker, that the government does not seem to have an exit strategy for those children after they leave secondary school, and after they leave the colleges because not everybody would go off to university. And when we look in our communities we noticed that there are many young people who are unemployed and they are trying their best to find employment but they cannot find it because the opportunities are not there. And Mr. Speaker, because we are having all these years of negative growth it means that the economy would have gotten smaller and the de facto services which are required to produce the goods and services will also get smaller. So, these de facto services that I am now talking about, Mr. Speaker, primarily I am talking labour, the capital and the land, everybody knows them, but I am more concerned, Mr. Speaker, with the labour aspect because if the economy is getting smaller and it requires less labour it therefore means that the unemployment situation is going to get worse [knocking the desk] and that is why so many young people are at home and cannot find jobs.

Mr. Speaker, some of our people are getting very desperate and I listened to the Prime Minister in his presentation and I recognised that he said that he was deliberately trying his best not to mention the marijuana farming. And I can understand why, Mr. Speaker, but they are what we call decent people now; they are not the bad boy type or the bad girl type but they are now heading off to the hills. I actually spoke to one guy not long ago and he was asking me to find a job for him because I am close to the family and in as much as jobs are hard to find I tried my best and I looked and I looked and I looked. When there was an opening I looked for the young man, I could not find him, so I spoke with his mother and his mother of that young man said to me, "He gone in the hill". If you look at the guy, Mr. Speaker, you would not normally believe that he would go to the hills but the point I am making here is that situations out there are so desperate and young people have needs too. They cannot depend on their parents because their parents would have sent them to school and it is time now for them to have some form of independence but what did they see hopelessness and despair.

I met the young man just before Christmas and he came out of the hills with a very bad cold and I said I have been looking for you all over the place and then he explained the situation to me. He said, "The place really is not for me but the circumstances sent me there". Another one, Mr. Speaker, said to me, "Nothing is happening to me, I know I am taking a risk". And the Prime Minister, Honourable Prime Minister has acknowledged that in his presentation that it is a high risk but the gentleman said to me, "I know this is very risky but I have to take

my chances because nothing else is going on around”. I am not saying this because I want to paint a bad picture, Mr. Speaker, I am saying this because this is the reality on the ground. I am saying this because our young people are only seeing hopelessness and despair.

Mr. Speaker, another thing that I think is going to affect our young people and I need young people to understand that. We have heard in this Honourable House and we can deduce from it that the NIS may not be in the best of health and if that be the case it means it may mean that the retirement age will have to increase.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, if my Honourable friend would give way, the Honourable Member, sorry. Mr. Speaker, the question of the state of the NIS is not an issue which is connected to in terms of the NIS per se in relation to the retirement age. What has happened is this, as I made the point in my speech, when you put the pension payment through the Central Government and the NIS payment that you will reach by the year 2030 a situation where an individual will get 127% of their salary, obviously that is not a sustainable position and therefore pension form reforms are required, arithmetic reforms are required which will necessarily include extending the retirement age. Indeed, a lot of people would be happy about that so I just want to make that point, it does not have anything to do with the nature of the NIS per se.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Okay, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much. Thank you very much for the intervention, Mr. Prime Minister, but the point I am making is that if we were to reach that situation where the circumstances around us give rise to an increase in the retirement age, if it does reach that far, Mr. Speaker, it means that older workers are going to be working longer and while they are working longer it means that it is going to more difficult for young people to become employed that is the point I wanted to make, Mr. Speaker. So, however you look at it the situation as it relates to young people finding employment seems dim. But having said that, Mr. Speaker, what do we see from the Budget not just for the young people but for older ones for every single person, we notice that there is a proposed increase in the water rate so rather than presenting a Budget that is going to increase the standard of living, Mr. Speaker, that is going to create employment, that is going to stimulate the economy what is given to the people of St Vincent and the Grenadines is an increase in the amount that you have to pay for water.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, what has been served up to the people of St Vincent and the Grenadines every single House save and except for what I heard the Honourable Prime Minister said, “Houses which do not value \$25,000”, you are going to be subjected to increase property tax, so you are the beneficiary of these, how is that going to make your life any better? And all these, Mr. Speaker, coming at a time when there is a freeze in salary, so is that going to make the lives of our people better? Is it going to take away from the little people already have? That is why I say, Mr. Speaker, that the earlier part of this presentation will be in Mathew Chapter 25:29 “To him that has more shall be given and to him that has not even that which he appears to have shall be taken away”. And from the meager income that people have they will be required to pay more in taxes.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, when we look on the other side, I have looked at the poor part the poor class of people, remember there is no middle class. Let us now look at the few, a few people, I am not going to call any name; but obviously on the other spectrum. Mr. Speaker, there are people who are living lives to the fullest. We

have some folks who I can only describe as self perpetuating self-serving elites they are only concerned with protecting their economic turf. But when you look around Mr. Speaker, when people cannot find employment out there you have a government that is literally running with two cabinets. You, Mr. Speaker, would acknowledge that every single member of the former ULP administration, former candidate, and former parliamentarians, every single one of is well taken care of. So, I want to draw this to your attention, Mr. Speaker, the people out there when you have people coming around to you election time and asking you to vote for the Unity Labour Party what you are in effect doing is securing jobs for the big wigs in the ULP. [Knocking on the desk] What you are in fact doing by virtue of voting for the ULP is to ensure that they continue their lavish lives. But you look at your lives; you look at your own lives out there and see whether or not this is a government that is acting in your best interests.

Look around and see the number of people associated with this government who have big contracts what do you have? I just want you to consider your ways. I am not telling you what to do but consider the next time you cannot pay your water bill, your light bill, you do not know where the next dollar is coming from, you cannot send your children to school, consider why you are in that position because there are people who do not experience what you are going through. I am saying that the onus is on you to wise up because you have loaned power to this government by virtue of voting for them but the power can come back to you whenever there is an election and it is for you to use it wisely; it is for you to lend power to people who would work in your best interests.

Mr. Speaker, enough of that; I will move on and while I am going on I hope that it is going to sink for the people out there. [Interjection] eh, we are the poorer class, poor, poor, yea. Mr. Speaker, I would move on a little further. You know I was listening to the presentation made by the Honourable Member for South Central, right, now I remember the Honourable Member telling the Honourable House how elated he was when he got the news - could you just remind me which of the cruise ship agent?

HONOURABLE CECIL MCKIE: Royal Caribbean.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Royal Caribbean, right, I am only saying this, Mr. Speaker, because I share the joy of the Honourable Member for South Central actually felt and it reminds me of a passage in Isaiah that says, “How lovely on the mountain are the feet of those who bring good news” and that was indeed good news. We are going to have another ship coming to St Vincent and the prospect for more money coming to St Vincent is there. I appreciate that I love that when things happening for the country I do not care which administration makes it happen I applaud it and I applaud that [knocking on the desk] and I share your joy, Mr. Minister. But the Minister went on, Mr. Speaker, during that presentation to say that with the length of time that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition made his presentation the “word” [should be “phrase” instead of “word”] Argyle International Airport was not mentioned once well that may be true.

Well, in your presentation, Mr. Minister, I recognise that the word cruise ship berth was not mentioned once and had it not been for the cruise ship berth built by Sir Mitchell, Jerry Scot and the NDP it would not have been possible. [Interjection] and [Laughter] and Mr. Speaker [interjection] I hear you, Mr. Speaker that was a project,

Mr. Speaker, that was criticised greatly by the Unity Labour Party; it was criticized by elements, people associated with the government. I remember we received a tail end of a hurricane [interjection] listen there was a tail end of a hurricane that struck St Vincent some years ago and it wreaked havoc there and there were people associated with the ULP who wanted the demolition of that project, but today the cruise ship berth is there to benefit everyone in St Vincent and the Grenadines, I am delighted for that.

Mr. Speaker, having said that, I want to use a little bit of time to address some matters of sports. Mr. Speaker, may I find out how much time I have please?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: [Inaudible]

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Eh, thank you Mr. Speaker. Well, I suspect since I have not been a naughty boy you will give me a little more time, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I will not be able to deal with all the issues here, obviously, in 45 minutes, but I am dealing with the issue of the National Stadium that was a campaign issue while the ULP was in Opposition. And being a person that was literally born into the New Democratic Party, I was sympathetic to the cause of the ULP at that time because I recognized, Mr. Speaker, being a sportsman I participated in most of the sports, I recognised that we had at least tremendous potential and because they had to be running on this hard surface they would never have been able to realise their truest potential, so I agree with the idea of the National Stadium and we were told that the National Stadium would be a gift from the government and the people of Libya.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Honourable Friend, would you give way? My Honourable Member would you? Mr. Speaker, there was never ever that the government of Libya would provide US\$20 million for the construction of the stadium. The government of Libya had provided US\$1 million which was used in assisting the preparatory work in respect of the stadium facility and to assist with design and so on and there is a design. And Mr. Speaker, the matter of the stadium was simply put on hold, we had spent \$50 odd million on a number of facilities for sports in 2007, and we had said that we would come back to it in 2009 but by that time the recession internationally hit and we came to this House and said that we were putting it on hold. But it is a matter where designs have been done and certain preparatory work done, including having the institutional arrangements. So, I mean let us be fact based, we can have opinions once we have the facts.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Mr. Speaker, the bottom line is when you look at the Estimates last year there was a provision of \$46.7 million for the National Stadium. [Interjection] It is not in the Estimates last year?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: [Inaudible]

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Well, the cost, well, okay good, good and I asked the question last year ... okay, thank you very much, Honourable Prime Minister. But the proposed cost was \$40... from what I noticed in the Estimates last year \$46.7 million and I noticed in truth that there should have been \$100,000.00

allocated, it was allocated but it was never spent, not a single cent. I asked the question in this Honourable House and I was told that no money was spent on it. So, when I look at the Stadium, Mr. Speaker, it shows that we are once again not keeping our promise to young people and the talents of our young people are just being wasted.

Sometimes I wonder whether we have ... when I heard the discourse between the Honourable Minister for Sports and the Honourable Terrance Ollivierre yesterday talking about sports. But sometimes I think we are really wasting the efforts of these young people. [Interjection] well, if they are making the Penn Relays well you can imagine what would happen if they were given the opportunity to have a synthetic track [knocking on desk] that is why in our manifesto we were saying to the people of St Vincent and the Grenadines that once elected we will present to them [striking the gavel] that National Stadium because we know the importance of it and we know the potential that the stadium has with respect to securing an economic future for young athletes.

Mr. Speaker, we heard about an indoors sports facility, the Anglican School annex was supposed to be transferred to an indoors sports facility, we are still waiting on it. The last time I asked the question on that, Mr. Speaker, I was told

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I wondering if my Honourable Friend, my Honourable Member would ... so I could put ... it is a matter which I intended to speak on in my reply but I just want to say at this juncture that the National Lottery has purchased the site from National Property and the National Lottery has set aside a sum approximately \$10 million, they have gotten concepts for design from two architects and are working through the issues. You don't ... oh please Honourable Member for West Kingstown I mean [interjection] [Striking gavel] if a person, if a Honourable Member is raising an issue on which the information can be provided for elucidation, I simply wanted to correct him on the particular matter, it is a simple thing. It is not an issue for any hostility, why do we allow vanity to interfere with these matters?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, you have to understand too that whereas it is true that the Honourable Prime Minister has wrap up time his wrap up time is also limited okay. [Interjection] Eh! I say it is also limited: it is also limited; I will leave it at that. Yea, hold on and I am saying if for instance one recognises that information given is not correct sometimes it is quite germane to deal with that immediately.

You see one of things we must understand is people do not always hear us all the time, somebody might pass and hear a certain statement made but never heard the answer to that statement and goes with that statement and says this is what happened and therefore it is important that if misinformation is given that they be corrected immediately as we all understand. Maybe who might be hearing now might not hear the Prime Minister in his wrapping up and then they would go ... and it is not just a matter of politics it is just that they themselves may have been misinformed about what the actual situation is and therefore it is important that we deal with it at the same time. Continue Honourable Member.

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: And I am saying he is interrupting.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Continue Honourable Member.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Mr. Speaker, all I was saying you know is that we are still waiting, I do not see how that is an incorrect statement. We are still waiting on the facility. [Knocking on the desk] You see there are times [Striking gavel] [interjection] well I am glad you mentioned that you know because listen, I am glad that you mentioned the Community Centre because it is time now that we put that to rest. You know that is something when the ULP came into office they have been talking all the time about funds and Community Centre in Questelles but there was no fund from the Community Centre. There was an investigation, why don't you just go out and listen, see how far the investigation got and see where it led to. The resources for the Community Center for three consecutive years in the Estimates money was allocated for that Community Center in Questelles, there was never an appropriate piece of land. The government approached a particular family in Questelles to have a piece of land bought, it was never the policy of the New Democratic Party to just go and oust people off of their own land. We wanted to go there all the time but the owner of the land refused to sell, but Speaker, what happened is

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member, just a minute [Striking gavel] let the Honourable Member continue.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Mr. Speaker, the fact of this matter is the money for the Community Centre in Questelles was transferred to Penniston where there is a Community Centre built there and the reason why that Community Centre was transferred to Penniston is because Penniston would have won the best village competition for three consecutive years that is why it is there. So, I hope this issue would be laid to rest. [Interjection] good well why don't you go to it? Go to it, I hope that issue is going to be put to rest now.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to move on to some other matters and I hope that the ruling on both sides there would be equity. Let me just deal with some constituency matters, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: What is the point you are making awhile.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: No! No! The point I was making, Mr. Speaker

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: About ruling and equity what is that point?

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: When people are making correct statements what we heard from the Honourable Senator David Browne yesterday was incorrect.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: What is that? He made an incorrect statement?

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Yes.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Did you challenge it?

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: No, I did not.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Speaker may I

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: What are we talking about?

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker may I

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: So, I am saying that I hope there will be equity.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: But I do not understand you. Wait Honourable ...

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I was just saying, Mr. Speaker

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: No, Mr. Speaker, would I be given an opportunity to

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No, I mean I am very concerned when you are making those statements; you are casting aspersions on me.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: I am not accusing,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Of course.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: not at all Mr. Speaker, I am only saying that I hope that there will be.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Yes.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: The point that I was going to make, I do not think with respect that he was referring to any ruling by you; he was making the point in relation to

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: You got his back.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I was batting for him that is the point I was making, I wanted to bat for him. I have to help my brother.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay, all right. [Interjection] no I just wanted a clarification.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: No, he was not casting aspersions.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay, all right.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Mr. Speaker that is not my nature at all. But Mr. Speaker, I hope I would be given back some time for all this interruption.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No, you have not lost anytime Sir.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: No?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No, the Watch stops.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: You have time.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Oh, very good, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Therefore, you have eleven minutes remaining.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Let me just deal with one and two other constituency matters. For the people in Penniston you have been promised this playing field for the longest while. I cannot go into all the details that I would have wanted but the thing is, Mr. Speaker, as a Member of the Buccament Valley because I have lived there for some time, I recognised that there were many, many sportsmen who are literally wasting their talent because the sporting facility was not there. We had to facilitate small facilities one at Penniston and one at Dubois where the primary school is and one part of Dubois for example, which was the main playing field was reasonably flat and the other part was gently sloping. That was not ideal for any form of sports and the residents there made an appeal to the government for a better playing field. At the time the NDP could not have done that and what compounded the situation, Mr. Speaker, is that there was a housing pressure and people had to weigh the situation whether or not they wanted the playing field or they wanted a place to build their houses. By and large, Mr. Speaker, many of the residents opted to build houses on those facilities which were being played on, therefore there was no sporting facility in the valley.

The ULP took the opportunity, they seized the opportunity and they campaigned on that issue; well it worked for them because the people in the valley said well, if the NDP allowed people to build houses on those playing fields the ULP would bring its first ... a piece of land acquired, and I remember, Mr. Speaker, very clearly in 2005 that there were members on the platform of the ULP who were saying that if you vote for "Nature" he is going to give back the land to his uncle. I would never have done that; the land was acquired from Sylvester, yes, family or no family that had nothing to do with me, anything that is going to benefit the people I am quite pleased with that [knocking on the desk]. But the point is, Mr. Speaker, that playing field should have been completed a long time ago, when you go to it you cannot play anything. I was here in June and I asked the question to the Honourable Member for South Windward and when he told me that 90% of the work was completed on the playing field I thought I goofus; I was scared to death, Mr. Speaker.

After parliament I went down to the playing field to see what I actually missed [interjection] I did not know that, I would be honest with you, I did not know that. And that is why I went down there only to find the area that is allocated for the cricket pitch was still a trench filled with water and tadpoles swimming in it. That was the state of affair there and the playing field was 90% completed, I pull a coconut a dry coconut that fell off of a tree nearby. The grass was so high that I said to my friend Ovid Burke who was the photographer at the time, "I am going to put this coconut in the grass, and see if you are going to see it". I put it there and you could not find it. If you go there and you want to play football you will never be able to see the ball but 90% of it was completed.

And listen Mr. Speaker, when you look at the Estimate for 2012 not a single cent is there for that playing field and the playing field is the same way. But Mr. Speaker, if the Lord wills in the not too distant future I am going to meet with the residents of Penniston and Vermont and we are going to put plans in place to ensure that the playing field itself is in a state of readiness so that some form of competitive sports can take place there. [Knocking on the desk] we will do that and no, Mr. Speaker, Commissioner of Police, no armed emissary, no message from the Commissioner of Police from Julian Francis will stop us this time. We are going to do it because it is in the interests of the residents there.

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

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Yes Sir,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: When you are referring to a Member of this Honourable House you either refer to him by his portfolio in case of Senator you refer to him accordingly.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I really meant no disrespect. I meant no disrespect, Mr. Speaker [interjection] I have only said that in the context of what the police said to me when they came to my residents and to warn me not to fix any road in the constituency I being the Representative for the area that is why I used it. But I have utmost respect for the Honourable Senator. Mr. Speaker that issue I am done with the playing field there.

There is another issue, I have heard mention of the bridge for Vermont and Francois. Everybody knows the difficulty as we say, "When river come down in Vermont", the Buccament River is not to be played with but those two villages being separated by the river it is very difficult for the residents whenever river come down to get from one point to the next. And I acknowledge that there was need for a bridge. The bridge could have come at the time from the NDP and I am sorry that I do not have enough time but I will go down there and I will explain over and over to the people why the bridge is not there. But the Bridge that the NDP had for Vermont and Francois was actually placed as No. 1 in Queensbury, simply because NDP recognised that the old Buff Gut Road was waterlogged and there was a possibility that the road could have collapsed. And today it collapsed but it was the wisdom of Jeremiah Scott and the New Democratic Party to transfer the funds for the Bridge and put it at No. 1 just before Bushay but I am hearing that I am the person who is obstructing the bridge from being

built. But we heard yesterday that there were technical difficulties with the bridge, so I want to know how I become the person that is obstructing the process or the progress of the bridge.

[Interjection] Yea! Yea! Naturally!

Mr. Speaker, I do not know how I could have done that and there are many, many, many things associated with bridge, I do not even believe that the engineer that the person who drafted the plan for the bridge, I do not even think that person ever visited it.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Four minutes Honourable Member.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Because I have been to that particular area, Mr. Speaker, and I have seen the drawing and the bridge is several feet below the road at Francois I do not know how they are going to do it. [Interjection] I am ... no I said that; I am not! I am not! I am not! [Striking of gavel] I am a layman, I am a layman but I know that is the reason why the bridge is not there. So people in Vermont do not blame me, blame the very many bright people around. [Interjection]

Mr. Speaker, I will conclude given the last few minutes that I have and still urge the Ministry of Works to pay some attention to a piece of road in Coconut Range in Campden Park. The road from Keitha Delpesche to Vin Durham came to the parliament with that question of the road before and I do not believe that any form of sensitivity was given to this road at all because Mr. Speaker, when it rains you cannot walk there, you cannot wear your shoes there you might as well take it off and walk barefoot. And what is even worse now, Mr. Speaker, because of the volume of water, because of the amount of water that is accumulated there the water is now breaching the area and flowing down into the property of a gentleman called Pollymore Richardson and causing tremendous damage to his property. It is not easy to rebuild now, Mr. Speaker, I hope that this year ... I recognize that it is going to be costly that is what the Minister said to me but please pay some attention to it, there must be some corrective measure.

Mr. Speaker, there is also a road in the same Coconut Range vicinity and a poor lady and all those people who are working over there Princess Miller and the rest of them, whenever rain comes the water accumulates on the roads and they have nowhere; please send a tractor or something to clear the road for them. There is a piece of road that started and I know that was just before elections; that was just a sham going up above Elsa in Coconut Range and DoDo after the election nothing. Help the people down there if I had the means I would have done it for them, they need help. Pembroke Road. I came to this parliament also and made representation on behalf of the people in Pembroke for a better piece of road for them, pave the road and all I am hearing is that the residents there they should have known not to buy land from people: from private people when they did not put in the facility. But they are also taxpayers, Mr. Speaker, and I think that the people of Pembroke and I must add that they are more inclined to vote Labour than NDP. So, be your brother's keeper help out the plight of the people down there.

There is a road, Mr. Speaker, above the Brewery and I see the Honourable Minister of Works just walked in. The road above the Brewery I am satisfied, I am quite pleased that is the road that caused the contention; that is

the road that caused the police to come to me to deliver a message from the Minister because that road was in a very, very bad condition and all the people who went up to WI FM to do the ULP programmes and so on would have been driving there, so it is something that they knew about.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: If the Member may just give way on this subject. I know he is nearly finished, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: I am almost done; I am also done.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: I listened outside I was in the Speaker's Gallery: Speaker's office and I heard the Honourable Member for South Leeward saying that no Commissioner of Police and no Minister of Works could stop him from doing what he wants to do in his constituency. I just want to acknowledge that I heard him; so if this is the message that we are sending to our young people [interjection] that is what he said, I am not asking I know he said that [interjection] you can go back to the Minutes [interjection].

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, on that piece of road this administration spent \$129,000.00 to fix that piece of road and the job there is excellent. I want to congratulate the contractor Mr. Cruickshank and the one who did the concrete works because the drains – that drain has been there ever since they changed the road to go over there and it is the first time - with three Representatives for South Leeward and it is the first time that major and corrective work has been done to that drain. And that is the reason why I suggested to the Member through the Commissioner of Police not to go there and throw any concrete in the potholes that were there; thank you Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Mr. Speaker, thank you.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member you have two minutes to conclude and that is generous. What, what are [inaudible]

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was simply making the point that I was pleased with the road, I said it before you came in here but you probably did not hear that part. But Mr. Speaker, what I am not pleased about is the fact that ... and the drain would be tested you know. There was an area there across Denny, I think the drain was not properly built but I am thinking from a layman's point of view that the drain if it was made deeper that would have controlled the enormous volume of water that flowed there but in the wisdom of the engineers and the contractors the area where we had the problem rather than been sunken it was filled almost to the surface levelling with the road. I am not sure how it is going to work, I know it was done in good faith but I am only saying that when we have heavy rain it would be tested.

And you go down a little further by a gentleman that we call "quiet" Mr. Frederick close to Brush Shop; Brush: Big Brush. When you go there, Mr. Speaker, I recognise that they made a little, what you call that something

that looks like a culvert over the bridge there so that the people could walk over from the main road to go up on the hill. But what is interesting there, Mr. Speaker, is that that is the precise place where all this volume of water flows when you have this heavy rain. So, in effect what has actually happened there is that a bridge has been made for the water to flow straight in the drain: that is the only problem I have with it, it is giving the water access to flood the road again.

Mr. Speaker, I want to end by recognising the Honourable Jeremiah Scott, [knocking the desk] many, many times I have said that he is my political father [knocking the desk] and I would echo what the Honourable Minister of Works said in this Honourable House that undoubtedly he has been the best Representative [knocking the desk] for the constituency of South Leeward.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: [Striking gavel] thank you.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: I sat at his feet, Mr. Speaker, I learned from him and given the opportunity to be in government I will endeavour with his help to surpass the effort that he made. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: [Striking gavel] thank you. Honourable Members, that brings us to the end of the debate only for the Honourable Prime Minister to wind up the debate now on the ... before we do that I am going to ... well, that is not for me to determine. But I am going to invoke 12:6 and for a stated period of 10 minutes [Striking gavel] so the Honourable House is suspended for 10 minutes and then we ...

House suspended for 10 Minutes

At 11:12 a.m.

House resumed at 11:25 a.m.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Pray be seated. Honourable Members, we are going to conclude the debate on this Appropriation Bill today and we are going to invite the Honourable Prime Minister; Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I first of all would like to thank all Honourable Members who made their contributions in this debate. I would also like to thank very much all the public servants who contributed immensely in the preparation of the Estimates and in briefing their respective Ministers for both the Estimates and the Budget debate. Mr. Speaker, a number of persons who have not been engaged in this exercise do not appreciate the extent of the work which is required. The Budget call goes out July-August with the frame which the Minister of Finance intends to shape the Budget within, and utilizing those guidelines in the Budget call as the document is historically named the public servants commence a very involved and long process including with the policymakers the Members of Cabinet. So, I want to thank all the public servants, especially I would wish to thank the Members of the staff of the Ministry of Finance and Planning and at the office of the Prime Minister.

Mr. Speaker, I would also like to extend New Year's greetings to every one. I am sorry that the Honourable Members for the Opposition they are not here, they have not afforded me the courtesy of listening to this winding up for several years now. It is a kind of debate in which they are engaged, you can call it hit and run tactics. No, I do not think that from another context that is to say in vehicular matters. People normally disapprove of hit and run drivers, I think they do disapprove of hit and run politicians. You must really stand up and take the assessment of what you have said. It is easy to parade a lot of half truths and in some cases untruths to provide faulty analysis which very often you are not disposed to correcting except some of the most egregious errors.

This is the time when they should be here and if I am in any way misrepresenting what they are saying they would have an opportunity to make interventions within the rules so that the general public can appreciate the full extent of the issues involved in this vital exercise. You cannot declare at the beginning as the Opposition Leader would do by saying that this is a most important public policy work, the Budget, and then you are found wanting by not being at the table for the conclusion of the debate. It thus creates the impression in the public minds quite correctly that they are not too interested in having their own ideas tested, they are more interested in presenting them for one purpose only to see if they could remove the government from office; but that, frankly speaking, is not the intention of this exercise. This exercise is for us to see what is the best that can emerge and for us to implement the budget in the most efficacious ways and to have ideas for further shaping of other fiscal instruments. So, I am disappointed that they are not here but the work has to go on and the public they are listening.

I am disappointed too Mr. Speaker in that the presentations of all the Members and those which I did not listen when I was here I listened on television. Because on one or two occasions I had to leave to do certain work associated with the office of the Prime Minister. But I always tried to do that work with an ear on the television or on the radio and I make notes either contemporaneously or shortly thereafter. So that I am in a position to give respect and credit to the contributions made by those who have spoken. And I am disappointed by the largely facile presentations by the opposition, they played fast and loose with the facts, I did not see any cohesion or clarity in their positions; they were internally inconsistent and incoherent as between one another.

For instance the Honourable Leader of the Opposition would be calling for austerity which I shall address shortly while there are other persons who are calling for spending, they have a wish list. We just heard the Honourable Member for South Leeward said, "Build the stadium, you said you would build it". I explained why it is that that project had been put on hold, "No build it", so he profligates while his leader is saying be austere; and they have all gone down a wish list that is the most recent one. Well, surely if you are going to have austerity you cannot have profligacy which is what the other Representatives were advocating and I conclude on that basis that they were doing so to see if they can impress their constituents that when they go back to their districts they can say: "Ah I raised it, spend the money; I raised it, spend the money"

But that kind of irresponsibility the people of this country have gone past, the Education Revolution has taken place [knocking on desk] and people watch informed discussions on television and they are on the internet. People just do not go on the internet to do Facebook type communication. They go on sites to learn and to read

substantive matters and then of course, Mr. Speaker, there were no offerings of any credible solutions, nothing put forward. Now it is easy if you do not have the responsibility to govern to behave irresponsibly. You know, Mr. Speaker, I remember one British Member of Parliament had said that the oldest profession of the world is one in which power is exercised but there is no responsibility. Well, I am not saying that the Honourable Members on the other side are in any way for the oldest profession, all I am saying is that there is no sense of responsibility because you talk, you say a number of things which are not fact based and then you feel that you have done something and you gone away and do not hear the responses. So, we got the same old tired opposinism out of step with the time.

Mr. Speaker, I have repeated over and over this year having read and studied carefully the book of Chronicles and I am very impressed by one of the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel, Issachar. We do not hear much about Issachar, but Issachar said, Mr. Speaker, that one of the first requisites of a leader is that we must know the times, very fundamental point. Must know the times and when I came upon that in the book of Chronicles, I put the book down and thought about it: you must know the times. And then I turned to Daniel and found that Daniel the prophet was selected above all leaders by Cyrus King of Persia not because of his training in any subject matter but because of his exceptional quality of leadership. And when you read the book of Daniel the thoughts comes to you that you can buy an economist, you can buy a lawyer, you can pay for any professional but one thing you cannot buy, Mr. Speaker, is a leader.

A leader cannot be a journeyman or a journeywoman he or she must present some overarching framework within which we are going to put the technical details. Without that framework, you may be a captain of a ship and this does not have anything to do with your capacity to steer technically but you would be steering your ship under sealed orders. They would not know where you are going, whether there is sea or whether there is land that is why you have to have a framework. So, what did we get in these times which are very challenging which the IMF in the World Economic Outlook in October said “The world economy is entering a danger phase” that is their formulation. “The world economy is entering into a dangerous phase” and in the midst of this great danger what do we get from the opposition: that the Prime Minister is going to buy a vehicle for the residence for \$70,000, \$70,000 you know, never mind that the vehicle at the house is breaking down. What happened, what you want me to do buy one for the house: for the residence, \$70,000? Eh \$70,000!

Then in these serious times where there is a budget of nearly \$800 million that you are going to play demagogic politics to say why it is you are putting \$200,000.00 to improve the security quarters of the police officers who have sworn to protect the Prime Minister and his family? So, we are building brand new police stations all over the country from Georgetown down to Canouan and now we are going to build one in Union, down to Questelles we are restoring in Rosehall, built all about. You want the police officers to be in a very difficult situation in terms of their accommodation these are grown men, they are not boys’ scouts camping. Where the IMF says that the world economy is entering a dangerous phase you are arguing about \$200,000 to fix up the security quarters at the residence on the compound? Before that was built I built one for the police officers out of my own money up at Frenches and then it is a big issue, every one of them has spoken about, why it is that you are going to spend \$260,000 to refurbish the residence of the Prime Minister? That is an issue, am I a man who behaves as though I am a lap of luxury man? When other persons are drinking expensive Claret wines I do

not know about them? I do not know about them. I have not one clue about them. My favourite drink is water and mauby.

So, you know, Mr. Speaker, it is so demeaning to have to speak to these things as a leader of a modern independent sophisticated country, where we are the carriers of our Caribbean civilisation, this component a noble one, its leader has to defend not the building of a palace but to refurbish a house so that it does not deteriorate, it is not mine. While the economy of the world has moved into a dangerous phase are these serious people? These are serious times.

The Financial Times of London on Tuesday 3rd January has as its headline, Mr. Speaker, “Economic Experts Foresee a Bleak 2012”, not a bleak 2012 for St Vincent you know they are talking about the world economy and the subheading here “Toll of Economist Sees Gloom to Rival 2009”. And you are raising questions about a building where the workmen are right there now on the roof because yesterday they had some rain and a section of the place was wet down, had to put buckets they did not get there quick enough, at the Residence I am sorry that I have to speak this, Mr. Speaker, in the month of November it is the alertness of the security at the Residence which prevented a fire from blowing up the place. The room next to the kitchen downstairs ... since they want to talk about it; I will in the process put myself in sackcloth, and ashes to demean myself but I shall stoop to conquer in the image of the people [applause].

Mr. Speaker, in the room next to the kitchen which has gas and all that they have the central equipment for the infrastructure for the electrical works switchboards and so, multiplicity of wires – the fire occurred there it is the alertness of the security. It was in the night and my sixteen-year old daughter was sleeping in the room which is leaking and which is just above there; it would have been blown sky high. You know I can say more but I think that I have said enough, there is much more you know, but I have said enough. Really that is where we have reached; that is where some people want to take us.

Mr. Speaker, this Budget debate is not about my travel to Bethlehem, Jericho, Jordan, Azerbaijan or Georgia. I am told that it is insensitive of me to have travelled at the time of Christmas because some people worked and did not get pay. Well, the numbers who would have worked because of the amount of money which was spent \$3 million on the road, I understand there might have been one and two but I enquired from overseas you know and I made sure before I left \$3 million was in BRAGSA’s account. So, any difficulty was an administrative one and I spoke to Brian George and I spoke to the Minister of Works from overseas, he is here to testify because I am sensitive to those matters. What is insensitive is in the last year when the Honourable Leader of the Opposition was Minister of Finance that he permitted the spending for Christmas for road works of only \$200,000.00, I provided \$3 million [knocking the desk], and before that \$5 million for repairs, and before that back to school \$2 million. These are difficult times but I have to make sure that persons who look for work on the road to supplement their income for special occasions, we provide that work.

Mr. Speaker, this Budget to, I am baptized in the Catholic Church, the Evangelicals and the Seventh Day Adventists would say that I was sprinkled but – so I am in the Christian faith, I have sinned and I have come short of the glory of God [inaudible] those who are holier than though let them cast the first stone. Mr. Speaker,

the President of Palestine a people who are oppressed invited me on the basis of the work that this little country has done, to defend the rights of oppressed people, invited me to Palestine to be there on the night of Christmas at the Church of the Nativity where Christ was born to worship with him and others including Christians and Muslim Palestinians as the only head of government invited [knocking desk] and they have been throwing jokes at me because of a statement I made earlier on reconciliation; they said it is the Palestinian effect. Well, if that is the case, so be it. All I could say is that when I was at the Church of the Nativity the night and when I went and had communion and when I went the next day under the grotto where Christ was born and where his mother Mary wrapped him in swaddling clothes, I kissed the ground and I prayed for St Vincent and the Grenadines. If that is being insensitive, I plead guilty of insensitivity. Mr. Speaker, I know that it had an impact on me, I know it. I do not have to wear anything on my sleeve; my maker would be my judge.

Mr. Speaker, in Georgia, already Ambassador Gonsalves has contacted me to tell me that the Georgian government has placed a sum of money with the Georgian Ambassador and they are awaiting the instruction for the account of the government of St Vincent and the Grenadines to lodge those monies; [knocking on the desk] hopefully within the next two weeks. And the President of Azerbaijan has pledged assistance. Azerbaijan is a very wealthy country. It is Georgian; Azerbaijan is ninety odd percent Muslim. One of the enduring battles in the world today is between Muslims and Christians and this small country a Christian country has interposed itself in the process of the debate to see if we can lend a contribution for peace and harmony [knocking on the desk] in this world.

Mr. Speaker, the day after I returned from Georgia and Azerbaijan and from Palestine, from Bethlehem and from Ramallah and from Jericho where I was fortunate to stand before the Sycamore tree, where Christ stood and ask Zaccheus, yes. Now, Mr. Speaker, as soon as I got back here the Israeli Ambassador had written to Camillo Gonsalves in United Nations inviting Ambassador Gonsalves to come to Israel to lay the basis for me to go to Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, and I will go on the invitation and I will give my opinion on this matter between Israel ... Mr. Speaker, yesterday I sent off to the President of Azerbaijan a letter and I sent also a designated official a series of documents electronically relating to development in St Vincent and the Grenadines and especially the Argyle International Airport.

Mr. Speaker, this debate is not about traducing patriotic Vincentians who had served as cabinet members and whom the Cabinet saw fit to appoint to particular jobs. Does anybody doubt the capacity of Rene Baptiste to chair the Board at VINLEC? Does anybody doubt the capacity of Selmon Walters to be the Honourary Counsel in New York, the Counsel General, sorry in New York? Mr. Speaker, the NDP had appointed Kirby Young former Minister as Ambassador to the United Nations, Permanent Representative and Wylie a former Minister as the Deputy and then when they removed Kirby Young they installed the gentleman Mr. Denny who was the NDP Speaker in the House and before that there was Jonathan Peters and when the government changed we allowed Mr. Wylie to remain as the Ambassador of United Nations for nearly one year. [Knocking on the desk]

What is that what this debate is about now? So the knowledge and experience of Rene Baptiste, Selmon Walters, Jerrol Thompson or Sir Louis Straker, we must pass them aside and of Sir Vincent Beache? You

know, these are not serious people; these are not serious people, these are not serious people at all, these are not serious people.

Mr. Speaker, this Budget debate should not be about point scoring or playing to the gallery of faithful, not about grandstanding in futility. It is not about presenting piddling ideas of no real merit but dress them up as though they are valuable beyond belief, for instance, a remarkable thing happened here; we were told by Senator Frederick that they have put a site on Facebook or some related site for children to go and look at examination papers and that apparently is a novel breakthrough in IT Education, linking education, linking IT to the process of teaching and learning. I will address that question shortly. This sort of window dressing of no real merit presented as a great idea and we had to endure it of course. Then I am told that a great idea of theirs was to have a police station in Belair, putting a police station in Belair is a great idea, that is a question as to whether the resources are available and as we have determined that we will put a police substation there, not only for the people in Belair but also because the Medical College is now there.

This not about our people when I hear them talk, the Honourable Members of the other side, our people remaining as hewers of wood and drawers of water. I do not know how many people know this, Mr. Speaker, when people talk in a way where they suggest that they are hewers of ... that persons must remain at a low end, at the totem pole and to give them something don't lift them up too high; just lift them as far as your ankle but when you are lifting them higher it is a real problem for some people. "No too much money is being spent on university education, better you spend it on the road, to clean the road" We got that you know, Mr. Speaker, the older I get the more I realize the wisdom in the good book. The expression "hewers of wood and drawers of water" well, it has been shortened as that but wood cutters and water carriers of the community on the altar of God. That is the faith of the Gibeonites, they were deceptive to Joshua and because of their deception they were made perpetually hewers of wood and drawers of waters, but we have not deceived anybody, we are part of a civilization which must be uplifted and that is what the public policy of this administration is about. [Knocking on the desk]

This budget is about the development of the people of St Vincent and the Grenadines at home and abroad, it is about the advancement of our country and our people's interest, it is the progress of this Vincentian component of our Caribbean heritage. The Leader of the Opposition thought it was being indignant, he said, "Look how could you have had a situation where in the Estimates debate you did not allow one member on your side to speak". Well that is an untruth, there were several members who spoke but I showed his deputy leader for he was not around for me to show him. On the 8th December, 1999 the debate of the 2000 Estimates one person spoke for the NDP Arnhim Eustace, the Minister of Finance. Gonsalves, Boyea, Straker, Beache Walters, Slater and Miguel spoke for the Opposition and then the Minister of Finance who is now the Leader of the Opposition wrap up. Yea! Yea! That is what they used to do every year now apparently amnesia has set in there is no remembrance of how they used to treat these debates.

Mr. Speaker, I want to join the issue on the economic approach and the fiscal policy of this government because what we had from the Leader of the Opposition was a historical wrong and one side factually distorted view of our policy and where we should go. In fact the opposition stylized the facts of our condition on the altar of

partisan politics while rummaging around inconsistently in search of a theory of explanation. It is easy to stylize facts you know and rummaging around looking for a theory of explanation. Mr. Speaker, if I would sum up their alternative, the main dish offered by the Leader of the Opposition as their alternative approach to ours, the main dish is one of austerity and then, you know when you go to the restaurant, you have the main dish, you buy lovely meat with some Basmati Rice but you order a side dish of French fries. The side dish is the side dish of course, but the real dish: the main dish is the dish of austerity and the dessert is one of parsimony because they say we must cut public assistance that is the dessert and he certainly drank from the cup of meanness, I must not go to Bethlehem and I must not go to Jericho and we must eat the bread of insularity jut stick with what you know Britain, Canada, United States and perhaps Taiwan, Ah! Now, I happen to know that the people of this country would not embrace austerity. He asked the question, he said, “What is so wrong with austerity”? I was for a moment thinking that there was another meaning somewhere of austerity, so this morning I had to look it up in Oxford Dictionary, and then I realised why the Honourable Leader of the Opposition loves the words “austerity” and “austere”. The first meaning is – sternness or severity of manner or attitude; that is the first meaning: sternness or severity of manner or attitude. The second one is – difficult economic conditions created by government measures to reduce public expenditure. In other words, it is the reduction of public expenditure in a willy-nilly manner which creates the difficult economic condition: that is austerity.

And there are two sides of austerity: taxation and he has not told us which tax they are going to increase because if you are going to be austere you got to increase taxes tell me which one nah. And if you are cutting expenditure you have to tell me what the NDP is going to cut but opportunistically they said nothing. One thing I know, if you have austerity in this country on the taxation and on the expenditure side there will be chaos and there will be blood on the street. I know that is what would happen. They want to stylize the facts, Mr. Speaker, and said that the position articulated in our Budget speech and when the Minister the Honourable Minister of Education was reading it, the Honourable Member for West Kingstown got up and said No! No! No! Those are not his ideas, those are IMF. Well, I invite everybody in this country to go to the Labour Party Manifesto of 2010 and go to pages 23 and 28 and you will see between pages 23 and 28 and you will see: “Economic approach, competitive economy, sustainable growth, job creation and social justice proposals for a sound economy” And what is in my Budget Speech is contained in those proposals in addition to the fiscal policy at pages 45 and 46. Just in case they say well, by 2010 you had started to go the way of the IMF, the only problems with that the provisions are almost an exact repeat of the 2005 Manifesto. The principles are there and I invite you to look at pages 35 to 38 in the 2005 Manifesto and section pages 47-48 and I would read that, Mr. Speaker, because this is 2005 you know, what is the headline: “Fiscal stance stimulus and prudence” what do we say here now: “Prudence and Enterprise” enterprise is just a substitute word for stimulus. Those are two ladies we have been in love with for a long time, “prudence and enterprise” we work hand in hand with them, wonderful ladies.

Mr. Speaker, what did we say:

“The ULP government in its second term will continue to pursue a fiscal policy with the following major features.

1. Implement the public sector investment programme to further provide among everything a fiscal stimulus to the economy in the process. Strive to implement an annual capital programme of at least \$150 million in real terms”.

We are talking about Public Sector investment not just Central Government, but Central Government and Public Enterprises including as it turns out International Airport, VINLEC; look over the last ten years VINLEC has implemented Capital Project over \$100 million. CWSA \$30 odd \$40 million, Argyle International Airport so on and so forth.

2. Provide an appropriate balance between the conflicting objectives of injecting a fiscal stimulus and maintaining a sustainable debt path.

Which is what we are still doing.

3. Contain Recurrent Expenditure over the Budget cycle so as to accrue a surplus on the Current Account of at least 3% of GDP.

Over the Budget cycle, not for a particular year, because as we said it is perfectly in order to run the Budget deficit for three four years or so, so long as over the medium term you have a programme for fiscal consolidation and therefore, Mr. Speaker, a surplus and I will come to that. You see how their Bible the IMF Report, you see how the IMF Report concludes that what we are doing is commendable. We are not looking for approval from the IMF but we are fashioning something to suit our own circumstances.

4. Adopt in conjunction with civil society through NESDEC the fiscal covenant. The draft fiscal covenant emphasizes fiscal consolidation, improvement in public revenue measures, including compliance and administration. Sensible management of deficits and debt including debt relief.

Because you remember I was still dealing with Ottley Hall debt at that time.

5. Improvement in the productivity of public expenditure, transparency of public expenditure, safeguarding equity through fiscal measures;

That is to say look out for the poor through fiscal measures.

and strengthening the institutional framework for democratic controls, accountability, monetary and fiscal matters.

6. Reduce further personal income tax and company tax to build 30% of the top rate.

Well, we are now 32.5%, it was 40%.

Introduce the value added tax to improve tax efficiencies but not to burden the poor and working people

That is why we have so many exempt and zero-rated categories.

7. Carry out appropriate tax reform including property tax reform so as to promote equity and stimulate investment.

This 2005 you know, we told the people what we are going to do and that was repeated in 2010.

8. Reduce taxation and working people by raising the income threshold for payment of income tax from \$14,000 annually to at least \$17,000 over the next five years.

Well, we have gone passed that; we are at \$20,000, when we met it, it was \$12,000. Mr. Speaker, so what we are implementing is what we said in 2005 and in 2010 the heading in our Manifesto “Fiscal Policy Managing the Money with Prudence and Enterprise.” The same two young ladies or elderly ladies depending on the age of the Honourable Members it could be the elderly ladies: Miss Prudence and Miss Enterprise. I am working with them, I am going everywhere with them in the interest of the people of St Vincent and the Grenadines. Those are not IMF ideas; those are our ideas as to how we are proceeding. [Knocking on the desk] Mr. Speaker, I heard them on the issues that how we abandon the countercyclical fiscal policy and that what we are doing now is an IMF policy. I want to turn to January 25th, 2010: the 2010 Budget Address pages 2-6, I do not want to read all of it. Mr. Speaker, the discussion begins by talking about what we are doing in the eight point stabilization, recovery and transformation strategy of the Currency Union. I am the Chairman of the joint taskforce between the OECS and the Currency Union which brought out the eight point plan, I am the Chairman and the ideas which are presented there are ideas which have been crystallized through our own work and the work of our other colleagues in the OECS. Then I went further down in my speech I said,

“At first Mr. Speaker,

and I am quoting my speech in 2010 this is months before we went to the IMF FOR any money under the Rapid Credit Facility because remember this, Mr. Speaker, you go to the Rapid Credit Facility when you have balance of payment plans some fiscal challenges as a consequence of Exogenous shocks: external shocks. And there were double external shocks:

1. Hurricane Tomas at the end of October.
2. The global economic crisis.

Those are the two. So we went for the Rapid Credit Facility, but Mr. Speaker, when I am going for the facility I had to write to the IMF and say to them; “Listen we have this disaster, we have the problem with the global economic crisis the impact, we have our special drawing rights, we are a member of the IMF club and we want to access that facility”. And I said to them, “Gentlemen we want to access that facility on the basis that we have

had an economic slow down as a consequence of the external shocks, which I have just mentioned, and we are doing our best to hold things together”; and I listed the number of things which we are doing. I said, “You can come and see for yourself because we want this money the 0.5% interest over a 10-year period”. When we got the first set of money they said, “Ah! We have gone to the IMF”. It is easy to understand this. The letter which I sent to the IMF and the report by the IMF staff in relation to the Rapid Credit Facility, I gave permission that they must be published on the IMF Website. I have nothing to hide, what do you mean that I hide it from people? It was discussed; I discussed it at Press Conferences. The same thing happened when I sent the second letter after the April floods in 2011 and that is why I asked him to read the letters, read them because I know what I wrote and there was nothing in the letters which was to the discredit of this government. On the contrary it showed that this government was taking advantage of opportunities which are available in the International political economy without condition. So, while we went to the IMF to get money from the Rapid Credit Facility this does not have conditionalities at all. The Leader of the Opposition is confusing an RCF application with an application in relation to a structural adjustment programme, and whilst I was asking for money there, I was getting US\$20 million in credit to the ALBA arrangements exercising our sovereignty and independence. So, because the Americans and the Venezuelans have a problem and the Americans are the biggest contributors to the IMF that I cannot go there? I belong to that club but I also belong into ALBA, and who benefitting? St Vincent and the Grenadines and we have not sold our soul and we have not sold our principles. Because when we were going to vote for Palestine as an independent state at the United Nations and when some, when a country a powerful country next to us sought to induce us to vote otherwise we voted on an issue of principle for Palestine [knocking on desk]

If I may say here parenthetically, Mr. Speaker, for my brothers and sisters in the Evangelical Faith, I am also calling for not only an independent state for Palestine but a secure state for Israel with clearly defined boundaries, the position established at the United Nations, and I want to say this that position is supported by the United States of America, but I do not have the problem of Presidential politics in St Vincent as to who contributing to it any powerful people supporting one side or the other , we are free to make our determination and we use our instrument of sovereignty and independence in the interest of our own people. So, Mr. Speaker, when it is said by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and also said by the Honourable Member for a West Kingstown that we said that in St Vincent that we are going to, as a condition to get money from the Rapid Credit Facility, we had to tell the public servants that we cannot give them any increase which we had promised them, I mean that is such an outrageous untruth because, Mr. Speaker, the application for the Rapid Credit Facility was made after the October 2010 hurricane but at the beginning of 2010 we said to the public servants we can pay you 3% of the 5% for 2010 but we have to pay you the 3% later depending how things are going and later we were able to pay them the 3%. What they want to say that I had such foresight that I knew a disaster was going to come at the end of ... that I knew hurricane was coming and I was going to the RCF and therefore I did that with the public servants in January of 2010?

If you get the sequence of events ... but that is what I say to you they are stylizing the facts in search of a theory of explanation and the stylizing of the facts is on the altar of partisan politics and they are rummaging around looking for a theory of explanation. They said, “But wait, how is the Comrade doing this thing”? They had to try and paint him and say that he been to the IMF. But we are doing things homegrown [knocking on the desk]

in the same way that we went with a homegrown constitution. Mr. Speaker, in this speech I pointed out how the IMF we differed with the IMF and the IMF eventually came around and agreed with us and then in 2004, I had this to say, sorry December 1st 2003, quote:

“The ULP Government accepts the essential truths contained in the advice proffered by the IMF Mission and it has fashioned efficacious policies for ongoing implementation accordingly, however, the government makes a somewhat different strategic judgement on the continued pursuance of the countercyclical fiscal stance for the years 2004 to 2005. We will not be as cautious as the IMF Mission recommends but at the same time we will not reckless or profligate. We will continue to be prudent: careful, creative and balancing, in reconciling if not resolving, conflicting fiscal objectives regarding increased Capital spending on the one hand and maintaining debt levels on the other within the context of enhanced revenue collection and tight controls on the Recurrent Expenditure”

That is what it says there, and we are using our judgement that is what we said now. You do not run a countercyclical fiscal policy indefinitely and we pointed that out in our speech last year but when the IMF wanted us to come off of it, in 2004 we said no we are not satisfied that the conditions are appropriate to come off from the countercyclical policy and we turned out to be right because we had such good growth in 2004, 2005, 2006 and 2007 and what derailed us in 2008 is the oil prices of US\$147.50 in July 2008 and then the financial meltdown internationally which metamorphosed into a world economic crisis.

And once that had happened we are still addressing prudence and enterprise but we have to do it in a manner appropriate to the circumstances: like Issachar we must know the time [knocking on the desk]. Mr. Speaker, in my 2012 Budget Address, I pointed out the factual situations, eleven truths, in our socio-economic condition and I proceeded to provide the framework for our economy to enhance our possibilities, you get nothing like that from the NDP. You get hit and run, nit picking here, there, stylizing facts, rummaging blindly looking for a theory of explanation. Now, I repeat, Mr. Speaker, that the Leader of the Opposition his main dish economic dish for the country is austerity with a side order genuflecting to growth, he has a dessert of parsimony, “Take away the public assistance from the poor people them”; that was repeated by the Honourable Member the Honourable Senator Baptiste; drink from the cup of meanness and continue to eat the bread of insularity, do not go abroad and look for money. Do not go abroad and look for money to just stay here?

You know Mr. Speaker, the economy of St Vincent is a peculiar one; in a nutshell let us give a glimpse of a particular relevant dimension. We have 50,000 economically active persons in this country 50,000 persons by themselves cannot provide the surplus required for the level of living we have where we have a high level of human development, we have that in this country, a high level of human development; education, health; telephone. I mean this morning you saw in mainland China people lining up almost fighting to get the iPhone-4S, in Kingstown I had one this morning and this is an illustration about where we are in the high level of development, human index but to support that 50,000 persons by themselves cannot provide the service so what do we do? We have to make sure that we train our people very well to develop them to the highest possible quality thus the Education Revolution. And then we have to train them too because we are historically a migrant

country, to go overseas and get work but to get work at a higher level in the chain of the international division of labour so that they can send back remittances.

In other words the issue is not a simple one of brain drain; we are integrated in the global economic system. I heard the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines said, “I do not support whatsoever ...” and he is the Deputy Leader. “I do not support whatsoever, this idea of training persons to export them, when you train them, our bright people must remain here”. Of course, he was trained overseas he stayed a long time overseas and then he came back because of politics. He may dispute that for he came for other things too because shortly after he came back he came to politics, I have no problem with that. So, what happened? Well, when he was finished he should not have been working in Canada he should have come home right away according to that thesis. Mr. Speaker, right today, 6% of the gross domestic product of this country about a \$120 million comes from remittances: that is a significant amount of money. This is a peculiar economy we have here you know, the problem of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition he has read text books but cannot take himself out of a stilted paradigm and get creatively as to how to deal with this economy and the society; that is a problem [knocking on the desk]

So, we say we will train persons to go overseas as well as, we will have a sufficient number here to man our public services and to man the economic and productive enterprises to lift our country and further to that we will also build an international airport to bring more people, to sell our goods and services to more people [knocking on desk]. At the moment it is 100,000 persons who come broadly speaking as stay over visitors. To have 100,000 Vincentians and 100,000 persons coming in; that is just 200,000 persons that we have to sell goods and services to. But when we finish the airport and very swiftly thereafter you move from 100,000 to 300,000 it is then 400,000 you have in the country, 300,000 coming in and 100,000 here so the farmers now have 400,000 persons to sell their fruits and vegetables to [knocking on the desk] the designers have 400,000 persons to sell their clothing to, the people in the cultural industries now have 400,000 persons to whom they can do their cultural work and to entertain and to make their money that is the logic of what we are doing.

But you read the Leader of the Opposition’s Budget Speech, in his 2000 Budget Speech and he says, “Well, we will try to see if we can do some things at Arnos Vale sure there are problems there”. He says, “Kitchen might be the best site technically” he says, “But that will cost US\$362 million and you cannot touch that”. At Arnos Vale, he did not look at it to say well, \$250 you cannot touch it, because they did not know what to do. It is only since this government came to power that we know what to do and how to build an international airport. [Knocking on the desk] And we will finish it and we will finish it at the end of next year, and have it ready for the Eastern Caribbean Civil Aviation Authority and the International Civil Aviation Organisation and the Airlines, so that they can come and inspect it because we are working with these people on an on-going basis.

So, what you want me to do? You want to crucify me because I am [a] year later than I said? We had all the money to build the national Insurance Building and it had a time overrun of two years and that is a building, it is \$20 million up there and we are talking about EC\$650 odd million and you want to crucify me for being a year later than I said it was going to be with all the rains and all the problems. And remember this while David left his son Solomon all the plans and all the gold and all the silver and all the timber of Lebanon to build the temple

it took him seven ... and the temple is a smaller facility than this. The temple is a smaller facility than this and nobody left us one nail not as screw driver and not a plan. We started from scratch; eh! Not a stone, not a piece a cedar, not a piece of breadfruit wood to make a scaffolding to fix up the building [knocking on the desk].

Mr. Speaker, to show you that the Opposition have their feet firmly planted in the sky I want Honourable Members to appreciate the policy position of the Opposition as articulated by the Member from the Northern Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, I have the information here between 1991 and 2001 the natural increase of the population of this country was 17,596 persons. During the same period the net migration was 18,169, in other words for the first time in our history net migration exceeded the natural increase in the population that is not something for me to bemoan, that is something which I celebrate. And in fact I will wager that since 2001 we have had even more persons over the 10-year period from 2001-2011 migrating, you know why I said that, Mr. Speaker, people are more educated and it is easier for them to migrate, more opportunities, transportation has become easier and the internet is there, they can make their contacts. In fact I would go so far as to say that in this country today, as it was ten years ago 1991 to 2001 the last ten years of the NDP administration that we have turned 18th century English Political Economist, Thomas Malthus on his head. The natural increase of the population is arithmetic but the net migration is geometric. I repeat the natural increase of the population of this country is arithmetic while the net migration is geometric; it multiplies and moves at a faster rate than the rate in the natural increase in the population.

What we therefore have to do is to train the persons to a higher level so that when they go to work at the big Kentucky, Brooklyn they do not look for a job to sweep, they look for a job to be the accountant or to be the Manager. You tell me that you are opposed to that? When I tell you, Mr. Speaker, when I say, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, that the gentlemen and ladies from the Opposition do not understand how this economy hangs together, you take the Royal Caribbean Cruise Line 2000 Vincentians work on the Royal Caribbean Cruise Line, they are coming here for the first time at the end of this year with Vision of the Seas but they have been contributing, Royal Caribbean Cruise had been contributing tremendously to this country. The estimate by Joel Providence of Coreas, who is the agent for Royal Caribbean, the estimate is that these 2000 persons remit to this country, earn and remit \$60 million per year. That is not part of the remittances of \$120 million that is normally counted; that is additional. So, if you put those two together you are looking at 9% of the gross domestic product of this country. What are you going to do? You are going to keep them at home? There are Chefs, there are Cabinet gentlemen; you are going to keep them here to cook in the hotels and the restaurants, you do not want them on the cruise ships? You do not want them to migrate and to become top class surgeons? But remember this, Mr. Speaker; we always say that an important component of the Education Revolution is to train persons fit to receive and transmit universal culture with a Caribbean particularity.

So, you train them for the whole world fit to receive and transmit universal culture including the culture of science and technology but with a Caribbean particularity they will be grounded in the values of our Caribbean civilization so always they will be tied to us [knocking on the desk] the Caribbean would be a noise in their blood and an echo in their bones. I know when I say that I heard the Honourable Senator Frederick mocking me with that. When I used it in my speech they sniggered, she and the Honourable Senator Baptiste, you know I smile. You know why I used that expression last year and going into this year? Now, I do not choose, Mr.

Speaker, to speak things randomly so last year was the year which the United Nations declared as the “Year of Peoples of African Descent” and among the most heroic peoples of African Descent were the Maroons of Jamaica who stood and fought against colonialism and for the maintenance of a Caribbean authenticity.

You know why I used that expression “A noise in the blood and an echo in the bone”? The Maroons had a horn called the Abeng and when they blew it in the hills it resonated in the cockpit country and when they heard it they came to the gathering: that sound was a noise in the blood and an echo in their bone, and the heroine, Nanny, one of the national heroes of Jamaica who stood and fought against colonialism in the 18th century, she is an embodiment of that issue, it was a noise in her blood, so I used it. And every time I use it I remember the Maroons and I remember the Garifuna: that is why I use it. [Knocking on the desk] But they think that is just a set of words that Ralph made up without grasping history. You notice how you have to interlace the history and the culture while you dealing with economics and everything else. They may think that this is the noise in the blood and the echo in the bone, not this, there is something more profound than this because the greatest hard drive, most advanced hard drive and applied software: the brain [knocking on the desk] and that is fashioned by a multiplicity of forces in our Caribbean civilization and they better, must get that, as a noise in the blood and an echo in the bone.

So, Mr. Speaker, when I use expressions like those, I do not use them for so. When a Christian says or sings “Amazing Grace” this Grace which is so amazing: they were lost, they were blind and they can see; it is the same kind of symbolic significance, hence the persons who are anti-colonial and anti-imperialist who are prepared to think creatively and that is what we teach. Mr. Speaker, maybe I probably have, I am now 65, I maybe have only ten more good years in me, maybe fifteen, if by reason of good living I get four scores and more in the remaining ones in addition to doing I had to be teaching and I had to be doing it on the basis of my experiences and what I have read and studied. And the younger one rather than snickering ask the question, “I wonder what is the significance of that what the Comrade is using; but if they do not want to learn what can I do.

So, Mr. Speaker, those who want to think that in a free and democratic country you can keep people locked up in St Vincent and the Grenadines after you train them is like spitting aimlessly in the wind. What we have to do is link in an organic way our nation at home and our nation abroad in the interest of the whole nation of St Vincent and the Grenadines that is the concept; that is the idea. Mr. Speaker, I do not want to revisit the territory of real economic growth because I have done so in my speech, suffice it to say that when you look across the region in a whole from 2008 to now St Vincent and the Grenadines performed above the average for the Eastern Caribbean Currency Unit and that though our growth is flat, the growth is not something which is at the higher end of no growth, it is at the lower end.

I want to turn, Mr. Speaker, to this document for the IMF Staff Report which the Leader of the Opposition quoted in a very partial kind of a way, incidentally, Mr. Speaker, every time the IMF comes to this country and does a report, I give them permission to put it on their website, that is part of the good governance of this government [knocking on the desk]. So, when the Leader of the Opposition presents it, do not think it is any white angel, or black angel or pink angel, you just have to go on the IMF Website to see it is a public document,

educate everybody about it. Mr. Speaker, it is a long document but I want to read essentially their conclusions in paragraphs 10 and 11 on page 7.

“The outlook for near term growth remains subdued but economic activity is expected to recover gradually over the medium term. The real GDP growth is expected to recover somewhat in the second half of this year 2011, reflecting a modest pick up in construction and agriculture, although growth will be slightly negative in 2011”.

So, from our statistics growth will be slightly positive, whether it is slightly positive or slightly negative or flat [inaudible] goes on.

“Next year

That is this year

growth is expected to get a boost from construction at the airport because of the amount of construction which will be going on, on the terminal building, from donor finance projects that were approved following the natural disasters.

That is monies which we have to get from the World Bank from the CDB from the visit to Taiwan. Remember when I was going to Taiwan, they said I should not go and I walked back with \$2 million to fix the Basin Hole Bridge in addition to existing money. So, what is so bad if I take a few days off and go and talk with the President and the Foreign Minister and walk back with \$2 million plus promises of some other additional monies US, to fix up the bridge for the people up there and to put in some sea defences - some river defences? They said that there is a disaster where I am going, but I went I was present on the disaster, in fact, I was up there with my walking stick, my foot was injured; I travelled with the injury. You think it is easy to travel 14 hours? Because of the injury to my foot I do not want to say this. I wore a tight orthopedic stocking so that I would be able to endure the flight, you hear me? Yes.

So, we will get a boost from construction at the airport, donor finance projects that were approved following the natural disasters and from the opening of two new universities.

Over the medium term, the economy is expected to improve towards its potential growth of 3½ % but the recovery to potential output is slow and more protracted than expected at the time of the July Rapid Credit Facility reflecting the downward revision in the outlook for advanced countries growth.

Remember I said, we would have growth this year the caveat is what is happening in the international economy and the question of the natural disaster.

On the price front, inflation is expected to moderate with long term historical path of 2.5% anchored by the Currency Board arrangement.

From the IMF, I do not think that one would say that is a bad report card coming out of these terrible conditions and where the world economy is entering a danger phase. It goes on:

However, risk to growth is squarely on the downside, the main risk. The main risk includes slower than expected disbursement from donors which could undermine reconstruction activity continued weakness in external demand due to delayed recovery in advanced economies. An erosion of confidence caused by possible spillovers from financial sector problems including in the region, and protracted delays in resolving the fallout from BAICO and CLICO. Moreover as is seen in the last twelve months natural disaster continues to be another potential source of risk”.

What they are saying [inaudible] and I accept that these are problems. We are trying to solve the insurance issues, we have to focus on the implementation of our Capital programme very well, and we have to implement our budget sensibly. The Members would tell you here, Cabinet Members, at our last Cabinet meeting last week Wednesday, the Minister of Social Development came to me privately and said, PM I am under pressure from some of the Reps. Where they want to put down more persons than the 500 which we budgeted for in respect of the YES programme \$2.8 [million] or thereabout and I told my colleague that they must stay within what we budget for. If you go over that, it means that by October or November you will have to come to me for a Special Warrant and because of the uncertainties in the global front, I do not want us on these matters to be other than focused and disciplined. So, we have the Budget, we put the number together and we follow the numbers. It may be difficult to tell somebody that they want to carry it to 510, no, you cannot carry it to 510, 500 that is what we budgeted for, and this is the discipline we have to exhibit in going forward.

Mr. Speaker, similarly, with the debt sustainability analysis which was done, and you noticed the Opposition said hardly anything about the debt, you know why, because we are the lowest in the OECS in the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union from debt to GDP. And the debt this year at the end of September 2011 was 0.7% less, than the dispersed public debt: total dispersed public debt at the end of September, 2010. And we have the lowest Debt to GDP in the region, we are in the sixties, mid-sixties which incidentally was less than when we came to office because there was the nearly \$200 million albatross of Ottley Hall around our necks. But the debt sustainability I want to read, Mr. Speaker, Debt Sustainability Analysis again by the IMF, I have to find that. Paragraphs 4-9, let me get that, Mr. Speaker, hear what it says Honourable Members.

“Although the public sector debt has risen in recent years, the authorities plan fiscal measures are expected to ensure debt sustainability over the medium term. The Public Sector Debt to GDP ratio is projected to peak at 72% by 2013.

Remember you know St Kitts is about 107% and the others are over 100%, only St Lucia and ourselves are in these kind of numbers; but here what they say:

The projectory is 72% by 2013, the year when the international airport project is expected to be completed. The debt trajectory is expected to start a downward trend afterwards reflecting fiscal consolidation measures that the authorities planned to take combined with the projected rebound in economic growth as discussed in the staff report. The public Debt to GDP ratio is projected to fall to 54% of GDP by 2020 which is just eight years away, below the Central Bank's recommended threshold of 60%.

You see what I tell you, we can run a deficit on the Current Account [clapping his hands] so long as we have a plan to hold it together over the medium term, and that is what we have been doing, and we have been implementing measures consistent with our philosophical and programmatical position from 2005 onwards, as reflected in our Manifestos. It goes on with the conclusion:

St Vincent and the Grenadines Public Debt is projected to revert to sustainable trajectory over the medium term and the external debt distress remains moderate.

I am not saying that you know, the IMF... when I told you that they present half truths and twist things out of context, I am giving you what the conclusion is.

“While the fiscal situation has been deteriorating in recent years the authorities have stepped up fiscal consolidation measures both on the Revenue and Expenditure fronts these along with projected improvements in the economic prospects are expected to improve the fiscal situation and reduce the public Debt to GDP ratio 52% by 2011”.

Mr. Speaker not only the IMF saying that there is no distress in our debt situation that is moderate the market also thinks so. Last year we went to the market four times with tranches of \$75 million in Treasury Bills: four tranches, and we received interest, they were... all our offerings were over subscribed on the regional governments security markets and on an average we got below 4.5% interest which is an interest rate better than what anybody else in the Currency Union is getting and better than what Spain is getting and Italy is getting for their similar short term 90-day money and we will see what we will get when we go in March for \$40 million in Bonds, 10-year Bonds when we go on the market in Europe countries like those gone pass 7%: 7½%. Incidentally, when the Honourable Leader of the Opposition was here when they sold Treasury Bills it is 6½% they sold their Treasury Bills at, I get them at below 4½% that is what the market is saying about what we are doing here in St Vincent and the Grenadines [knocking on the desk]. Not I saying it, the market; and the people are not taking the money to buy your Treasury Bills if they think that you would not be able to service the Treasury Bills and if you are not managing the economy sensibly.

Mr. Speaker, this is what the IMF Staff Report said, this is a document which you would not see on the website, and this is where the Executive Directors the Board Directors of the IMF had to say about St Vincent and the Grenadines; they met on the 16th November last year to discuss this which was presented to in October, so they met on the 16th November. What are they saying? I will just read what a few of them which is a sample of their position.

“The economy of St Vincent and the Grenadines is severely affected by a very unfortunate series of disasters we commend the authorities to keep the economy afloat during these very difficult times. The weak external outlook

That is the global economy.

is hindering the country to recover quickly.

Notice what they say,

“We commend the authority for their effort to keep the economy afloat during these very difficult times”.

That is two of them, I go for another two, Mr. Speaker, I am not calling their names because these are documents sent under confidential cover to the Prime Minister.

“Over recent years the real GDP growth in St Vincent and the Grenadines has been stayed in negative territory largely owing to unfavourable external conditions”.

Notice that: “It is because of the unfavourable external conditions and the economic crisis internationally and the disasters”. This is an interesting part to read.

“St Vincent and the Grenadines has been adversely affected by the continued slow down in the global economy and was hit by two natural disasters in the past twelve months. We commend the authorities for their efforts to stick to prudent macro economic policies during these difficult times.

Then they go on:

First we welcome the progress made on fiscal structural reforms agreed before; even if the Debt to GDP ratio is about 70% we do not see a strong case for fiscal consolidation in the short term as the country has to rebuild its capital stock after two natural disasters”.

So, where the Honourable Leader of the Opposition is siding with the Staff Report which is saying that we should go for more rapid fiscal consolidation, these Directors are saying that they do not see a strong case for that. We have to rebuild our capacity in this transitional period. Again we have commendation.

“Despite this difficult background we are reassured by the authorities’ commitment to put the fiscal situation in a sustainable position as illustrated by a medium term plan aimed at generating significant primary surpluses. In addition, we commend the authorities for their efforts on tax transparency and information exchange in accordance with their commitments to international standards”.

Another two of them:

“We commend, we would like to commend authorities’ efforts in progressing forward despite these challenges”.

Now, you call this a bad report card? People must speak the truth, Mr. Speaker. There are some inescapable facts of relevance on our fiscal situation. I reiterate the decline in the public debt 2011 compared to 2010. Our interest payments are 3.4% lower in this year than last year. Mr. Speaker, you know I am often amused when I hear the Leader of the Opposition. This Budget was his last one; this is what he left for me: 2001 Estimates passed in the House of the 6th December, 2000; in my Budget Speech, I told them that this was the dying effort of an ancient régime, they laughed at me, it proved that I turned out to be prophetic and they were defeated three times consecutively. This is the last dying effort of an ancient régime what did they leave for me? They left a surplus on the Current Account of \$401,897.00 and persons would say, “Well that’s fine”, fine. How did they conjure up the surplus? When you turn to page 5 of the Estimates, Mr. Speaker, Account No. 16005: Honorary Citizenships \$12 million. He budgeted for a surplus based on \$12 million to sell our passports and sell our citizenship; that is what he is boasting about you know, it is here, this is what he left for me.

So that in the beginning of March 2001 when we came to office, when we were sworn in on the 29th March this is what he left for me. He left, therefore, because we had made it plain that we are not selling any passports we were in the hole - \$11½ million up front. In addition he left me a debt of \$189 million at Ottley Hall where he had given them a commitment that he would pay the interest ongoing until 2013 when he would start to pay the principal, 2003, sorry, when he would start to pay the principal and we would finish in 2013 could you imagine paying one hundred and something million dollars principal over a 10-year period that is over \$10 million on the principal plus the interest payment which is set at LIBOR+2 (London Interbank Offered Rate +2) if the people at St Vincent did not change them in 2001 we would have had to band our belly and suck salt in this country. That is what was left here Mr. Speaker. In fact, Mr. Speaker, the 2 years before, in 2 years, we had paid in interest alone \$19 million on this. But it is interesting to compare these Estimates and these for 2012; he said that in this one I am being profligate when I must be austere even though in the case of this one it is just under one percent less the recurrent spending than last year.

Mr. Speaker, let us look at some comparisons in this one wages were \$142 million: wages and salaries, in this one \$251 million, in this one Pensions and NIS was \$14.5 million, in this one \$47 million; [knocking on the desk] in Education the Recurrent Budget in this one was \$55.6 million, in this one \$106 million nearly twice; what do you want me to do send home the children, send home the teachers that is the austerity you want? In the primary schools in 2001 in this one the recurrent spending was \$29.3 million, in this one is \$38.4 million; in secondary schools, in this one it was \$13.5 million, in this one is \$35 million; [knocking on the desk]. In the Teacher’s College, in this one was \$4½ million, sorry not the Teacher’s College, all the Community College Institutions, in this one was 4 ½ million, in this one it is \$12½ million.

You know, they are talking that ... and I heard the Honourable Senator Cummings that we must do something about technical education, sorry the Honourable Member for West Kingstown, in this one the Technical College had 187 students, in this one it has 817 [knocking on the desk] In the Community College system in this one was 949 students, in this one 2,229; [knocking on desk] for Adult and Continuing Education, in this one was \$289,000.00, in this one is \$2.4 million. For university training in this \$6.9 million, in this one \$14 million; [knocking on desk] the school feeding programme in this one \$1.1 million, in this one \$2.1 million. For the Nutrition Unit in this one was \$219,000.00, in this one is \$644,000.00. Health and the Environment ... Recurrent Budget \$39 million, in this one \$64 million; at the Milton Cato Hospital in this one \$13½ million, in this one \$26.2 million; [knocking on the desk] Medical Stores in this one 2001 was \$4 million, almost \$7 million. For the rural hospitals, in this one \$1.3 million, in this one \$2 million plus; in the Lewis Punnett Home this one is more than \$1½ million of this one, in the Mental Hospital it is \$1.3 million more than in this one.

You know Mr. Speaker; the Community Health Services which deals with the clinics, the rural clinics 40 of them, in 2001 it is \$4.9 million in 2012 \$8.7 million; National Security we are talking about crime, in this one the Police, Fire and Coast Guard is 810 persons 1,034; the Recurrent Budget for the Police in 2001 \$16.05 million, in this one it is \$28.5 million; reflecting the massive increase in salaries which we gave to the police at the time of reclassification and for the Fire and Coast Guard similarly we have tremendous increases. Social Welfare, public assistance in this one for poor people it is \$8.6 million in this one it is \$17.6 million.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister I am reminding you that you have 1 hr.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I am obliged, Mr. Speaker. For the YES Programme in 2001 zero, in 2012 \$2.8 million; [knocking on the desk] in this one Home Help for the Elderly zero, in this one \$1.09 million; [knocking on the desk]. Now Mr. Speaker, I could take away all the increases and be austere, what is the meaning here again? Let me look at it, let me see what the Oxford Dictionary tells me is “austere”: sternness or severity of manner or attitude; difficult economic times induced created by government measures to reduce public expenditure. I could reduce it to these levels you know, I could do that with just to take account of inflation and of course Mr. Speaker, tell me well that is a wonderful thing.

Mr. Speaker, I want to address the issue of Culture and the Creative Industry, the Honourable Senator Frederick said, “We applaud the laptop initiative but that the NDP were the originators of the idea” What I know the Leader of the Opposition had said that over the medium term they would see how they can phase in laptops for students. Over the medium term, the medium term 2020 to phase it in. I responded the morning and I presented one of the laptops I said, “What they talking about medium term and phasing in, I have a laptop here for every child”. Apparently, because they spoke it at a Party Convention they were not listening to us, they assumed paternity for something they are father to what, father to what?

Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition says that the only instrument we have to use is fiscal, well the laptops which came here and the implementation for 15,000 laptops cost \$18 million that was not introduced because of any fiscal policy you know that was introduced outside of the Budget because of our exercise of sovereignty and independence [knocking on the desk] If you only see the fiscal issue as the only one which you

can manipulate you would not have gotten it from between Portugal and Venezuela, and when I went on that trip to Portugal Honourable Members would remember that trip, I went to Madeira the land of my fore parents talked about tourism, I went to see the airport there, Rudy Mathias was with me, they are mountainous like St Vincent, how they build. Then I had lunch a lunch meeting with the Prime Minister of Portugal whom I had laid the ground work with several meetings at the United Nations, he said he did not want anybody other than me at the lunch and he had his principle. He said to me, “Ralph what can I do for you in St Vincent”? I said, “I want you to give me 30,000 computers”, I said to him, “I know that Intel the American Company had built them for you, they are very good and you use them in your schools”. He said, “I am sending close to a million to Venezuela, I will organize 30,000 for you, do not worry about that”. He said, “What you would like to have for lunch”? That is how that discussion was made because I had laid the ground work at several meetings before, when I meet him he used to introduce me to other people and say, “Come, come, meet the Senior Portuguese Prime Minister in the world, Comrade Ralph” because I am senior to him I have been Prime Minister longer than him, you think you can stay home and get that?

And then I went from there to see the Holy Father, at the Vatican, I was going on to Iran and he gave me a special message to take to President Ahmadinejad. From that visit there was US\$2 million you know, for the airport and the first set of laptops well even though they put them conservatively \$1,000 a laptop that is \$30 million you know, for the first set is \$15,000 plus we had some local cost [inaudible] what a story? What a story? And Senator Frederick says she welcomes it but when I spoke about the laptops first she hadn't investigated them, she went as their information guru on the radio and said that the laptop is a joke. They hadn't examined it till Mr. Bailey who was with me, I said, “well you are the technical man answer that kind of a comment”, and he answered about the capacity. Now, she says that you just cannot do it like that that you have to have a site so they put up in December last year a website with some examination papers in it www.vincyclclassroom.com and she says that that is a way to utilize the laptops, well I have never heard anything more infantile.

You know, it is trite that the provision of the laptops alone cannot complete the process for teaching and learning but you have to have the internet access in the schools; for instance which we have provided to all education institutions in St Vincent and the Grenadines. And we have done to the Learning Resource Centers, we are going to do to the police stations and we are going to do to the clinics. And that you must not only integrate the technology into the learning and teaching process, you must transform it and the presence of a website is smoke in your eye. You know I want to read this, the Caribbean Examiner, the publication of the Caribbean Examination Council, Volume 9, October 2000; this is how we see the technology. I am the Minister of Telecoms and one of the things I try to make sure I do I read up on policy in relation to information technology. I do not have to be adept like the next person in manipulating the computer, I have to know how IT connects with the learning and teaching process and for that you have to read about it and study it.

Didacus Jules, Dr. Didacus Jules who heads the CXC, the Caribbean Examination Council former student of mine at university, came to see me. He said to me that they are going to ... they have a number of E-Learning portals and they have Notes Master for every CXC student and teacher. I said but you have to have a similar Notes Master for the primary schools because we have put the laptops in the hands of the primary school

children. He said, “Yes they appreciate that and they will [inaudible]” because the Ministry of Education is working with CXC for exit examination from the primary school system to replace the Common Entrance that is being worked on and we have told them that we are prepared to join in that programme not in the year 2012 but in the year 2013, we told them that, it is left for the official proceedings. But I want to read what Dr. Carol Granston and Dr. Didacus Jules have to say about E-Learning and teaching through ICT specifically in an article called E-Learning Portals in Caribbean Education. They discussed what they called the four “Cs” Communication, Connections, Conversations and Community they go on.

“These new possibilities in the four “Cs” cannot fundamentally change and enhance learning, learning is no longer restricted to the highly formalized structures to the traditional schools, it can happen anyway at anytime, and it can be highly individualized even while being made universally available. The teaching function becomes more of a facilitating function that can take many pedagogical forms. It can involve the sharing of knowledge or the creation of new knowledge. Beyond the focus on knowledge acquisition is the imperative of developing skills and competencies and in this process the facilitator can be a skilled trainer, as opposed to a trained teacher, with industry or professionalism.

A common fallacy is that all these new and emerging technology makes it possible for us to do what we have traditionally done in a more engaging manner. This is a limited perspective that is unconsciously replicated in the notion of integrating ICT in education. For many this means simply adding and making use of the new technologies in our traditional didactic modes of education delivery where teaching and learning are dominated by the [inaudible]. The real power of the new technology lies in the fundamental redefinition of teaching and learning that they enable. It is not about integration but transformation. Used at their fullest potential the new technologies render it impossible to teach and to learn in accordance with the old prescriptions and paradigm. In the first instance the distinction between teaching and learning itself is redefined as is the rigid differentiation between learner and teacher. Both teaching and learner become a tighter dialectic that is focused on the discovery of knowledge that happens in a more participatory manner as learners becomes partners in the learning process.

Attention must therefore be paid not only to the effective use of the technology but equally to the context in which learning occurs. An expert Jenkins argue that “rather than dealing with each technology in isolation we would do better to take an ecological approach thinking about the interrelationship among different communication technologies, the cultural communities that grow up around them and the activities they support”.

In other words to present to us a website where you put some examination papers on it and you might put something there for somebody how to count that is not a transformative way to use ICT, it is not even an integrated manner. You have to link the syllabuses you have to know what you are doing, the teacher and the student they have to interact in a new manner, in a focused and disciplined way, not this kind of a bling as

though you going up on top of the stage in front of a carnival show and shout with somebody “Two, three wave your hand and wine”; that is not what this thing is about this is a more profound which we are proceeding in the Ministry of Education. Now, one eye man in blind man country might be king but we are more thoughtful on this subject.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in our Manifestos we have full details about culture and cultural industries but you know a profound error has always been with the opposition, they want to shortcut the things and don’t think them out they have no conceptual framework like the building of a civilization where culture is at its core. As far as they are concerned you have a couple of people who do one and two entertainment things and that is enough; I am sorry there are so many dimensions of culture. There are the creative industry industries in which I outlined in my budget speech, things which we can be doing with it to lift it but it has to go within a broader rubric. Mr. Speaker, in relation to practical things, the NDP really they have the gall to talk about culture; before we arrived here a popular Mass form CBC was on its last legs, Mama Culture, René Baptiste, had to revive it. Then they haven’t had for years any panorama there were two pan sides there were Starlift and there was Sion Hill Euphonium and there was also VINLEC Potential, but Grey had said he is not participating in any kind of panorama. We revived panorama, we put money in pan side, pan against crime we now have about twenty something pan side in this country, adult and young. I mean what is the matter with ... I hear they are talking about ... the Member for West Kingstown said that we must put pan up in Peace Moe when we arrived there was no Peace Moe the thing had gone to the dogs. You go inside of there it was rat infested and you fall through the floor, it was leaking, windows broken that was the constituency of the Minister of Finance. There were not sending people overseas to be trained in this field, we have them all about now; dancers introduced in every single school in this country courtesy of Mama Culture.

Mr. Speaker, over the last three years well first of all Invest SVG has a document 2009 entitled Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Policy Framework and Development Strategy for Cultural and Creative Industry Development; notice I have been talking about culture broadly within the framework of the civilization but Invest SVG has a strategy document and for the last three years they have been working in this area. National Export Strategy Process has the creative sector as one of the priority areas. Guidance from the coalition of services which has identified the creative industry as a best bet sector and promotion and training in the areas of music, entertainment, songwriting, videography, fashion designing and the creative arts. And there are some specific proposals that we have here, Mr. Speaker, the only reason I did not read these my budget speech was so long that I had to cut out some things saying I would read them in my winding up and I will read them now, I have them here. This year we would:

1. Set up an inter-ministerial unit for cultural industries to be spearheaded by Invest SVG. This would consist of representatives from the various Ministries including Industry, Technology, Sports, Culture, Finance, Foreign Affairs and Redo.
2. Enhance the work and functioning of the Coalition of Service Industries.

Which Ambassador John has been speaking to me about.

3. Put the technology unit in the Ministry of Technology and Redo to work on an ongoing basis with the Ministry of Industry and Invest SVG on this matter.

The point is this, Mr. Speaker, we have two persons in the technology unit in the Ministry of Technology who are working really with the school on IT matters, we have to put them to Industry related matters also, in this case creative industry.

4. Sign as many relevant visa abolition agreements with as many countries as possible and continue to push and secure Schengen visa waiver to European countries, so as to be able to facilitate easier travel by Vincentians including cultural and entertainment workers.

As I had pointed out, either in my budget speech or when I was speaking during the Estimates, I said that we need, Mr. Speaker, to get these visa waivers for our entertainers and cultural artistes to go to Europe to perform at the festival. We have an Associate Degree at the Community College in Fine Arts and Design. I do not understand what these ... what the Honourable Senator Frederick is talking about, I mean ... we have two of them, sorry, at the Norman Manley School for the performing Arts in Jamaica. I was in Tbilisi the Capital of Georgia and I put on my television in the room in which I was staying and who came on, on a TELESO programme TELESOL, the two young men who play pan who is at Norman Manley and one of them was interviewed on the program. I am in Georgia and I saw that we are helping them, he came up by me and I said, "My brother, I saw you in Tbilisi", he said "Where is Tbilisi"? I said "Georgia". Now, in Georgia Vincentians can go there without visa and stay there for up to 360 days, our Diplomatic Missions and Honorary Consuls have to address this matter and I want them to hear this.

5. We are going to provide duty-free concessions on a specified range of equipment in cultural and entertainment business including recording and videography facilities.

We are going to give them duty-free concessions, but you have to be doing it as a business you cannot have it film yourself and your family inside of your house.

6. Facilitate entrepreneurs in the cultural and entertainment industry in a series of ways including helping with start-up capital.
7. To work assiduously with Caricom Governments and Cuba, to establish a specialized regional training facility in the creative and performing arts.

Now, the people know they can trust us on these issues of culture.

Mr. Speaker the Honourable Minister spoke on the City of Kingstown, I just want to say that we are going to clean up the City and I want to say that the National Lotteries either later this year or early next year will have construction commence on the facility, the indoors sporting facility down by little Tokyo. I was at Rose Place

during the 2010 general election and I promised them that we are going to build right down there an indoor sporting facility and soon after the election I had the National Lotteries Authority buy the Gloves Factory Site from National Properties, the design process is on the way. This indoor sporting facility will include basketball, netball courts, tennis courts, a well equipped gymnasium, a boxing gym, table tennis facilities and specialized shops to be rented. The National Lotteries would do that in addition to the three courts that they have for squash at their headquarters and the tremendous work that they have done down at Victoria Park. All over this country we are doing playing fields, I do not know what the Member for South Leeward was talking about.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to the CWSA I just want to say something, the Member for West Kingstown has misled this House and the people of this country saying that the government does not pay water bill. Well, the government does not pay water bills because we do not have any water bill to pay. There is no school, no department in government where they get a water bill, we give \$1.4 million subvention, a block subvention, to them so that there is no water bill which is handed out. Now, from time to time as is with subventions to any state enterprise they may be short a \$200,000.00 a \$300,000.00 but they get paid. But I cannot understand a serious man would say that the reason why we are raising the water rates is because government owes money on their water bill. Even if that were the case which it is not the case you do not increase the price of delivering a service or a commodity because the seller has receivables, you ask for a rate increase on the base for the revenue which is generated in relation to your expenses and your capital programme. You do not ask for a rate increase in relation to receivables, you think that could get pass Cabinet a Cabinet with Ralph chairing it?

But these are such elementary points but the Honourable Member for West Kingstown has a propensity, with great respect to him, of speaking things about which he does not quite know and to speak them authoritatively and also to speak very kidding ideas as though they are earth shaking you know because they were delivered with a particular air. I don't understand, you know you can contort and present it in however you want but style like fine silk often hides eczema. So, the point is this, you do not go and speak about things in a manner to mislead people which is what happened. He did the same thing on Energy. You know, Mr. Speaker, this country, this government we had to spend over \$100 million to be able to supply the energy needs for Buccament for the growing demand in the country and also for the airport which is coming. And having done that we are going to spend millions of dollars as I outlined in my budget speech on renewable energy wind and solar, and we are working with people in relation to geothermal, the agreement which he talks about which we have with Croghan.

They have brought investors and given the expensive nature of the renewal ... of geothermal, the investors have backed off who were brought in by this company; when he compares that with Ottley Hall we have not spent any money on that matter. We have not borrowed any money this is for people to begin to do some exploration and when they bring the financiers we will see how we can all work out as we go forward. Geothermal we are pushing it but it is not easy a matter to get going.

They are bad mouthing the medical complex in Georgetown in the same way, Mr. Speaker, that hey had bad mouth the Education Revolution, the Housing Revolution, the Jet Airport at Canouan, the Arnos Vale Cricket facility, the Argyle International Airport, the Rabacca Bridge, the Fishing Complex at Owia, the modern

National Library, the Tunnels at Park Hill and Byrea with their encasement and the Buccament Resort. These are people who left us blacklisted, loss of corresponding banking relation, our country as a money laundering centre, the Lucky Star fiasco, Colonial Homes fiasco, sale of our passports and citizenship, the Ottley Hall debacle, people remember Gibson Corner and Justice Monica Joseph commission of enquiry. Seriously, they think that in this day and age people would go back to that? And then I heard them on IT; Mr. Speaker, this government was responsible for the practical liberalization of telecoms. We have put computers in the schools and the learning resource centers, we have done the internet connectivity to schools and the LRCs, and we have done tremendous work at the National Telecommunications Regulatory Commission. We have secured rate reduction repeatedly, we have provided fiscal concessions to ICT'S investors, and we have provided tax relief to home, ICT training for teachers, phenomenal ICT advances at the Community College.

This morning I was speaking to the CEO for LIME locally and he was confessing to me that until I spoke he did not know that all these things were happening at the Community College. And he went out there yesterday to see Dr. Wharton and what they are talking about is to deliver certain information educational programmes on the Blackberry for the students. I mean ... and to work with the community college in their ICT expansion which is going on as you know, there is a \$40 odd million project for ICT expansion generally, including at the Community College and other development; \$26 million, \$27 million at the Community College alone. I addressed the question of ICT in the learning and teaching process, ICT and CXC, ICT and the Centre for Enterprise Development with Industry. You know, I want to talk about something before I forget some people, ICT companies and the government. We came to office and Cable and Wireless was hardly paying any taxes and we set up a review a forensic study into the tax payment the former Comptroller of Inland Revenue Miss Alma Dougan is right here, she can say it to anybody, the assessment showed that they owed us over six years \$26 million. When you look at the study it was more realistically like \$20/\$21 million. Cable and Wireless people said that study is a joke; a lawyer from England wrote and said that all they owed us was \$563,000.00 and that is being very generous that was their position.

So, I asked her what are you going to do, I cannot tell the Comptroller what to do she has her power under the law, the Income Tax Act not in the hands of the Prime Minister or Minister of Finance in her hands. She said, well she does not know she is thinking about it. I said, "Well, let me ask you something if you do a best of judgement assessment about tax [inaudible] and they do not want to pay having spoken to them, what do you do"? She said, "Execute". I said what are your measures of execution? She said, "One them is garnishing, the account". So I said to her "You have better than a best of judgement, you have a study". She said, "You mean garnishing Cable and Wireless"? Because there was not yet a second provider you know, I said, "Don't worry if they try to lock it down our Vincentians would run it and I do not want that to happen". I said, "Madam Comptroller, collect my tax" She garnished the accounts: this is a law, a country of laws, Cable and Wireless went to court the Judge lifted it the garnish by saying "Cable and Wireless is a big company, you know they could provide the ... if there is anything they are good for whatever monies they are talk with them negotiate and so". They send down some high powered people from England to talk and we settled at \$17.5 million, yes, you cannot sell no passport for that - just do our work properly. What happened? Cable and Wireless, no companies are god.

In the old colonial days you had the Governor General or the Governor you had they brought the Book of Common Prayer which is still a good book, they brought Barclays Bank and Cable and Wireless but we were not in colonial times any more. This is an independent country and I decided that we would settle; I recommend to Cabinet let us settle for \$17.5 because I know they would have drag me out for about five six years all the way up to the Privy Council and I prefer to take \$17.5 million now than \$21 million in five or six years, I am a practical man of affairs and that is how we did. And we had to pay a lot of lawyers and all the rest of it we had to pay [inaudible] in full.

Mr. Speaker, I want to state other educational institution University of the West Indies, I want to read a letter, Mr. Speaker, from Hazel Simmons Mc Donald, Professor Hazel Simmons Mc Donald she send me this email and wrote this letter to me on the 27th December. She said,

Dear Prime Minister,

Many thanks of informing me of the decision of Cabinet to provide a letter of guarantee in respect of the loan of the Caribbean Development Bank for the upgrading of the UWI open campus site in St Vincent and the Grenadines. The proposed sum for the upgrading of the site is \$9.996 million; I am attaching a summary description of the project from the proposal that was submitted to the CDB.

I am pleased to learn that Cabinet has agreed to partner with the UWI on the auditorium initiative. I agree to your proposal for an MOU to guide us on this project and look forward to further discussion with you early in the coming year. I also look forward to receive a copy of the letter of comfort that will be sent to CDB.

I take this opportunity to wish you the very best for 2012.

Kind personal regards.

And what is going to happen at university, we are going to provide a letter of comfort. CDB is providing the money to the university open campus, they are going to develop a student learning activity centre, which will comprise a general reception area and student's services area, a learning commons and library services and classroom, an administrative block which will accommodate some senior administrative offices, a multipurpose room, which will also be used as a conference room, a multimedia training room to facilitate local and remote interaction for instructor led training of staff and specialized student activities, an ICT Learning Centre which will comprise two multimedia smart classrooms with state of the art display capabilities a TeleVideo conferencing room, two computer laboratories and office for technicians and a work space server network room and infrastructure wiring closet. A specialized office centre block with offices provision to accommodate varying short term projects and specialized initiatives including space for visiting academics, dedicated office space for site staff, a daycare center and a green space play area. This is \$9.996 million and the cost for furnishing the building is 10% of that.

Now, we are going to expand the Community College and we partner with the university on this. You see what we are doing now with post secondary and tertiary education is a magnificent time for young people in St Vincent and the Grenadines [applause].

Mr. Speaker, all I could say about the Leader of the Opposition in addressing jobs is that, Mr. Speaker, he said he does not accept the NIS numbers; well, what I can say to this Honourable House I called a professional at the NIS an actuary, Mr. Stewart Haynes and I said Mr. Haynes, can you please send me a table for active employers by economic sector for the period 2001 to 2011 for active employees and for self employees and he send me, and this is the data which I ... I did not make it up. So, the Leader ... I can read this and because it does not fit in with his preconceptions he said he does not accept it. What do you do with individuals like these? Seek truth from facts and let the real world validate the truth. The same thing he did with the poverty report, I have never seen somebody so austere.

So, Mr. Speaker, I want to say this just briefly: the NDP built the cruise ship berth and this government is paying for it and they are paying heavily and I will tell you this left handed Lenny struck late in 2000 or 1999 it was repaired, it cost over \$7 million to repair apart from the original fifty odd millions Kuwait fund put the money, they did not pay one cent. So, when I signed the agreement in relation to the money for E.T Joshua I paid the \$7 million before I went to Kuwait you know, early 2001 because I told my officials, I said, "I am not going there unless we pay this money" because the first thing the Director of Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development asked the officials, "The special \$7 million has it been paid yet"? Unless that was paid we could not go forward with anything else but we had paid it, this government paid it.

Mr. Speaker, as I wind up I want to speak to the people of North Central to thank them. They have had a good team together them and myself, I love the people of North Central Windward, I love the people of St Vincent and that I have a love for the people of North Central Windward so, we have a bond which cannot be shaken. We have done a lot of work, we are still working on the medical complex we would finish it this year; Georgetown Police Station we opened, we are working on completing the playing field in Chili, we have something else still to build there. We are doing those at Colonaire, Park Hill and South Rivers, Colonaire bridge the project is on its way, we have finished the Bailey bridge the alternative bridge we have done the road ... we are doing the road to that. The Black Point Tourism site has been developed; we bought a building, and renovated it and extended it, a school for special needs in Georgetown.

You know, you can tell a government how they treat persons who are challenged. When we came to office they were in an old broken down section of the old hospital, the waterfront terrible, terrible, terrible. We built first of all a timber building and then this beautiful facility, when you visit there children love it: that is when you know a government cares about people, how they treat those who are the most marginalized. Then we built an Early Childhood Centre with BNTF monies in the church yard of the Methodist Church in Georgetown. We have done a lot of projects, I want to tell the people at Dundar Hole in Park Hill that the project which has been started there, there is money in the Estimates for it to be continued. People at Golden Years Activity Center they got a bus, a beautiful bus, there will be rebuilding after Tomas and we are going to distribute some lands at

South Rivers, Colonaire and Georgetown this year. We have a lot of parcels of roads which would be done and we have some renovations to do on some of the schools.

Mr. Speaker, I simply want to ... the last four years have not been easy but we have held things and we are going forward [knocking on the desk]. We have strengthened the social security net for the poor, we have not laid off people in the state sector, when several countries in the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union public servants getting their salary six and eight weeks late in this country you put your pot on the fire, you are getting your salary on the appointed day. Public servants are having some forbearance with us and I appreciate it, they understand. Now, they have a few people who would like to use their positions to see if they could manipulate some public servants but I tell you this, have no fear public servants, Mr. speaker, understand what is happening and they know who trying to play politics and who not trying to play politics and they know where their interests are. They know this government has done well with them and for them. They have a lot of work to do in this period and we appreciate it, all of us. In the productive sectors tremendous work has to be done.

Mr. Speaker, when the history is written people would want to know how it is in this period you could provide a laptop for every single child. How in this period you could build the largest capital project since conquest and settlement? How is it that you are building all these schools and extending the Education Revolution; and deepening it and doing these fantastic things in health? People would want to know how; I believe deeply that the Almighty God is watching us in St Vincent [applause]. I believe sincerely that our love and concern for the poor and our practical efforts in helping the poor is done to our advantage, we are getting the blessings, the book of Psalms tell us that: "Blessed is he who considereth the poor" and we will prevail against all those who want to chop us down. Fortification and the ring of Almighty God and His Grace protecting us, helping us and then when we have a little problem to find some monies at the International Airport we get a call from Venezuela that the loan for US\$20 million is approved, just as you are saying what are you going to do Petro Caribe provide EC\$31 million that when we want some trucks because 56% of the trucks are not working now pretty soon about \$1 million is coming to help us buy new trucks to move the dirt maybe to buy another Scraper [inaudible]

So that when people ask me how you sleep by nights, where you think these things coming from, I embrace St Paul's injunction: we reason, we do our work but in these circumstances when things are trying we live by faith [knocking on the desk]. I know that many persons would think I talk this just for political effect I do not play with God, I do not play with him at all, he kept us going and we are building it for our children and grandchildren; the airport will come. We have a financial shortfall but we know where the money is coming from, we have the plans as we go forward, nobody believed that we would have reached this far, this is a miracle for some; what at time eh! I know what they are worry about is that that when the airport is completed and when this country returns as the IMF says it is in the medium term of economic growth and this year barring a calamity in natural disaster and worst economic [inaudible externally we would be there with [inaudible]. They are worrying what will happen to them, that is their political problem that; is their headache; that is their nightmare when the 747 land [knocking on the desk].

Mr. Speaker, there are some people in this country who just wish ill for everything what we are doing good, in education, the Rabacca Bridge because of the tightened economic circumstances we had to focus on the airport and rest for a little while the cross-country road and they are gloating eh! Just like how they said that Buccament was a phantom project and Buccament is one of the institutions responsible for us having economic growth in 2011 because of their performance at the resort [knocking on the desk]. Mr. Speaker, I do not say that there are areas in which we could have done better than we have done. There must be because we are not perfect and we do not control all the factors and circumstances but we have done our best [knocking on the desk].

Mr. Speaker, I push myself to the limit for this country which I love and this Caribbean. I heard the Leader of the Opposition enunciated how many years he worked as a public servant and did this and that. I have been a political activist this year would be 43 years 43 weeks [inaudible] 43 months, I have been through a lot, I have trained myself and been trained in a wide area of disciplines touching and concerning government economics, government philosophy, administration, law, statistics, but most of all I have been nurtured in the love of people and when I went away over Christmas, I was away for 16 days, I was in and out of hotels on eleven occasions and while I was away I took the Estimates and a lot of notes and by the time I returned I had already written over 60% of my speech. I will come from dinner with the President 10:00-10:30 or the Prime Minister in a particular country and I go to the hotel and fortunately there is a room which is outside of the bedroom because they give us a suite so I do not have to wake Eloise. I sit down and I start to write for a few hours.

Mr. Speaker, anybody who wants this job has to be prepared to work hard and to take a lot of blows in doing it, it is the nature of this job but I put my faith and trust in God with the support of the people and very much so of my colleagues whom I want to thank for providing tremendous support in the preparation of this budget; whom I want to thank for their phenomenal work over the last year and I want to thank very much the Deputy Prime Minister for holding things together when I am away [knocking on the desk]. She is an extraordinary woman who has become advisor to all of us and whose spirituality helps to hold us together and who leads us. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and members of the staff of the House; may God continue to bless this country and bless all of us [applause].

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House to consider this Bill clause by clause.

House resolved itself into a Committee

House resumed

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, I have the honour to report that a Bill for an Act to provide for the services of St Vincent and the Grenadines for the year ending on the 31st day of December 2012 has passed the committee stage without amendment.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to provide for the services of St Vincent and the Grenadines for the year ending on the 31st day of December, 2012 be read a third time by title and passed.

Question put and agreed to

Appropriation Act 2012

Appointment of Public Accounts Committee

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, well I do not know what is happening to those from the Opposition but I would like the following persons to be named from the government side in this Public Accounts Committee, the same persons who were there in 2011. The Honourable Minister of Housing, the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works, the Honourable Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Honourable Minister of Trade and Industry, The Honourable Senator David Browne and the Honourable Attorney General. I think that is five.

ADJOURNMENT

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, we have had quite a time and we have to allow the Attorney General to get some of her Bills together and I want to suggest a date in the latter part of February as the next meeting, February 21st Tuesday.

Accordingly, I beg to move that this Honourable House do stand adjourned until Tuesday 21st February at 10:00 a.m.

**Question put and agreed to
House adjourned at 1:30 p.m.
Until 21st February, 2012
At 10:00 am**