

**No. 10**

**Tuesday**

**Second Session**

**24<sup>th</sup> February, 2012**

**Ninth Parliament**

**SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

**THE**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**ADVANCE COPY**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

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# **THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

## **OFFICIAL REPORT**

### **PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE FIFTH 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.**

**TENTH SITTING**

**24<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY, 2012**

#### **HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

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

#### **PRAYERS**

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

Honourable Hendrick Alexander

#### **Present**

#### **MEMBERS OF CABINET**

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

Member for North Central Windward

Attorney General  
Honourable Judith Jones-Morgan

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 Transport and Works, Urban Development and Local Government Honourable Julian Francis	Government Senator
Parliamentary Secretary in the Office Of the Prime Minister Honourable Elvis Charles	Government Senator
Honourable David Browne	Government Senator/ Deputy Speaker

### **OTHER MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE**

Honourable Arnhim Eustace Leader of the Opposition	Member for East Kingstown
Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday	Member for Northern Grenadines
Honourable Terrance Ollivierre	Member for Southern Grenadines

Honourable St. Claire Leacock

Member for Central Kingstown

Honourable Daniel Cummings

Member for West Kingstown

Honourable Roland Matthews

Member for North Leeward

Honourable Nigel Stephenson

Member for South Leeward

Honourable Vynnette Frederick

Opposition Senator

Honourable Anesia Baptiste

Opposition Senator

**ABSENT**

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade  
And Consumer Affairs

Government Senator

Honourable Dr. Douglas Slater

# SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

## HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

### PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE

TUESDAY 24<sup>TH</sup> JULY, 2012

#### PRAYERS

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Pray be seated.

#### OBITUARIES

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member for East St George.

**HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I want to express sympathy to the family of the late Tantie Merle Codougan who was the oldest living person in the constituency who died at the age of 105 years. She was laid to rest last Tuesday and Mr. Speaker, at the funeral ceremony at St Paul's Anglican Church in Calliaqua, the daughter who was the person taking care of her made a pronouncement in the church that hours before Tantie Merle would have passed away, when she went to feed her, she asked her the question, "Vera, how the airport going"? And Vera said, "It's going". So, it seems that even though she had just a few hours she was concerned about the International Airport, and then some other things really.

That was a remarkable woman and the thing about it, her memory was very good even until her death. So, I want to express my deepest condolences to the family and may her soul rest in peace, and may God bless her soul amen.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Leader of the Opposition, I take you.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay brief tribute to the late Bobby Fraser who passed on in the course of the last few days. As most Vincentians would know he was very much involved in the field of culture, information, communication and did make a significant contribution to St Vincent and the Grenadines, and the people of this country by those things that he has done in that regard. He was also a very prominent member of staff and then subsequently the Board of what is now NBC Radio, and I noted that that institution has taken time to publicly indicate their grief at his passing, which I think I was very pleased that that in fact has happened.

Bobby Fraser to me was a very simple person not given to excesses and at the same time very concerned about cultural matters and matters related to communications. I wish to say to his family, his wife and his children we are with them at this time, the most difficult time in their lives; and may the Lord have mercy on his soul.

I also wish to recognise the passing of someone, everyone I think knows as *Fuzzy* Knights, he went to the St Vincent Grammar School at an early age and I recall in my junior years there, he was in the senior form. And I remember very well, very, very clearly the day that, what we call then, School Certificate Examinations, the results came back from London, and Fuzzy was one of the few persons, and he was indeed from very humble background; he was one of the few persons to get a grade 2 pass. Grade 2 at that time was considered something very good. He spent a lot of his time subsequent to that when he left school in the business with the customs and broker, and we mourn his loss. I say again, we wish his family our deepest condolences at this time. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member for Central Kingstown.

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I join with the Honourable Member for East Kingstown and Leader of the Opposition in extending condolences to the family of Bobby Fraser who [inaudible] registered and captured, now served this country faithfully and well and perhaps with the passage of time may go down among a more recent list of nation builders. To the best of my knowledge our fondest memory collection, Bobby lived for quite some time in an area that we refer to as Devil Street or not far from the street itself that we refer to as Devil Street with a fairly influential bunch of then young men made their contribution to this nation sportingly, culturally, politically and otherwise.

His contributions to radio has been outstanding, his partnership with Chester Reynolds the famous \*rifling [inaudible] has been a household name in St Vincent and the Grenadines. Bobby Fraser lived his latter years in Central Kingstown, Sharpes Dale, Redemption Sharpes and there was a period of time when I would go to that home with some frequencies, and [inaudible] where I think his cousin his wife's brother, I hope I have my arithmetic correct, to service my motor vehicles and I have frequent contacts. There is no doubt that his is a contribution that would be remembered for a long time and would be captured for posterity.

I am hoping, Mr. Speaker, like the other Members here I may be able to attend that funeral service this evening; I gather it is 2:00 o'clock and knowing how question time runs one may have to sacrifice the lunch period to be able to be in and out of there to be back for the business of this House. But what happens then, Mr. Speaker, is in your hands and maybe that would be the government's business but I am sure the others would like to be there.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to extend condolence to the family of *Fuzzy* Knights maybe around ten years my senior that much I do not know, but I knew him well as a younger man when he was at Grammar School but better when he worked with the De Nobrigas of De Nobriga's Ice House and FRU-TI Fame and my father was permanent there as an ice vendor. And so, there will be many lessons to be learnt from people like *Fuzzy* in all aspects of life, football, cricket and he was just a sporting icon. I would remember the days when Wednesdays was half day in those days that you would go to the Park, where I think Kenneth John who was in the gallery

with Dr. John said, he played there for Saints where there was the held over of a great number of outstanding Grammar School young men who had taken this sporting enterprise into the club formation.

*Fuzzy* of course also came from Up Street as we called it those days, you know. When you are town man, I do not say so with any order, you know those who came from Up Street, those who came from Bottom Town, Rose Place and those who came from Paul's Lot, now Paul's Avenue and the different sojourns. And *Fuzzy* would have been a member of a fairly outstanding family: *Spooky* Knights who we still know is around, Patrick Knights, who took a picket at Lyrics Cinema and then there is the other one, I think Samuel Gratitude from Paul's Lot. And of course this *Fuzzy* Knights is not to be confused with the other *Fuzzy* Knights from Paul's Lot who was in Mass. But *Fuzzy* certainly made a tremendous contribution. In later years I used his service as a custom broker, he continued that reserved way of living quite effective and efficient with what he did and in more recent times you saw him as I would like to say down shuffling and clearly not in good health, and you got a sense that it is only a matter of time before the worst occur and that has in fact occurred. But certainly, people like *Fuzzy* has made their mark in St Vincent and the Grenadines and must have been a role model for very many in this country. May he *Fuzzy*, Mr. Speaker, rest in peace.

Finally and briefly Mr. Speaker, I just want to comment on the passing of one Zeta Dick from the village of Riley in Marriacqua whose funeral took place last week, the mother of Inspector Dick in the Police Force. I think she has sons and daughters in the Coast Guard and the Customs Service. A market vendor, but from the tributes and eulogies declared last week clearly she reminds us that you cannot be too poor to have character and value and impart these to your children and it really was ... It is a good reminder of how much of our society still stands on the shoulders of the poor struggling people who through their children and grandparents have left St Vincent a rich history to build upon. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Senator Francis Minister of Transport.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and my apologies for being a bit late. I want to join with other Members on the passing of Bobby Fraser and *Fuzzy* Knights. Bobby was a veteran, I say media professional. Bobby is a playwright outstanding and in the Media Bobby goes back to the earlier days of WIBS (Windward Island Broadcasting Service) him and Claude Theobalds; I remember particularly as a young man when I tuned in to WIBS, which graduated to be 705, and Bobby stayed on and then went on to GIS today's API (Government Information Service), I believe that is where he retired from.

Bobby also served a short stint at the Prisons as a Welfare Officer and he played a very important role there. But also he was very dedicated to his church the Anglican Church and the Bishop payed great tribute to Bobby in his commentary to the media on his commitment and dedication to communication from within the Anglican Church. His wife Janice and his children I believe I know have suffered great loss but we know that Bobby himself personally have suffered from some medical conditions. He has served this country well and he will be really missed in his fields of endeavours; may his soul rest in great peace.

Mr. Speaker *Fuzzy* Knights, in latter years, and I became very close. I am not like the Honourable Member for Central Kingstown who was a town boy, I am a country boy and I came to town when I went to Grammar School, so I did not have the pleasure of growing up with people like *Fuzzy*. He is advanced in years beyond us

that is the Member and I, but *Fuzzy* has made a significant contribution to sports and culture in this country. *Fuzzy* in his latter years settled down to custom brokerage and it is in that field that we spent a lot of time together, especially once every five years and he always loves it when election time comes around because there is more business. As you know, custom brokerage earns a percentage of the imports, and considering the significant funds that are pumped into the economy at election time *Fuzzy* shared in the booty and we developed a very close working relationship.

A very diligent worker, he may keep your entry for a day or two but rest assured that when it gets to the customs there is no coming back, it is clear, he is pretty good. [Laughter] I believe his handwriting was as bad as his eyesight but we have very fond memories of *Fuzzy* in his latter years, I do and his other members of family *Patches* and *Spooky*. *Spooky* I am also very close to from East Kingstown, also called *General* and I am sure again that family will greatly miss the presence of *Fuzzy* around.

I just like to acknowledge, Mr. Speaker, the passing of one Jeffrey Greaves of Dorsetshire Hill who died in rather unfortunate circumstances and he left a big Greaves family from Dorsetshire Hill to mourn. So, I want on behalf of the Unity Labour Party and the government which I represent to extend condolences to the Fraser and Knights and Greaves family, and may their departed ones may their souls rest in peace. Thank you very much.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Member for Southern Grenadines, I think you have ... [interjection] congrats? Okay, Honourable Member for Central Leeward.

**HONOURABLE MAXWELL CHARLES:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the passing of Miss Sandrina Barbour who was a member of the Police Force, really Traffic Warden. She died after a period of illness in the hospital. My condolences go out to her family especially her husband and two children and husband Arthur. And we all know Miss Barbour was an outstanding Traffic Warden, she did her work with pride and I am sure that the members of the Police Force at the Layout Police Station would miss her greatly. May her soul rest in peace.

I wish to acknowledge the passing of others like Miss Phillips who was tragically killed on the Highway of Layout; also Miss Frederick of Barrouallie and others, may they rest in peace. Thank you.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Prime Minister.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to identify with the obituaries relating to all the persons whom Honourable Members have spoken about this morning. I want particularly to identify with the persons whom I knew personally, Tantie Merle, of course Bobby Fraser and *Fuzzy* Knights. I want to endorse all what have been said about these individuals.

Just two additional matters in relation to Bobby and *Fuzzy*, first of all Bobby was until very much in his declining years would always talk to me about books, reading books I recall. Strange how things stick in your mind, oh maybe forty years ago we were walking along the road in front of the Cathedral of the Assumption, Bobby talking to me about Naipaul and Lamming, a man of literary taste and sensitivity. He found a wonderful companion in his dear wife Janice who herself is a remarkable woman and who is making an important contribution particularly in the area of the welfare of children and their education. And of course as a free spirit

there is often in many of these small societies about which many of us have written, and which all of us here live that though Bobby was a gentle person he had strong opinions and we have seen in the past that many in authority were not so pleasing of some of his strong opinions. I do not want to dwell on that today but I think it must be that the markers should be put down.

One feature of *Fuzzy* Knights which has not been spoken about is his cricketing ability. *Fuzzy* played cricket for the Grammar School and played in the Windward Island Competition. He ... people used to remark when *Fuzzy* became an officer, someone in the private sector working at the Customs – a custom's broker, they wanted to know how it is that a man who had gone to Grammar School and gone to form 6, and who did not drop out took up this thing as a serious business. Of course, I used to use him as a broker and I used to ... we used to share a lot of very good stories from the past including some between himself and his riding partner *Goofy* Da Silva; they sat next together in form 6 and I knew from time to time they got into little mischief over certain beverages, which the headmaster would not take too kindly to. But he is a man of real humour and I would miss *Fuzzy* and I would miss Bobby and I want to extend on behalf of the government and people of St Vincent and Grenadines and my own behalf our profound condolences to the families. May they rest in peace.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** That's it? Congratulations

### CONGRATULATORY REMARKS

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member for West St George.

**HONOURABLE CECIL MCKIE:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I rise to offer congratulations to a number of organisations and groupings that would have achieved over the past few weeks. First of all in tourism I want to offer congratulations to the Ministry of Tourism, the Tourism Authority and all other stakeholders for attracting yet another recognition for St Vincent and the Grenadines; [Applause] this is the seventh recognition that we have received over the past two months not one, two, three but seven, and this time it is coming from Travel and Leisure the top Caribbean Destination.

We are in fourth position behind Bermuda, Bahamas and the Virgin Gorda (BVI) and this comes on the heels of St Vincent and the Grenadines being recognised as a top destination for 2012, by CNN, Travel and Leisure, Today Travel, Toronto Star, USA Today and the New York Times. It also comes on the heels of CEO Glen Beache being recognised by "Who is Who" for his contribution to the development of tourism in the region [applause] and it also comes on the heels of the best article as part of the Caribbean Tourism Week of Activities recently held in Manhattan.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to extend congratulations to the National Association for the Advancement of the Union Island People, who organised a reunion activity that will take place over the course of this week in Union Island. Close to one hundred persons would have journeyed to Union Island for this activity and I would have had the pleasure along with the Minister of Health of being part of that opening programme on Sunday as well as the Parliamentary Representative for the Southern Grenadines. In fact, some of those persons would have returned to Union Island for the very first time and they are excited about the prospect of the International

Airport at Argyle and they have been very pleased in what they have seen in terms of the development on Union Island. In fact, some of them have already committed to invest in the development of that Island.

Mr. Speaker, in sports, I want to offer congratulations to team two of St Vincent and the Grenadines that is our top team where street football is concerned. That team went to Guyana they were not the favourites to win the competition but they defeated all others including Trinidad and Tobago in the semi-finals and Guyana the host country in the finals to be crowned the best Street [inaudible] football team in the region. [Applause] For their success they have received US\$4,000 and the commitment of Guinness to put down a street football pitch right here in St Vincent and the Grenadines. In fact, we have already offered the Captain of the team, the Football Federation as well as Guinness the opportunity to have that pitch placed at Diamond the venue for the National Stadium Project here in St Vincent and the Grenadines. In fact, it would offer us an opportunity to have that project developed into a multipurpose sporting facility here in St Vincent and the Grenadines.

I also want to extend congratulations to our National under twenty three netball team who once again after a few years drought since 2008 won the OECS, ECCB Netball competition in the under twenty three competition for the thirteenth year. What an achievement [knocking the desk]. I also want to extend congratulations to West St Georgian Bowney Allcott for being adjudged the MVP of the St Vincent and the Grenadines team.

Mr. Speaker, in Culture I want to extend congratulations to the Ministry of Culture and all other stakeholders for putting on yet another successful National Primary School's Choral Speaking Competition and I also want to extend congratulations to the Bequia Anglican Primary for winning that competition for the third consecutive year. We have used this competition to sensitize and educate our young people on the product, the tourism product that we have here in St Vincent and the Grenadines and its importance to the development of our economy, and we will continue to use these competitions to achieve that objective.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also congratulate Vincentians Candy Gloster and Mark Cyrus for making significant strides in the development of song writing here in St Vincent and the Grenadines. These two Vincentians have already written songs that have been selected by big artistes out there in the international music field, and very recently they were identified as co-writers through the theme song for the Canadian Olympic team in the 2012 Olympics, what an achievement [applause].

In fact, they have joined with Canadians Rob Wells and Christopher Anderson in producing that song "Rolling" which will be the Canadian theme song. In fact, in addition to being co-writers Candy's voice is also heard in the chorus of that song. Mr. Speaker, it is for this reason why we are aggressively pursuing the possibility of having a songwriters campus established here in St Vincent and the Grenadines, which will significantly contribute to the development of culture.

Mr. Speaker, finally, congratulations are in order for the Carnival Development Committee for the production of one of our better Vincy Mass in several years. [Knocking the desk] it started with the rural carnivals, we also had successful beauty pageants, pan was as sweet as ever, mass was the usual mass of class, and soca and ragga soca were of international standards. We must single out a couple of individuals and groupings: Francis *Pest* Llewellyn, he was recognised for his contribution to the development of pan here in St Vincent and the Grenadines. Lornette *Fya Empress* Nedd for an outstanding year, she won the ragga soca, the calypso and the

road march competitions; and she came in a close second I understand to *Skinny Fabulous* in the soca monarch competition: what an achievement. [Applause]

I would also like to congratulate the J'ouvert fanatics for winning J'ouvert for the umpteenth time, and that means many, many times here in St Vincent and the Grenadines. We won eleven of the fifteen categories at stake for J'ouvert and how can I forget the King of J'ouvert himself who successfully defended his title for many, many years; of course that is the Minister of Culture himself. [Applause]

I also want to congratulate both Sion Hill pan sides that is the junior pan and the senior sides. In fact, the senior pan they did the beaver trick this year winning that competition for the fourth consecutive year congratulations to them. I also want to congratulate Gamal *Skinny Fabulous* Doyle who again for many, many years he would have won the soca monarch competition this year, he regained that title from *Fya Man Hooper* in 2012, and of course to *Blondie Bird* and friends for winning all but one category in the mass component of Vincy Mass 2012. What an achievement for *Blondie Bird*. [Applause]

I would also like to single out the police and private security for allowing us to have the safest carnival in the Caribbean an outstanding achievement this year, Public Health and Solid Waste who won the full job, they did clean up Kingstown after the various events; returning Vincentians and visitors to our country who played their part in making carnival 2012 a success. The thousands of J'ouvert revellers on Monday morning, as well as Monday evening revellers, who saw both activities being extremely successful with thousands of persons on the street. To CDC for their innovation in 2012, VC three, four, and five and of course the garbage bins throughout the length and breadth of Kingstown added to our streets being kept clean. Of course, the media for keeping the nation up to date on all activities relative to Vincy Mass.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I do not think that all of these achievements point to the fact that nothing is happening here in St Vincent and the Grenadines. I think on the contrary there is a whole lot happening here. Much obliged. [Applause]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member for the Southern Grenadines.

**HONOURABLE TERRENCE OLIVIERRE:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I wish to join the Minister of Culture in congratulating all the winners of the various components of carnival including the senior panorama champ, Sion Hill Euphonium. Also I know a pan side from Union Island, last year we placed I think fourth, this year we were not in the top four of the competition but hopefully next year Sion Hill will have a challenge on their hands [laughs].

I also wish to congratulate the winners in the rural carnival. Last weekend it was the turn of Mayreau and next weekend it will be Canouan and I think the winners of all the rural Queens will be in Canouan next weekend, Sunday I believe participating for the big rural crown. [Interjection] yes all are invited to Canouan next weekend. Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate the folks in Mayreau, last weekend we had a splendid display of costumes on the streets of Mayreau, they were designed by Mr. Neville Frederick and the production team was headed by Jean Alexander and Faustina Lewis. In fact, there is a plan afoot if we can find the sponsorship that maybe next year for Vincy Carnival 2013 there will be a mass band from the Southern Grenadines participating for the championship in St Vincent and the Grenadines, Mr. Speaker.

I also wish to congratulate the NWAUP it stands for National Association for the Advancement of Union Island People it was launched last Thursday at the Ashton Hard Court on an island reunion which is dubbed “Giving Back to Union Island 2012”. This organisation hopes to assist the people in the area of health, education, culture and others while being in collaboration with the people of Union Island. As the Minister said, close to a hundred people have travelled from all over the world where you can find Unionites as they are commonly called coming home in order to participate, to give back and to see what they can do to improve the lives of the people of Union Island. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member for South Rivers.

**HONOURABLE FREDERICK STEPHENSON:** Much obliged, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer congratulations to Soroptimist International St Vincent and the Grenadines Charter they celebrated their 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on the weekend of the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth weekend of 2012. Over the years, Mr. Speaker, the club has instituted several programmes in keeping with the club’s focus. Among some of the programmes which stands out are the Glebe Hill, the Nursery in Barrouallie, the comfort station at Bonadie Street at the area we call Heritage Square, the Helping Hand Centre at New Montrose for the differently abled, the Margaret Room in the Shelter for the Homeless Persons at Rose Place, several secondary schools scholarships for the underprivileged and disadvantaged children in St Vincent and the Grenadines, support given to the St Vincent and the Grenadines Medical Association Breast Cancer Awareness activities.

This club, Mr. Speaker, which is for business and professional women has an average of 25-30 women. The founding President was Jean Moore of blessed memory, other foundation members include Mrs. Annelle Thomas who served as President on four occasions, Mrs. Norma Keizer, Ms. Theresa Daniel, Mrs. Susan Dougan, Mrs. Laura Browne and Ms. Sandra Davis are all founding members. Other members of the club which have served at the regional and international level include Ms. Catherine Cyrus, the current patron is Lady Gloria Antrobus and the club’s President is Ms. Union Thompson. Sister René Baptiste and former Minister of Tourism and Culture served as President on two occasions. The club has recently completed the beautification of the new National Library grounds by planting over seventy new plants there.

Mr. Speaker, I have here in my hands a copy of the original installation charter ceremony and dinner leaflet which was held at the Aquatic Club on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> July, 1987 at 7:30 in the evening. I want to congratulate the Soroptimist International St Vincent and the Grenadines Charter for the outstanding work that they continue to do here in St Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, secondly, I want to offer congratulations to all the grade six students of the constituency of South Windward who recently wrote and passed the common entrance exams. In that constituency, Mr. Speaker, there are five primary schools and the smallest of those primary schools the New Prospect or we call it Simon they gained nine passes out of thirteen. Two of the young men who passed there are heading to the St Vincent Grammar School. The smallest inner village that a lot of persons do not know about, so I want to congratulate them; those from the Biabou Methodist School, six of the girls are heading to the Girls’ High School, a couple from Calder, couple from Stubbs and couple from Argyle Primary are heading to several of our top primary schools, secondary schools, sorry, in St Vincent and the Grenadines. I want to congratulate the teachers and the parents also for the tremendous support they gave to the children. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member for Central Kingstown, I recognised you

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Mr. Speaker, I continue where the Honourable Minister left off on education, and I just wish to draw attention to the wonderful work that a number of our educators are doing in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, between the last parliament and this one I had the privilege to attend three or four graduation exercises, certainly that of the Girls' High School, St Vincent Grammar School and Bishop's College Kingstown. I felt very lifted, Mr. Speaker, by the quality of the reports from those schools but even more so the dedication of the Principals: Mrs Bowman, Mr. Jones, Ms. King and the staff, and when you witness the performance of a lot of our young men and women in their graduation ceremonies you came away with a certain degree of confidence that we do have and still have a very bright future ahead of us in St Vincent and the Grenadines.

There is a lot of talented among our young people in St Vincent and the Grenadines, who we must continue to nurture and we give thanks to the Principals of those secondary schools that continue to work assiduously in moulding the character of our nation's youths.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to offer on behalf of this side of the House warmest congratulations to one of the most distinguished Vincentians you can come across Dr. Cyrus on the recent launching of his book "Doctor Granddad". It was a fantastic evening and the book itself is a good edition for reading for those of us who are at the granddad's stage and those of us who will get there eventually. But Dr. Cyrus is a hell of a man to tell you the truth, Mr. Speaker, and his contributions ... I do not know why he is not knighted yet to be honest; he is really that rock solid.

Mr. Speaker, it is not politically correct to stand in this House and to acknowledge good performances out of the governmental system but I am a mass man and a carnival man, I love carnival a lot. Carnival is still one of those things as I have the adage: "The things that unite us are greater than those that divide us", and carnival is really a wonderful unifying force but it is extremely hard work and you have to know what you are about. And I reach out, Mr. Speaker, for the Chairman of the CDC and the Manager of the CDC, Mr. Ambrose, Mr. Wood and their staff for sticking to it and producing the festival with its success, and I am not going to use the word failures but the areas upon which they must work for great improvement.

Those of us who are following carnival must have recognised that this year it was a challenging one, perhaps a reflection of the tough economic times which we are in; that you did not have the numbers where we should have had them. Perhaps air travelling contributed to that and the bars did not make enough money. Some people are not smiling as much after carnival as they normally would have, Mr. Speaker [laughter] but that said

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** You want to know how much money I made [laughter] [inaudible]

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** Mouth open, Mr. Speaker, mouth open. It was a wonderful season and I think that the committee gave it their best and continue to serve this country well. Mr. Speaker, I love the pan instrument, it is I clear that there is some growth and there is some development that is taking place in the pan and the attention that is given to it is bearing some fruit. But we cannot help but recognise that even with that great help a lot more still has to be done perhaps by corporate St Vincent. I have often said that perhaps if those monopolies that we have around and the big institutions would each adopt one of the steel bands it may go

a long way. It is one thing to have a number of young people coming to play but to put these bands on the road or at a festival cost quite a hell of money; and so your heart goes out to people like Sardo Sutherland of Sea Operation Starlift, Kingsley Hugh Roberts and *Roddy Dowers*, and I want to salute them for having recognised [inaudible] for the well intent of their own tributes this year not just wearing the jerseys but the great attention they paid to [inaudible] she has paid over the years.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Carnival himself, Mr. mouth champion, *Blondie Bird* he has given ... the guys at the back here ... I call him Taiwan, a hell of a licking this year and he continues to do ... He is a *dragonite* by nature and he has gone beyond Ralph now in his carnival achievements. They too need to get all the support they can from us because this festival is a very important one. You know sometimes, Mr. Speaker, in this House we talk politics across the aisle but you say that maybe one day you will be in government, and you wonder how much sometimes colleagues and others realise that there are certain institutions and activities that have to be managed on an annual basis, and how much attention we are paying to ensure that there is continuity and high performance standard and so on and so forth. Carnival is one of those things I want to make sure, Mr. Speaker, that we are very united around, so I want to once again summarise by congratulating carnival. How can I sit without recognizing *Zion-I*? They left him out, Zion-I, big up! [Laughter].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Senator Frederick.

**HONOURABLE VYNNETTE FREDERICK:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members good morning. I appreciate, Mr. Speaker, having not advised you that I would have wanted to congratulate persons this morning that you have permitted it.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I join with the Members on this side and with the Minister of Culture to really speak to the efforts made by the CDC and by all persons involved in carnival this year. Mr. Speaker, I speak specifically as well as I wish to acknowledge the efforts of those foreign based Vincentians who returned not just to enjoy the festival but to participate in it. I speak particularly to *Lively* one of our soca stars who I do not know if many people knew this, who suffered a death in his family on the day of the Soca Monarch competition and still took to the stage to perform and I know that many were critical of his performance but given the circumstances I think he did well even to appear.

I believe his brother passed away on the very day so he had that news to contend with and I hope he does not mind me sharing that with the parliament, because he has participated every year and came with some songs that really pushed the envelope that lend to the brilliance of what our carnival product is. And I look forward to the continued improvement of the carnival product and I wish to join with the Minister of Culture to laud the efforts of all the participants and all of the victors; I really wish to commend everyone who went out there.

Mr. Speaker and yourself, you did not see me two steps away from you during the calypso semi-finals, you were very brave and your feet did not buckle when the lashes were doled out; I noted there and I was standing testimony that you stood up to the onslaught and as a consequence of that you passed with flying colours for what is the semifinals efforts in calypso. I just want to say that I support all of ... and I want to associate myself with all that was said by the Member for Central Kingstown the fact that carnival continues to unite us and that

we must look forward to pushing the united agenda on the issue of what the product is for carnival. Much obliged to you, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you, all right.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Prime Minister.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I want to join with all colleagues in their expression of congratulations on their respective areas. I want to first of all congratulate very warmly the under twenty three netball team in winning the OECS under twenty three championship in Grenada. Mr. Speaker, there are several persons who have come out of the under twenty three netball who are among the growing band of young professionals, they are good at netball and they are good at their academics and they are disciplined.

I think for instance, Mr. Speaker, the case of Dr Halimah DeShong who had obtained a scholarship from this government very early in accordance with the government's policy of assisting those who have matriculation qualifications for university to be assisted to go on and do their university training. She had been hanging around for a few years teaching at the Girls' High School and could not get anywhere while leading the under twenty three netball team. We have right here a young lawyer behind us Saskia Diamond who is a lawyer; and I should point out that Dr Halimah DeShong is at the University of the West Indies she has the, the ... I am quite sure that once she stays in this particular field she will end up as a professor at a university somewhere in the world. Saskia Diamond, a graduate in law.

There is Michelle Peters who also represented St Vincent under twenty three, the major team who is working as a lawyer at IFSA and there are others and of course the current captain Ruth Ann Williams who has matriculation qualifications to go to university and I am quite sure that she among others would be assisted by the government of St Vincent and the Grenadines as indeed we assisted the cricketers and the footballers who have matriculation qualifications to go to university and we tried to get them up to speed [knocking the desk]. So, I want to congratulate all of these persons, this is an outgrowth of public policy and individual and club effort and non-state actors doing work but within an efficacious policy framework.

I want to thank them for dedicating this victory not only to St Vincent and the Grenadines but to the Prime Minister of St Vincent and the Grenadines because, Mr. Speaker, it was around mid-day or thereabout on the day before they left for Grenada that I was informed through the management of the team that the source from which they were to get the money to send them that source dried up. It was not a governmental source and though we all talk about, quite rightly, about challenging economic circumstances we have to help out the young sportsmen and women to go off and compete and to build their confidence and to build their sense of ownership of their country, and we were able to assist at very short notice. And I thank them for coming by to look for me and I have a ... my secretaries at the office took all their information about all their pursuits what they are interested in; there are one and two of them who are at the community college and they will no doubt be ready shortly to go off to university.

Mr. Speaker, as same I want to reiterate the congratulations on both sides of this House and it is very pleasing to hear both the Honourable Representative for Central Kingstown and the Honourable Senator Frederick who congratulated the CDC and all the stakeholders and participants. The work of the CDC is in part because of the quality of the personnel we have despite the criticism, which they will get from time to time. People criticised me for fifteen years and I am still the Prime Minister, so it does not really matter. If you do not do things ... there are two sets of people in the world, Mr. Speaker, those who do and those who talk about those who do, and there are a lot of people who talk about those who do. The fact that we have established the CDC as a statutory body gave it institutional strength and cohesion and put substantial resources at its disposal that that has had to do with the success in part.

I want to congratulate very much so the persons in pan. Mr. Speaker in the year 2000 there was no panorama competition; there wasn't any for three years; we had come to office too shortly before carnival in 2001 to have panorama, but in 2002 we had three pan sides and they came first, second and third those were the only ones, and we had to help one of them otherwise there would have been only two. Now, we have dozens upon dozens of pan sides, you are having so many senior pan sites and so many junior ones, and Mr. Speaker, what we have been seeking to do is not only to build in the schools and also other community pan sides but to try to build them also in connection with police youth clubs.

It is a little known fact in this country that the first police youth club was inaugurated in Barrouallie on July 15<sup>th</sup>, 2001 and there are now eighteen police youth clubs across this country with 724 young people in them [applause] and we are linking the pan with them. Then of course we had moved the Cadet Corp from just about under a 100 persons to close to 1000 members of the Cadet Force and we are encouraging them also to be in music and pan etcetera, etcetera. Public policy provides the framework in which citizens could grow and develop and I want to congratulate all of those who behind the scenes implement the public policy to have a lot of these things done and we have the advancement.

Mr. Speaker, I have not seen it reported in this country, perhaps ... I have not heard it either, it probably was reported but I did not hear it; 21 miles away in St Lucia they had just had their carnival: three persons were killed over the carnival weekend. They had to shut off a section of the city from carnival, I understand they had to close early and we hear the kudos to the police and the behaviour of the people. All these things reflect the quality of life what we have in this country and we take many of these things for granted and I want to congratulate the police [knocking the desk] and I also want to congratulate the revellers and the citizens as a whole for their good behaviour.

Mr. Speaker, I am very heartened that the Honourable Member for Central Kingstown congratulated the teachers, I am very happy about that because they do despite their limitations and weaknesses among some, they do a very good job. And the outpouring of students from all of these institutions is just simply amazing: the quality, and we have work still to do on an ongoing basis but what one saw is as a consequence of ten years of the Education Revolution, [applause] which was being opposed by many across this country. So, I am happy to hear a consensus on pan, carnival, police and education, it has come out of the horse's mouth today on the other side. My regret is that some who are brave, very brave according to them were not brave enough to sing about a lady named 'Anesia' and somebody named 'Arnhim' that was not a subject of bravery [laughter] neither was

any bravery about a whole set of internal *bassa bassa* and some other things but that is for another time in the spirit of unity. I am obliged.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines, and I think this is the final person we will have on the question of congratulations.

**HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Very brief. I wish also to congratulate the Bequia Anglican Primary School on their success in the choral speaking competition. I join the Minister of Culture in recognising that. I know they worked very hard, Mr. Speaker, I saw them last year in the preliminaries and they were very proud with their efforts. The efforts put in by the teachers to help them to prepare the tremendous amount of commitment and dedication on the part of the staff, in particular the teachers involved and the students themselves. So, they deserve the recognition of this Honourable House and least of all for the fact that it is the third year running that they have been the national champion, and I am sure that even though they are losing some of their bright talents to secondary school this year that they would have good replacements coming up to challenge again in the next year for the competition.

Mr. Speaker, I wish also to congratulate the Bequia Basketball Association on the launching and the opening of the Bequia basketball season. This I believe is the thirteenth year and it is really a tremendous accomplishment for the organisation that they are able to mount this competition every year without fail and to do it in a professional way that really is a model for organisation with community sporting events in the country. I wish to congratulate the President of the Association, Sabrina Mitchell Sutton and the committee who puts this together and wish them well throughout the rest of the season. And on a lighter note, Mr. Speaker, but perhaps a bit serious for the Member involved I just wish to join with the Minister of Culture in recognising his accomplishment as J'ouvert King. He should not have been made to blow his own trumpet in this House, Mr. Speaker, [laughs] Members on the other side could have said it for him, and as we know self praise is no recommendation [laughs] so I will do it right for you [laughs] the J'ouvert King may he reign long, Mr. Speaker. And I hope he recognises too, Mr. Speaker, that I having said this and standing up here bravely for him in this House, so that when I ask him again for support in fixing Clive Tannis Playing Field he would remember that and help us to repair the stadium there. Thank you.

### **CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES**

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

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Under the Minutes.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yes.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** The section dealing with the...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Page?

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** I will get it for you, Mr. Speaker, the section dealing with statement by the Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Statement by?

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** By the Speaker, yes Mr. Speaker, Announcement by the Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I do not know that the Minutes accurately reflect the proceedings in the House in particular as it relates to the final paragraph beginning “The Honourable Daniel Cummings”; with your permission if I may read it Mr. Speaker.

**“The Honourable Daniel Cummings and Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday rose seeking the Honourable Speaker’s ruling on two matters brought to his attention in the last sitting of parliament. Mr. Speaker, informed the Honourable Members that he was not going to rule on the matters and that the Honourable Members could address the issues under Standing orders 41:1: ‘The Speaker of the House and Chairman in the committee shall be responsible for the observance of the rules of order of the House and committee respectively and their decision on any point of order shall not be opened to appeal and shall not be reviewed by the House except upon substantive motion made after notice’ ”**

And that is the end of the minutes. Mr. Speaker, I recalled ....

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Wait, let me ask you something before you go any further; what are you moving for, for an amendment of the minutes?

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** That is correct; that is correct, I am saying that the minutes do not reflect...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** All right.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** what transpired, I am not dealing with the substantive matter.

I recall, Mr. Speaker, that I raised then with you that the matter that I raised was not one on which you had ruled and that that particular standing order did not relate to it, and I think it is important enough, Mr. Speaker, that that be part of the Minutes for other than that it would appear that this matter is dead. I say that even more so because in the previous parliament I brought the matter to your attention pointing out that for it to be carried over to a next parliament it needed your permission whereupon you said you will deal with it. So, therefore I seek your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, that the minutes accurately reflect what transpired in the last sitting of the House.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Okay.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker.

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, if I may crave your indulgence as Leader of the House, Mr. Speaker, the purpose of minutes as we all know is to provide a summation of decisions,

rulings etcetera which have taken place. A lot is said here which is not recorded, you will get that in the Hansard and that will emerge, so whatever the Honourable Member said would be recorded in the Hansard and when that is published it would be part of the record of the House, it is not being disputed that what is here you did not say. The minute's taker said:-

**“The Honourable Daniel Cummings and Dr. the Godwin Friday rose seeking Honourable Mr. Speaker’s ruling on two matters brought to his attention in the last session of the parliament”.**

Which is a fact, it did not provide the details but the details will be inside of the Hansard, the proceedings of the House. So, what is here I would say is my clear recollection of the summary of what transpired, the two Honourable Members raised some issues there was a lot of *toing and froing*; in fact the *toing and froing*, Mr. Speaker, where you made several comments that they were not recorded here either, it is at the conclusion. I myself, Mr. Speaker, got up and said something and it is not recorded here but it will be in the Hansard and there seemed to be some misconception as to what are minutes and what are verbatim proceedings of this Honourable House.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you very much Honourable .....

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Mr. Speaker, may I?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Just a minute please.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Mr. Speaker I wish to address what was said by the Prime Minister, which was somewhat erroneous.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** No! No! You cannot address that [striking the gavel] please I am not debating this issue; this issue is not for debate. You made a statement, the Honourable Prime Minister I obliged to make a point and I am going to deal with the point now. I am saying that a lot of what I said in this matter, also I agree, is not reflected here but I could understand what goes on in minutes and I am saying that as the Prime Minister said in the Hansard you will see a verbatim report of what took place. I want us to move on with the confirmation of the minutes, because I can say a lot that wasn't written. Let us move on with the confirmation of the minutes.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that the minutes of the meeting of this Honourable House, the sitting of this Honourable House held on the 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2012 be confirmed.

**Question put and agreed to**

**ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** No particular announcement at this time.

## STATEMENT BY MINISTERS

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, I wish to rise under section 81:1

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Um, um no! No! Let me ask you what is that; what is that a point of order you are moving?

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** No, it is just in relation to 81:1, I just want clarification on some issues.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, let me just tell you right now, if you are not moving a point of order I am not going to entertain you. If you want to rise on any other issue you will notify this Honourable House before on these issues – yes. I do not have you here as saying that you are going to rise on any particular issue if it is not a point of order.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** No it is not a point of order, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, when I listened to the first session of this parliament today and the Prime Minister even in his comments afterwards noted that something was a bit different. There was an atmosphere which indicated clearly a little less disunity than is often the case. I have written to you, Mr. Speaker, as the Leader of the Opposition a letter signed by all the Members of the Opposition for which I have not even got an acknowledgement.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** 81:1?

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** 81:1. Not even an acknowledgement, we have a number of issues in which there has been no ruling which has come up time, after time, after time in this Honourable House for which we cannot get any redress, Mr. Speaker. They come up over and over again; comments are made, you made comments publicly, I wrote you about the comments and other Members of the Opposition signed the letter, not even an acknowledgement. Mr. Speaker, we cannot have it both ways you know. All of us are elected in this parliament by the people of St Vincent and the Grenadines except those who are Senators you know. I have been here for fourteen consecutive years and there are others who have been here before me but elected by the people of this country.

I wrote a letter as Leader of the Opposition to the Speaker of the parliament of St Vincent and the Grenadines! Signed by all Members of the Opposition! And you cannot even get an acknowledgement, issues are raised information is presented and you cannot get a ruling, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this has to change the parliament cannot continue to operate on this basis we are already here in an 8-7 position in terms of elected members. [Knocking the desk] We represent a significant number of people in this country [He screams] and I am tired coming here time after time on these matters without any redress whatsoever!

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You see, Honourable Member, I allowed you to speak, I really should not have. As I said, if you have an issue, if you have an issue with the Speaker, I have also informed you which I know you know that you can bring it here in the House, serve a notice that you want to discuss these matters. I had no right to allow you to speak you know, but as you said in the spirit of goodwill I allowed you. You wrote

a letter asking for my resignation what am I supposed to say, “Yes I will resign or no I will not resign”? That is what your letter asked me – to resign [interjection] well that is what I saw; [interjection] that is what I saw.

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** It is more than that.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I am not arguing with anybody that is what I saw [striking gavel] [interjection] no!

Let us move on; Honourable Prime Minister. Honourable Member, would you please sit I have acknowledged the next item on the agenda.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I am not acknowledging you Sir, would you please sit.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** If you do not sit would you please leave the parliament, I am not acknowledging you I am acknowledging the other item on the agenda.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** So, you want me to leave?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yes, if you do not sit.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** Yes, I will leave.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yes! [Striking the gavel] Right!

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** I have not been thrown out of parliament, so I could come back when I want?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** No, you will leave until the end of this session if you are not of this meeting.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** You haven't put me out the parliament you asked me if I voluntarily want to leave. So, I am ....

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** No, I am telling you to leave. I am asking you to leave if you do not sit down because I am not acknowledging you. I am not acknowledging you; I am finished myself with these nonsense as well

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** But what is nonsense, Mr. Speaker [inaudible]

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

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** But what is really wrong with you?

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Why would you refer to our business as nonsense, Mr. Speaker?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, could you please...

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** That is nonsense.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, thank you.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, if you do not remain silent I will then have to put you out.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** I rise on a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** What is your point of order?

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Mr. Speaker, the statement you made is very disparaging about Members of this House and you have no authority to do that and I all for you Mr. Speaker,

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** What is your point of order? Sit down please.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on the point of order asking that the statement you made is disparaging on the Members of this House.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, I am on my feet would you please sit down. I have acknowledged the Honourable Minister for Education.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** That does not prevent my standing on a point of order, Mr. Speaker, and I rose on a point of order.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You have not ...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You have not ... again I stand would you please sit and if you stand again here I will put you out of this House!

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Mr. Speaker, the House allows me to stand on a point of order!

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I said I do not acknowledge [interjections]

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** And you have a right to address my point of order!

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I said, I do acknowledge that as a point of order.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** But you have no such authority.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You do not tell me I don't have authority. I have authority.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** The rules are clear I have the authority to stand on a point of order.

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

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** and you have a responsibility to address it, Mr. Speaker, you cannot have it all the way.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Mr. Speaker,

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** This is a House you know this is not a thoroughfare.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, the Minister is making a statement.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** Mr. Speaker, may I?

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** But you have not dealt with my matter.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** May I?

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** You have not dealt with my matter.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** No! Let us have this [inaudible]

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** He saying the House Rules no longer apply that is what he is saying.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** That I what he is saying because if I cannot stand on a point of order, I do not understand this; I do not understand this; I cannot stand on a point of order.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I said I do not acknowledge that as a point of order.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** But you do not know what the point of order is.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** What order are you quoting?

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** But you did not allow him to do that.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** What order are you quoting?

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** But you did not allow him.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You want to say the order you are quoting.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** I said that I am finished already.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Okay fine, let us move on.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** I said I made the order very clear. “No Member should use disparaging remarks against a Member of this House”.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** What order is that?

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** You have it in front of you, Mr. Speaker [laughter].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, could you move on please.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** And I am sure you know what I am talking about but you go ahead! Make a mockery of the House!

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a statement on the St Vincent and the Grenadines Community College.

The mandate of the St Vincent Community College has not changed since its establishment in 2005. The mandate is to provide a high quality of tertiary level education to the citizens of St Vincent and the Grenadines at a cost that is affordable. To this end the college continues to make significant strides despite the very difficult economic times facing the country. [Knocking the desk] Under the 9th EDF ICT Project, the college campus at Villa is undergoing a transformation that will significantly enhance the delivery of its programmes through improved natural science and modern language laboratories, visual arts studio, e-learning and video conferencing facilities. [Interjection] students' union building .....

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Just a minute Honourable Member. Honourable Member, the Minister wants to be heard in silence as she makes a statement to this House. [Interjections]

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** All of us have a right to be heard.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** In silence.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** And we have a right to be respected too.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member for West Kingstown, I am cautioning you for the final time. I am cautioning you for the final time. Honourable Minister of Education, continue your speech.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** For my benefit, Mr. Speaker, what is the caution?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You are in West Kingstown?

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** What?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You are in West Kingstown?

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** I am interested to know, yes, what is the caution I just want to know, just tell me?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** To allow the Minister to make her speech without interruption.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** In silence?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yes, in silence without interruption.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** So, you are enforcing that rule from here on?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yes.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** I am glad to know.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** All right. Go ahead Minister.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Under the 9<sup>th</sup> EDF ICT Project the college campus at Villa is undergoing a transformation that will significantly enhance the delivery of its programmes through improved natural science and modern language laboratories, visual arts studio, e-learning and video conferencing facilities, students' union building with cafeteria, a new teachers' block and sports facilities. The European Union and Government counterpart financing are being utilized to complete this project. The new buildings will be completed in 2012 followed by renovations to the existing buildings to be completed by June 2013. Under a proposed new CDB Project there will be a facility upgrade at the Division of Technical and Vocational Education. This upgrade will enable the Division to offer the Caribbean Vocational Qualification at levels 1-3.

Over the past two years the college has seen a rapid development in its evening programmes - three Bachelors programmes in Mathematics, Education, Language and Literacy Education and Guidance & Counseling were started at the Division of Teacher's Education in September 2010 on franchise arrangements from the University of the West Indies and Jamaica Theological Seminary. A fourth Bachelor's programme in Social Work began in September 2011. The selection of these programmes was done in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Development; they are geared to provide a cadre of trained well equipped citizens to meet the needs of our ever changing post colonial society.

The St Vincent and the Grenadines Community College has also enabled and embarked on developing a franchise arrangement with the University of Technology, Jamaica for seven new programmes commencing September 2012. These programmes are BSc. in Nursing; BSc. Computing Information Systems Management and BSc. Computing Enterprise Systems Management; B.Ed. Computer Technology; B.Ed. Industrial Technological Construction; B.Ed Family and Consumers Studies; and a Diploma in Engineering. These programmes are all affordably priced and will cost the students between \$18,000 to \$23,000, and will range in duration from two years and three and a half years respectively.

At the Division of Arts Science and General Studies there are four part-time Associate Degree programmes that we are in their second year. In addition, an Associate Degree programme in Fine Arts; Design and Cultural Communication has been developed as a full time programme. The Division also continues to offer on a franchise arrangement the University of the West Indies Social Services level, for a fraction of the cost of going overseas to a UWI Campus students can complete the first year of their Bachelor's Degree in Social Sciences in the St Vincent and the Grenadines Community College. Two new Associate Degree Programmes are also set to roll out in September 2012 at the Division of Arts, Sciences and General Studies. These are an Associate Degree in Performance Arts and an Associate Degree in Media Studies. These programmes it is hoped will be available to both full time and part-time students at the Division.

At the Division of Technical and Vocational Education curriculum review is ongoing. The programmes have been converted to Associate Degree Programmes to offer students more options on graduation. A recently held stakeholder's consultation under the theme "From Rhetoric to Reality, Learning for Work Citizenship and Sustainability in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century" provided many useful insights which will guide the curriculum review

process and ensure that the technical and vocational education offered by the college remains current and relevant.

In addition, the Division of Technical and Vocational Education continue its partnership with several organisations. In collaboration with Mustique Charitable Trust, a new mechanical computer laboratory is being developed. This lab will provide state of the art computers with autocad and other software that will facilitate the teaching of a variety of areas in the mechanical technology area. In addition, through collaboration with the National Telecommunication Regulatory Commission two new programmes are being developed which will focus on training students to develop computer software including computer and cell phone Apps. Through another cooperative effort with the National Ozone Unit, a state of the art heating ventilation and air conditioning lab is being developed. On completion on August 2012 this lab will not only serve our students but also function as a training facility for local and regional practitioners.

### **Hospitality & Tourism**

In the area of hospitality studies ground is due to break later this year on the construction of a new Maritime and Hospitality Institute at Diamond. On completion this institution will form part of the St Vincent and the Grenadines College and will significantly enhance the delivery of hospitality, culinary arts and travel and tourism studies. The outreach of the College may be further enhanced by one of its most recent initiatives annexing the four Technical Institutes. Successful annexation of the Technical Institutes will see a widening of the programmes and access to these institutions thus maximizing the use of scarce resources in TVET education in St Vincent and the Grenadines.

### **Nursing**

The Division of Nursing Education continues to produce the best nurses in the region. [Knocking the desk] Our graduates are sought after by other Caribbean countries as well as several international health systems including North America and the United Kingdom. This Division is in the process of converting their programmes to Associate Degree programmes in keeping with the policy of the College.

### **Enrolment**

I want to give us an insight into student enrolment numbers in the various divisions, and so in the Division of Arts, Sciences and General Studies we have 935 students; Division of Teacher Education, 238; Division of Technical and Vocational Education, 870; and in the Division of Nursing Education 198; giving us a total of 2,179 students. Comparatively the total registration in 2008 was 1,484 students. This represents an increase of 47% over the three year-period. The most significant increase is shown by the Division of Technical and Vocational Education, which has shown an increase of 87% over the same period from 437 students in 2008. This marked increase is in keeping with the needed thrust in developing technical and vocational education and training within St Vincent and the Grenadines to ensure that our country has the necessary skill set to press on with its development.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Community College has truly embraced its motto: "Nothing Limits Excellence". It has been transformed from being an 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. postsecondary institution to an 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m. tertiary institution [knocking the desk] offering four

Bachelors programmes and numerous Associate Degree programmes. The ongoing developments will see the College continuing to meet the needs of the citizens of St Vincent and the Grenadines and expanding well into the community to truly become a community college of excellence.

### **Salutation**

I want to salute at this time Dr. Joel Warrican and his hardworking staff and members of the board [knocking the desk]. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Prime Minister.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to make ministerial statements on two subjects:

1. The issue which concerns this Honourable House relating to British American Insurance Company resolution and
2. The matter of Liat.

Mr. Speaker, on the 29<sup>th</sup> June on behalf of the Eastern Caribbean Currency Union I signed along with the Judicial Managers of British American Insurance Company and the Chief Executive Officer of SAGICOR Life Incorporated an Insurance Company, this agreement to recapitalize and sell what is known as the Traditional Life Business of BAICO to SAGICOR. SAGICOR Life Incorporated is a wholly owned subsidiary of SAGICOR Financial Corporation and the ECCU governments; the currency union governments, have undertaken to provide funding of up to \$38 million to assist in restoring the values to the transferring policies. The sale was agreed after a formal sale process, which resulted in strong interest from seven entities with four final bids being considered. The business being sold under the Sales Purchase Agreement is made up of Group Pensions and the following Traditional Life Policies issued by BAICO in Anguilla, Antigua, Dominica, Grenada, Montserrat, St Lucia, St Kitts and Nevis and St Vincent and the Grenadines. These Traditional Life policies being Universal Life Policies, Term Life Policies Whole Life Policies, Endowment Policies and Home Service Life.

Approximately, 17,500 policyholders are expected to benefit from this sale restoring the values for nearly two out of every three BAICO policyholders. Mr. Speaker, it would be recalled that we had already addressed the issue of the Property Insurance of BAICO which had been sold earlier, and we had made arrangements for the establishment of a medical support fund in order to take care of those who had medical insurance with BAICO. It should be noted, Mr. Speaker, that under the terms of the sale all valid and in force Life Policies as at the effective transfer date will be transferred to SAGICOR without any amendment or change to the respective policy allowing policyholders to benefit from the terms they historically agreed with BAICO.

The Life Insurance business will be transferred to SAGICOR once all necessary approvals for the scheme of transfer from the relevant courts and insurance regulators in the Bahamas where BAICO is incorporated and throughout the currency union countries, once we have the courts and the insurance regulators giving their

approval. You must remember that we had gone to the courts to appoint Judicial Managers and what was approved by the court was the proposal put forward jointly by the government and the Judicial Managers as to how we would proceed to solve this problem, this challenge. We are at the stage where we have to report now back to the court and when the court gives us its imprimatur which we fully expect, there is no reason other than that because we have done what the court had ordered that we do, but then also the regulators in each of the individual territories have to approve SAGICOR as the entity doing the business in the same way that you would have bank regulations.

It is expected that the approval for all countries will take a further three to six months at which point the transfer of the business can be finalized [interjection]. Yes, from the end of June, well we did it the end of June, so we are talking July going onwards. The governments will work with SAGICOR and BAICO to finalise this as soon as possible. It is intended that the entire business described above will be transferred at the same time, however, as a precaution if any approvals are delayed unduly or not received within the next four months the parties can agree to transfer the business in stages.

SAGICOR is a highly respected insurance provider operating across nineteen countries in the Caribbean, as well as in the UK and in the USA. Its parents SAGICOR Financial Corporation is a listed entity in Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago and the United Kingdom. SAGICOR has a financial strength of an A- Excellent from A.M. Best. The Group revenue reached US\$1.4 billion for the financial year 2011 and shareholders' equity and assets stood at US\$578 million and US\$5.4 billion respectively at December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2001. SAGICOR Life Incorporated is already a regulated entity in all the currency union countries; 2011 sorry.

SAGICOR has demonstrated its commitment to the currency union in this agreement by agreeing to set up an ECCU consultative committee to play an oversight role including compliance, anti-money laundering and capital adequacy and corporate governance in relation to the performance of the business. It has agreed to place its currency union business into a separate ECCU based entity within twelve months of the completion of the transaction and it has committed at our request to list at least 25% of the shares of the ECCU entity on the Eastern Caribbean exchange within two years of its commencement of operations, so that we can have broad buying of persons who would wish in the currency union to purchase on our securities exchange.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, what should the policyholders do generally now? The policyholders whose policies are proposed to be transferred need not take any action at this point, however, prior to the completion of the sale, policyholders are encouraged to continue to pay and if necessary bring up to date their Life Policy premiums to representatives at existing BAICO branches within the currency union in order to maintain their policies. Policyholders will be provided with further information either directly or through local advertising about the proposed transfer of the business in the coming months as SAGICOR and the Judicial Manager of BAICO seek the necessary quote and regulatory approvals. Once the transfer is completed SAGICOR will contact affected policyholders to inform them of the change in the ownership of this business and on completion SAGICOR will assume BAICO's place as the legal insurer of the transferred policies and policyholders will be able to once again operate their policies in accordance with the contracted terms: the terms originally contracted with BAICO.

The obligations to pay certain unpaid amounts to policyholders under these policies being claims, maturities, surrenders and bonuses will transfer to SAGICOR with the business, and the currency union governments have arranged funding for the payment of these in accordance with the terms of the policies. That is partly why we have to put up the US\$48 million, the US\$38 million. The payment of the claims will be subject to the claimant meeting the requirements of the policy terms and signing an appropriate release; because people would have their claims, their maturities, there will be surrenders and there will be bonuses.

Mr. Speaker, I should point out that the US\$38 million comes from the support fund which the governments had established at the Central Bank, our Central Bank with the US\$50 million, which I had secured through the intervention which I made with the former Prime Minister Patrick Manning when we were contemplating doing plan (a) which was to continue the business. Of course, plan (b) had to come into play by December 2010 after the May 2010 general elections in Trinidad when the new government decided that they would not proceed with plan (a). Now, I want to speak to the issue about policies that have lapsed.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** Mr. Speaker, I know questions are not allowed on ministerial statements but the Prime Minister addressed a very profound matter for which there must be complete clarity in the House, and so it is understandable that questions would be asked. For example he made reference to the US\$50 million previously secured and I simply want to ask if this is apart from the \$100 million?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Yes it is different.

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** On the am ....

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** From the current government.

**HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** From the annuities.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** No.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** This is a separate ...

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Separate.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** So, it is a total \$150 from Trinidad all told?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Yes, totally different, and I will come to that shortly explaining everything, but in as much as you ask the question the US\$50 million is addressing - US\$38 of that is addressing the capitalisation of the Traditional Life and the \$100 is to deal with the issue of the annuities.

What about the policies that have lapsed? The currency union governments are mindful that during the past three years due to the uncertainty of BAICO's future many policyholders may have stopped paying their premiums, in many cases this would have resulted in them allowing their policies to lapse. The governments,

SAGICOR and the Judicial Managers of BAICO are currently considering whether it would be possible to offer to reinstate policies that have lapsed in this period and further information regarding this issue will be communicated to affected policyholders prior to the completion of the transfer. The entities involved want this to happen but you will appreciate that they have to get all the data to see what will be the requirement of the various policyholders if your policy lapse to bring it up to date.

Policyholders may have other queries. Many policyholders may not be aware if their policy is current for example they may have ceased paying premium sometime ago but the automatic loan feature of their policy may have been triggered meaning essentially that the accumulated value of their policy was used to pay their premiums. So, if policyholders have queries I am asking you to contact the local branch of BAICO to find out the status of your policy. So, you may not actually have lapsed, you may have had accumulated savings so your value would have been there out of which premiums would have been drawn.

Mr. Speaker, this sale represents an excellent outcome for Traditional Life Policyholders and reflects the ECCU governments and Judicial Managers continued efforts to work to identify solutions for the individuals and institutions affected by the BAICO collapse. Although the sale is structured specifically to transfer the ECCU Traditional Life policyholders to SAGICOR, the sale is also beneficial to all other policyholders and creditors of BAICO who are not covered by the terms of the sale by reducing the remaining liabilities, so that if you find any assets there is less to be satisfied because you have now dealt with a substantial portfolio.

The Judicial Managers and the Governments of the currency union continue to work on solutions to recover assets of BAICO, as well to pursue those responsible for the collapse. I want to read that sentence again lest members of the public have any doubt as to the resolution; the resolve of those of us who are involved in this matter:

**“The Judicial Managers and the Governments of the currency union continue to work on solutions to recover assets of BAICO as well as to pursue those responsible for the collapse”.**

The Judicial Managers and the currency union governments wish to reiterate their appreciation to all those affected by the BAICO situation in the region and for their patience as this work progresses. I want myself to thank the core committee, which has been advising me on this matter because as you are aware I am the chair of the Prime Ministerial subcommittee with the currency union dealing with the insurance business and that had a core committee headed by Timothy Antoine of Grenada advising me and the rest of the subcommittee, and I want to thank them for their work.

Mr. Speaker, may I just point out something which should make all of us feel very proud as Caricom people. You know, we did not hire any consultant in this issue save and except very early for a brief period of time about some possible modalities. What we are seeing here is the work of the intellectual creativity and resolve and drive of Caribbean people [knocking the desk]. Mr. Speaker, if I may say this you have – I see the trend in some parts of the region even in this country, everybody wants a simple thing to study and they are going for a foreign consultancy as though the Social Science Faculty in this country has not been in existence for 55 years. It is true that some of our graduates and professionals have not organised themselves as properly as they should in consultancies and from time to time we have to go outside for consultancies, but there is a range of matters in

which expertise is resident in our region and it is certainly my outlook as a nationalist, as far as it is practicable in all of the circumstances to get somebody from among us in our Caribbean civilization to assist in these matters.

### **Annuities**

Mr. Speaker, I turn now to the issue of the Annuities and we use that as a category just to capture all the different types of annuities. We have had lots of ups and downs with the government of Trinidad on this issue, I do not want to go through all the twist and turns but Senator Leacock raised the ... you could imagine that [interjection] sorry, I apologise, the Honourable Member for Central Kingstown; that there are persons who would have wanted to count the \$50 million as part of a solution with the \$100 million so that was a issue which we had to get out of the way and fortunately I was involved intimately in this exercise and I knew the details inside out and I was able to correct many misapprehensions about this matter among certain people.

I had the matter on the agenda for Caricom, the meeting in St Lucia and fortunately at that meeting we had in addition to Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago we had the foreign Minister who was the immediate past Finance Minister Winston Dookeran, and it was reconfirmed, it was reaffirmed that Trinidad and Tobago would put in US\$100 million towards that solution. It was agreed that this contribution will be made in three tranches US\$36 million as an immediate disbursement; US\$40 million arranged by the government of Trinidad and Tobago from the Caribbean Development Bank, to be disbursed almost immediately thereafter; and US\$24 million to be sourced from other sources in Trinidad and Tobago including the Caricom Petroleum Facility; and there was some uncertainty as to how much money was left in that.

Mr. Speaker, on the 12<sup>th</sup> June the importance of this is such, just after carnival and just after the end of the Caricom meeting, 12<sup>th</sup> June, I had a letter written to Larry Howai the Minister of Finance and the Economy of Trinidad and Tobago, [interjection] 12<sup>th</sup> July; the 12<sup>th</sup> July and in the letter I requested the first disbursement and I advised the account number at the Central Bank in which this is to be put the British American Liquidity Support Fund and I expressed appreciation to the government and the people of Trinidad and Tobago over this matter.

Mr. Speaker, as currently advised if we provide about EC\$30-\$32,000 to every one of the Annuity holders, we will require a sum in the region of EC\$110 million. Please forgive me if the number varies to EC\$108 or to EC\$112 do not hold me a prisoner of this, I am giving you what are the ballpark figures which means that there will be some monies remaining to be put to other things that is to say some credit unions to persons who have annuities above the \$30,000. I want to say this, Mr. Speaker, that between 75% and 80% of the annuitants would be satisfied with a \$30,000 payment which means that we would have taken care of all the various segments and the bulk of annuitants and to see how we are going to fashion payments for others with annuities higher than that number and also to put towards say credit unions.

Mr. Speaker, the government of St Vincent and the Grenadines is seeking to put its hand on assets which are available, and as you know we have sued the Insurance Regulator in St Vincent and the Grenadines, sued a financial institution operating in this country for approximately \$136 million on a custodianship which is given in relation to assets to be placed in the statutory fund. To a number of persons I may be talking legal gibberish

but just, (who are listening) just know that we have a strong case and we have a case for \$136 million against this particular financial institution. As I have pointed out before that the BAICO Judicial Managers have instituted action with the support of the currency union governments against several persons associated with BAICO on what is called the Green Island Deal in Florida to the tune of US\$75 million. There are some other resources we are looking at and I do not want to talk about them at the moment; so that we are in a situation where we have made considerable progress.

### **CLICO International**

In relation to the CLICO International that is CLICO out of Barbados, the Judicial Manager of CLICO International and the government of Barbados they have put a proposal to us in the currency union and we are currently studying that proposal. The situation in CLICO International does not appear to be as problematic as BAICO was for the simple reason that the liabilities in CLICO International can be funded by assets up to 60% of the liabilities. In other words on the face of it there are assets for \$0.60 out of every dollar but because most of the assets are in real estate, clearly modalities would have to be worked out that you do not just sell the real estate because if you do that you will realise values below their current value if people know you are expecting, thinking you are selling it on a fire sale basis. So that is an area where we are still having important discussions and as we progress, I will talk more about this.

I want to say this, I informed Caricom and in fact I had done so to the Prime Minister of Barbados hitherto that early a clock I had received a verbal assurance from the late Prime Minister of Barbados, David Thompson, he is dead so the verbal assurance you just cannot say because I am the only man alive for that except to say I had that verbal assurance put into writing and an assurance was given that the Barbados government would ensure that they would make good to the policyholders in the currency union. That commitment was reiterated in a letter to me at my request from the new Prime Minister, shortly after I got in but I want to be fair to both of them that I do not think that they knew the full extent of the liabilities at the time when those assurances were given and we are seeking to solve this problem within a regional context, and therefore I do not intend to hold them to those assurances, but nevertheless those assurances have to be there as a backdrop. [Interjection] Ah! No I have spoken it at Caricom and I have told them [laughter] but I think in the context of how this discussion is going, I think colleagues would have to rely on me to make the judgments as to how we are going along because many of these things is the question of the judgments you are making. So that is the story, Mr. Speaker, in respect of insurance.

Mr. Speaker, I would say this, I was at a Press Conference in St Kitts and a journalist a very experienced journalist who have been living in Brittan for many years, Gus Williams, and he prefaced the question and said to me that he wants, on behalf of the policyholders of BAICO and CLICO in St Kitts Nevis, to express thanks to the Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines that many of his friends believed that I will help to chart a solution. He said that the faith and confidence they had in part averted many of his friends doing some things which were silly, which were stupid because this was a matter which has brought a great deal of grief to people across the region and a new species of poverty has arisen what I call “genteel” poverty. Persons who have a good middle class house but they cannot properly repair it, they used to have the yard properly done, it cannot be properly done anymore, they sold their vehicle, they are just barely surviving because they put all their

investments and all their savings looking for the 9% or the 10% as the case may be. So, they are not what you may call persons who historically may have been poor but persons who historically may have been poor who all of a sudden have arrived in the latter years of their lives to a kind of genteel poverty it is difficult for them to survive because they have not yet owned the survival instincts of many of the poor who have had to use those instincts all their lives to get by.

It is a very interesting area for sociological study and I am disappointed that the University of the West Indies has not contributed anything serious to the discussion either about CLICO - the Professors there; the professionals CLICO/BAICO or contributed anything to the sociological analysis which follows into what I call genteel poverty. I was looking for a category and I did not find one and that is as close I think, somebody may come up with a better category but that is the one I put it under.

### **LIAT**

Mr. Speaker, I want to address the issue of fleet renewal and fleet expansion for LIAT. An important decision has just been taken, and some other decisions are to be taken on a matter of critical importance to our region because whatever anybody would say about LIAT, without LIAT as René Baptiste memorably put it: “Without LIAT *yo gat to tek yo belly and mek boat* “. It is a graphic expression. What is the current fleet of LIAT post the fire? The LIAT fleet comprises of 14 Dash 8 Aircrafts; 1 - 100 and 13 Dash 8 - 300.

The 100 series aircraft is dedicated as a freighter service and of the other aircraft that one LIAT owns and LIAT owns seven others so LIAT owns (8) of the 14 aircrafts, the others are leased and the lease expiry date range from next year 2013 to 2015. [Interjection] Yes there are 14 aircrafts which we have; 1 is a Dash 8-100; 13 are Dash 8-300, the Dash 8-100 is used for freight; the other aircrafts that is to say the other 13 we own seven of those 13, so we own 8 in all. The other six aircrafts Dash 8-300 are leased and the leases are expiring between the periods 2013 to 2015.

I should point out two of the leases the later leases are extremely expensive about US\$135,000 to US\$140,000 a month. People think an airline is easy to run, it is when you get into it and you study it, and I would just say this before I go into the cost associated with maintenance for LIAT that is to say for the engines, for persons who you have to put up when you have a breakdown, because they relate all to the maintenance cost. People here and there, it came up to a sum of around EC\$80 million last year because the fleet is aging and we had to keep it safe. So, we had to spend a lot more money on maintenance than would usually be the case. Mr. Speaker, the vision which we have for LIAT is to be the Caribbean Airline of choice connecting the people and communities that we serve safely, reliably and hopefully profitably, with excellent customer service at an affordable price.

What is the factual background for the decision for fleet renewal in the first case and then for fleet expansion? LIAT has been challenged by many issues associated with an aging fleet and less than optimum on time performance. The on time performance is 70 odd percent and really we should be 85% though we have improved over the last several months. The high passenger inconvenience cost, the high maintenance cost and financial losses. In this strategic plan fleet renewal was identified as critical to LIAT’s ability to put the airline on a path of sustained profitability. In short, we have to get new airlines to put ourselves on a profitable path. A

fleet renewal committee was formed to develop the fleet plan and make recommendations; thus far we have had the work done by the fleet committee because I want to give an idea as to how we seek to do the work. I want to thank in this regard as the Chairman of the shareholders and I have been Chairman of the shareholders for 10 years even where St. Vincent and the Grenadines is no longer the major shareholder since Barbados had taken up most of the loan from the CDB in 2007. Barbados is number one, Antigua and then ourselves, but I have been asked to remain as Chairman of the shareholders. [Interjection] Ah!

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** We will keep you on don't worry. [Laughter]

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I am very happy that the people of St Vincent will keep me on. [Laughs] [Applause] So, the activities by the fleet committee involves preliminary in-house analysis, network study by Lufthansa Consulting, we have a consulting firm associated with the International Airline Lufthansa. Visits have been made to the manufacture facilities; demonstration flights have taken place both in relation to the ATR Aircraft which is an Italian French aircraft manufactured in France and the Q 400 which is a de Havilland Aircraft which is a series up from the Dash 8 – 400, all Turbo Prop.

We got request for proposals what they call in the business RFP; we had presentation of the proposals from manufacturers; an assessment of the RFP responses by the fleet committee of LIAT; technical assessment of the aircraft types; financial review of all options and of course finally a submission to us the shareholders, to the Board and then the shareholders.

We have some market challenges and I am giving the backdrop so you can get the appreciation as to how we have to go about selecting an aircraft type. We have small markets, the market over the 21 destinations for LIAT where we do 120 odd flights per day, close to 130 flights per day; incidentally St Vincent and the Grenadines is the fourth destination point in relation to flights; we would not been having the number of flights I do not think if we were not prominent in LIAT. We have short Sector Lens; LIAT's network is by and large below 200 miles, growing competition from major carriers international and regional, economic difficulties in the regional markets resulting in weak demand. Now, what are the main conclusions of the Lufthansa study? That LIAT's core network that is to say the 21 destinations and over 120 flights daily lends its self to a Turbo Prop Aircraft, due to its economic advantages and short routes.

I think persons who are not persuaded about this all the time would have seen something on, I think it is either Al Jazeera or BBC showing how the ATR 42s and 72s are being manufactured in France and they had something about Turbo Props being half as expensive to operate as Jets particularly over the shorter distances. And remember when I talk about the core network I am speaking about the 21 destinations and 120 odd flights daily. So that is the first conclusion that a Turbo Prop Aircraft is the one really over the core network we should be always with, that LIAT should introduce a larger 70 seat Turbo Prop for some existing routes and some expanding ones. That the ATR 72 and the Q 400 are both viable options for the expansion to some existing routes and some expanding ones; that LIAT should first consolidate its market position in its core network as the basis for growth and expansion and after we have taken care of the core network and then to expand beyond the core in the region, say going up to places like Jamaica and the Dominican Republic that we look at the issue

of expanding the network with regional Jets but seeking targeted partnerships to mitigate the risk if we are going with any Jets.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** [Inaudible]

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** That?

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** The expansion [inaudible]

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** For those countries to be involved in the shareholding, at the moment the study which has been done by Lufthansa suggests that if we do the expansion we are talking about we could increase our load by about 15%. We can have the growth we are not going extra-regionally yet. So, LIAT strategic direction; we first of all have to consolidate and strengthen the core network, secondly we have to expand regionally and thirdly we expand extra-regionally linking of the network to North America particularly Fort Lauderdale, New York and also to Central America because of the growing importance of Central America with our economies. There are some important objectives in any decision making on fleet renewal, we have to improve operational efficiencies in the core network, improve customer experience, achieve sustained profitability, address expansion, look for the lowest investment cost, manage the debt levels and minimize the risk.

Now, there are three sets of aircrafts which come into the mix the ATR 42s which carry 50 passengers or 48 passengers about the same size of the Dash 8 - 300, the ATR 72 which carries 68 passengers and the Q 400 which carries 74 passengers and the issue is what decisions you make in relation to all of those in consolidating the core and expanding regionally. Just to give an idea colleagues; the latest figures we have - a base price for an ATR 42 is US\$15.9 million, an ATR 72 US\$19.4 million, a Q 400 US\$19.9 million, but of course because the seat capacity per se the Q 400 is 74 seats, the cost per seat would become less in the Q 400 if you are expanding regionally, and then of course you have other calculations in respect of the cost per seat for the others.

So, the shareholders have had to take a decision based on a set of facts and assumptions including the size of the fleet, financing cost, growth of revenue projections, extent of shareholders contribution to the investment, and we have to as a result of all we have been saying here, we took the decision on Saturday, sorry, on Friday in Barbados a meeting which I chaired, for LIAT to purchase six new aircrafts. The first delivery is targeted for the last quarter of next year and you would notice that it fits in fairly well with the period where your leases would be running out during 2013 and 2015. Now, for a number of reasons we have not and I will not here today indicate what is the aircraft type which we have chosen, the

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** Mr. Speaker, if the Honourable Prime Minister would allow before he gets to that particular point he is going to make. You may have the information for us of the justification in terms of the payback period or the net present value, as well as the internal rate of returning IR was that information provided so we could have the benefit of those three data. Payback, IIR and

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I have some of the data. I should point out that whatever aircraft type we purchase we are not going to have profitability in relation to those aircraft because of the extent of the investment for up to four to five years, yes. So, that an investment which we have to make is over a five year period 2012 to 2016 inclusive, but the bunching will be in the middle years; the bunching of the investment, because we haven't concluded the negotiations because we have to go now into some detailed negotiations but I am giving you broad parameters.

Now, you will clearly see that if you are buying six new aircrafts depending on what you buy or any mix you buy it is going to be between US\$100 million to US\$120 million. Clearly, you do not put up all that money because you will have shareholders contributions including transitional cost, and then the various entities which manufacture airlines, they have their own financing arrangements because we have gone through this already with the Dash 8-300 for instance. Now, so we have three decisions making

1. The immediate decision which we have just taken.

And please do not press me as to which aircraft because there are a lot of reasons involved why I cannot say for we have to talk to the people concerned. As you would expect the different manufacturers want LIAT to buy their aircraft and there has been a substantial amount of work done in this regard where people are coming to you, coming to the airline.

In another four months, so we are doing one ... we have to get some new aircrafts right away starting delivery by the third quarter of next year. We have to complete the negotiations and the negotiators have to come back to the shareholders and say, "This is the final deal that we have made, the final arrangements the financing and all of that". Secondly, in about four months time we would address the question of what aircraft you are going to have if any additional, or different, to do your expansion of your route regionally. So that is another bundle of decision to take place four months time and then in so far as the extra-regional goes to Miami or to New York, Central America in dealing with regional Jets that is a decision for about 18 months down the road. I am very mindful to in all of this that we are having an international airport opening in early 2014, so we have to fit everything together. So, the next steps with the aircraft business is

2. A notification has to be done to the manufacturers.
3. Then the financing arrangements
4. The negotiations and then
5. The final shareholders decisions on the negotiated package.

I should point out in relation to our performance LIAT's existing performance up to the end of May this year that we have a net loss of EC\$6.6 million, EC\$1.2 better than what we had budgeted for at the time at the end of May. And I should point out in the EC\$6.6 million we had paid EC\$3.3 this year in severance because we have to do a lot of careful management of the workforce, so that is where we are. I see they have a figure here on time performance, last year it was 72% and now it is 76% so we are making some improvements.

Mr. Speaker, one final issue relating to LIAT, relating to last night, as we know there was an aircraft which had been circling for a while because you know we had some terrible weather yesterday evening, and the lightning knocked out one of the lights but all the requisite arrangements were made and the flights which were to be operated came in though they came in late because we kept the airport opened up to 1:12 a.m.. The technical people have been doing a good job during the requisite repairs after we have had the knock out by the lightning and I really want to thank them. We do not normally operate clearly this late because it can cause staffing problems for the next day but in view of the circumstances and the number of passengers who were waiting to come in both locally and from abroad and to go out that the workers decided to push themselves a little bit more and I want to thank them very much for the tremendous work that they have done at the airport. [Applause] but I have been advised that things are back to normal. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker. [Interjection]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Just a minute, yes Honourable Prime Minister, clarification.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** On?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You would take it?

**Dr. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** [He nods]

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Do you have the loss associated with the fire?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Yes.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** For LIAT and what figure is that?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I have the loss associated with the fire. I have a full brief on the fire here, let me find the page. [Interjection] No! No! [Laughs] The loss from the fire is in the region of US\$20 million around EC\$50 million but we are going to get ... the thing is this there are two types of losses with two types of policies, the aviation cover which was brokered through Willis and placed on the London market where it is led by ACE Global Markets, these policies covered the aircraft, the spares and the ground support equipment, they were fully insured to their value. The non-aviation, material damage that is policies with Caribbean Alliance Insurance and this provides cover for the buildings the computers, the furniture and the office building, they were not insured up to their true value. And as reported to me we will have after the insurers settle we will have a loss to LIAT of about EC\$10 million the insurers having done their work.

We suffered the loss of four engines each of them valued at \$2 million, propellers, landing gears. you know as simple as you see the landing gear equipment it is \$700,000 that cost. A propeller is \$80,000, an alternative power unit that is \$400,000, the reduction gear box that is for another \$400,000 each. So that we had, I mean completely destroyed were the ground support workshops, the paint shops, the wheel bay, the hangar No. 1, building No. 1 and 2, technical records and contents of all the buildings; a terrible blow, a big blow.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** The other relates to the BAICO situation. Do we have the figures and the number of annuitants for St Vincent and the Grenadines?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I have the number because you had some shifts, but I can get it fairly easily for you, I can give the assurance for that.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** In similar relation to the number of policies transferred to the Life.

**DR THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Yes, okay. I could get the final numbers at the moment, I will get them from the Judicial Manager, I will seek his assistance.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Take a question from the Member from Central Kingstown on LIAT.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** Mr. Speaker, Mr. Prime Minister, we are obviously grateful for the disclosure on LIAT. I think you indicated that the lease arrangement is about \$135 .....

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** For two of them not for all.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** Per month.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Per month for each for the last ... for two particular months.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** Per plane, \$135 per month.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** For two.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** For two, so it is sixty something for an aircraft?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** No! No! Each for two, the lease aircraft six of them leased but there are two of them in particular where there is a lease and a supplemental lease in the business. There is a price and a supplemental price and for those two I was advised for each of them per month it is US\$135.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** That is the point I am making, Mr. Prime Minister, because clearly in five years you will pay for such an aircraft on the lease price. So, you see the issue about this investment and finance decision is obvious that LIAT continues to be tax financed because that is what it amounts to, it has been tax financed. And for a company that has a cash strapped character, what is the extent to which the taxpayers could have been relieved by other regional airlines for example Caribbean Airlines taking up some of LIAT's route during the period they were looking for long term financing, such that they could have accumulated that finance at a more economical rate. It seems to me that that aspect of it was ruled out in exchange for hard institutional cash and that we are paying a price for that in terms of airfares, I reasoned that.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** No! No! No! This is why you have to know the whole story.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** You did not tell us the whole story?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** No! No! No! You are raising a number of details and you have to know the whole story when you take certain decisions. May I just back up a little by saying the government of Dominica has now formally announced that they are going to put EC\$8 million [interjection] yes, as equity partners because if you own a company: if you own a company it comes from the shareholders and the shareholders are the taxpayers; and the people who ride the aircraft are not Martians but taxpayers. And without LIAT talk to any of the hoteliers around here, I spoke to one who is not a supporter of mine said, “Thank you very much for what you are doing with LIAT, otherwise my hotel would have been closed down and I would have put so many people out of work and so on and so forth”. [Applause]

Now, I have had several discussions with CAL (Caribbean Airlines) BWIA before and CAL and the discussions go to and fro. I remember in the last days of the Manning Administration a very sharp and experienced entrepreneur: businessman, Arthur Lok Jack who was Chairman of CAL, he told us in Barbados at a meeting, he said, “Listen we want to get involved and form a strategic partnership with LIAT. We have a lot of things to do”. But he said, “Understand this, at the centre of this partnership we do not have any special consideration for tourism”. You see a problem immediately; you see a problem immediately.

When we got involved with LIAT and I came here and I told the House honestly, I said “We are investing in an airline which at the time was insolvent”. I said, “We have an airline which is undercapitalized and with a mountain of debt”. And incidentally it came to us undercapitalized with a mountain of debt from the private sector because the private sector used to have it and then they simply dropped by the wayside; at least the substantial private sector involvement. It just was not making any money. Now, if we had the capital to buy all the aircraft that we need up front new, clearly it is preferable than to have ... to lease and to do the maintenance particularly on an aircraft also which you own, which is old to buy new ones.

The challenge which you have when you get into the nitty gritty of things take the Dash 8–300, I have been advised that the Havilland is no longer manufacturing them, so the question now of refurbishing them creates a challenge. So, when you come to the table there are so many different aspects and so many details on this issue, you have to come to it with a very open and inquiring mind to be able and to get all the facts to make a final determination. So, it is a, I noticed you nodded and you see some of the challenges I only give a snapshot and you see some of the problems on the face of it.

Mr. Speaker, I said that I want to say this, I know sometimes some of my own colleagues may sometimes get frustrated with me with the amount of time I spend on BAICO, CLICO and LIAT but these are regional matters of fundamental strategic importance to this country and we have to get them right and somebody has to spend a lot of time on them rather than just let them just go in a drift that is the reality. I am obliged.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you Honourable Prime Minister as a matter of fact.

## REPORTS FROM SELECT COMMITTEES

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to lay on the table of this Honourable House the Reports of the Select Committees the Airport Service Charge Bill and the Cooperative Societies Bill.

Mr. Speaker, may I indicate something which I had indicated to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, I was advised yesterday afternoon late that I have to be in Trinidad tonight and the flight which is taking me is at 6:30 p.m. which means I have to leave here sometime like 5:45 p.m. so I indicated to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition I hope we can finish our business for the day, we have two Bills, the Cooperative Society Bill and the Airport Service Charge Bill. They shouldn't take us a great deal of time and then the one on the Property Tax that has to go into Select Committee we need to knock some things also in shape. So, I want to indicate, Mr. Speaker, that I would have to leave at that point and seek a suspension if we do not finish the agenda for the day, and I indicated that we could resume next week Tuesday if in fact we do not finish, but I hope we will finish, I will like to finish off these pieces of work before the end of July. So, I provide that by way of information, Mr. Speaker, as I did to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move under Standing Order 12:5 that the proceedings of today's sitting be exempted from the provision of the Standing Order hours of sitting.

### Question put and agreed to

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I want to move into question time but I am aware of the fact there are some persons who probably would like to attend the funeral and I believe we can juggle the questions; we do not necessarily have to go in the sequential order but we can probably juggle them to facilitate those persons who may want to attend the funeral.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Sure.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** So, we are going to monitor it as we go along.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Maybe it would help those who would like to go to the funeral the Honourable Member for Central Kingstown would like to go to Bobby's funeral, I suspect the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works will probably like to go also. Maybe, also Senator Charles may well also go, but Bobby will appreciate that we will have representation at his funeral but that he would want us to get on with the business of the House also.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** So, we will monitor as we go along. As we see the time wears on, then so 5:00 o'clock? Questions.

### QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWERS

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

1. *The Honourable Arnhim Eustace (Leader of the Opposition) asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development, National Security, Grenadines and Legal Affairs:*

*Will the Honourable Minister indicate the status of the overdue 3% salary increase owing to the Civil Service?*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Prime Minister question No. 1.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I am very grateful for the question. Yesterday I met all the public sector unions, I had promised to meet them before the end of June and I wasn't able to do so for several reasons and they accepted why. Among them: overseas a while, I was recovering, the Director General of Finance who I want at the meeting was on holiday part of the time and then was ill so they accepted that. But I indicated to them that at this moment we are unable to pay any portion of the 3% but we still remain committed to pay on it from January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2011.

Mr. Speaker, the suggestion arose from one of the public sector unions from someone who represents persons in the public sector unions that a committee be formed under the Director General of Finance and Planning to look at possible modalities for the payment of the 3% and when and any other possible relief that may be available for public sector employees. I pointed out, Mr. Speaker, basically the following facts at the meeting ... we had a long discussion but there are certain facts which are there and we began the discussion by getting the truth from facts that the first half of this year expenditure on personal emoluments amounted to \$108.3 million as compared to \$105.5 million for the corresponding period in 2011 representing an increase in the Salary Bill of 2.6%.

So, without the 3% increase which is the final 3% percent of a 12% increase over three years which we had agreed on before the global crisis struck us. This is because of the increments and the filling of a number of vacancies. We could take the position that we are not filling the vacancies but we have to try and give some people work and we make sure that those who working get their salary on time and make sure that those who are entitled to their increments get their increments.

In fact, 60% of the public service received increments ranging from 3%-5% but of course, a substantial number of public servants have reached the top of their scale and do not have any increments and therefore things are real challenging for them. I pointed out and they accepted it that ... Mr. Speaker, you take last year, in January, I could have paid the \$4 million but I had to make the choice between paying the \$4 million to the teachers, public servants, police, nurses et cetera or to give the enhancements in public assistance payments to the poor. I saw what was ahead particularly the increase of energy cost in 2011, and increase in several commodities, to give them to cushion them. But I acknowledge that there is a challenge for a number of public servants and that those who have reached the top of their scale where they do not have their increments they are without any relief.

I will tell you this, Mr. Speaker, I was hoping that though the fiscal situation has improved and I will answer that in the next question relative to last year we are still running a deficit on the current account and I was hoping ... I had asked in fact for the numbers to be given to me by the officials to see if I could have paid 1%,

1½% even at this time but it is problematic and I have to be careful. For instance, I have to find \$5½ million to put into the student loan committee, sorry, student loan fund: student loan \*Company for students going off for tertiary education. Close to 2½ million for those who are already there, the commitments I have given to them, and then I have to find another three plus for those, plus I can say and some people may say, “Well, let our students who want to go to university from now on (poor people children) let them hold on for two, three years”; but I just cannot do that given the strategic importance. So, I have to balance and manage a number of things and that is where we are. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition asked the question and I reported on the status, the meeting which I held and what is the factual situation in respect of the extent of the growth of emoluments even though by 2.6%, even though they have not had an increase of the 3%. So that is the long and short of it, Honourable Members.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question No. 2, Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, I move to question No. 2 but I have come to the conclusion that the 3% is not realizable in 2012.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Maybe you are right, maybe you are not, let us see.  
[Laughs]

2. *The Honourable Arnhim Eustace (Leader of the Opposition) asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development, National Security, Grenadines and Legal Affairs:*

*Will the Honourable Prime Minister indicate the fiscal outturn for the period January to June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2012 as compared to the same period in 2011?*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Prime Minister.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, total Revenue and Grants for the period ending the 30<sup>th</sup> June, 2012 is \$223.5 million or 3.6% more than the \$215.7 million for the comparable period last year; \$215.7 last year and \$223.5 this year that is total Revenue and Grants. Current Revenue \$219.1 million for this year by the end of June, \$209.9 million for the comparable period last year an increase in Current Revenue of 4.4%. The total Expenditure is \$249.8 million for the first half of this year compared to \$261 for the first half of last year, which the Current Expenditure is \$235.6 this year compared to \$247.5 last year; \$235.6 this year compared to \$247.5 last year a drop by about 4.8%. The Current Balance is \$16.4 million deficit, the current deficit by the end of June compared with \$37.6 million for the same period last year. So, you see the extent of the deficit has declined. The overall balance, the overall deficit is \$26.3 million compared to \$45.8 million for the same period last year; \$26.3 million the overall deficit compared to \$45.8 million last year.

I should point out, Mr. Speaker, an important indicator there the Current Account deficit. We had budgeted to have a deficit by the end of June of \$15.8 million in accordance with our budget which was approved but we are a little outside of the budgeted figure but much better than last year; we have to manage the Recurrent side of

the Budget quite carefully. Those are the numbers. [Interjection] Well, oh sorry, the Capital, \$14.3 this year and \$14 last year.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question No. 3 Honourable ...

3. *The Honourable Arnhim Eustace (Leader of the Opposition) asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development, National Security, Grenadines and legal Affairs:*

*Given the present regulations of the NIS:*

*Will the Honourable Prime Minister state approximately what percentage of contributors in 2010 and 2011 received lump sum payment as distinct from a pension at age 60?*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Prime Minister.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Yes. As colleagues are aware in addition to the pension the contributory pension you can get at age 60, there is available a lump sum payment known as an Age Grant, as per the National Insurance Services Act No. 33 of 1986, and an insured person at the NIS is eligible for an age Grant under the following conditions:

- a. The insured person attained the age of 60 years.
- b. They paid at least 50 weeks contributions but less than 500.

In other words they do not reach the 500 required for them to have an Age Pension, so they get a Grant. The amount of benefit under the Age Grant is calculated based on average insurable earnings, and I think the Honourable Leader of the Opposition would probably know this at six times the average insurable earnings for each completed 50 contribution weeks paid or credited.

For the years 2010 and 2011 as asked in respect of the lump sum payments or Age Grants as it is called in the law;

Number of Age Grants in:

- 2010 191
- 2011 177

The percentage of the contributors who received Age Grants is just about half of 1% point, half of 1% point in 2010 and just under half of 1% in 2011. The value of the Age Grants in 2010 - \$887,122.020; 2011 \$846,510.096, and Age Grants as a percentage of the total benefits paid out ... I gave the percentage in relation to the contributors who received Age Grants and now I am dealing with the Age Grants as a percentage of the total benefits.

- 2010 2.89%
- 2011 2.49%

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, we would see from these statistics that there is a relatively low payout under the Age Grants and this is tangible evidence that the NIS plan is maturing and is converging from a Grant based plan to a Pension based plan. Simply put, an increasing number of insured persons who attain Pension age of 60 are eligible for Pension instead of a Grant. I hope that this would help to add some further clarity to a debate which has started a few weeks ago.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Let me telling you what I am going to do now because we are about eight minutes after one, so I want to - and please take note I will take questions 6, 7, 8, 9 10, 11, and 15. I think those are persons who have indicated that they are likely to go to the funeral. So, I will go to questions - again I say 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 15 and if anyone spots any other thing there that I missed [pause] hello, anybody spots anything that I missed, well then you can ... [interjection] 20? Oh yes! Okay fine, 20 as well.

Question No. 6 then and that is from the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines.

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

*In light of the fact that the La Pompe/Paget Farm main road particularly in the areas called Bluff is in a terrible state a disrepair, and may in fact be unsafe for the travelling public, will the Minister please state:*

- a. *whether the area near Bluff has been or will be examined to determine if it is safe for the public; and*
- b. *when the road will be repaired?*

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

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, thank you, a preliminary on land site visit has been carried out by BRAGSA plus I went down to Bequia, and subsequent investigations have begun into the cause and outcomes of the apparent failure; but there needs to be a more detailed survey to be carried out from the sea. You have to go to the sea to get a better vantage point of the failure that has occurred, and they have to do whatever test they have to do on that side. The immediate response may entail cordoning off the area that is most likely to fail, the concrete surface of that roadway and limiting it to a single lane flow of traffic, while these detailed surveys and solutions are sorted. Thank you.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question No. 7. [Interjection] Eh! You have a supplementary? Okay sorry.

**HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** I just wanted to have some timeframe on that, Mr. Speaker, because it is kind of getting urgent.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** It is difficult to give a timeframe. This is an investigative work and we do not know the extent of it so it is difficult to give a timeframe.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question No. 7 Honourable Member for Central Kingstown.

7. *Major the Honourable St Clair Leacock (Central Kingstown) asked the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works;*

*The roads in Central Kingstown particularly the Green Hill, Old Montrose, Lodge Village, Redemption Sharpes, Largo Heights main roads remain in a deplorable condition:*

- a. how soon will the road about 100 yards from Honourable Senator Charles' residence just adjacent to Michael and Jessica Best be repaired;*
- b. can any assistance be given to the potholes between Kenton Jacobs residence and Josephine Duncan; and*
- c. one trucker has volunteered to remove the soil and debris on the road above the Sharpes Playing Field where "Barda" shop is located. Can a front end loader be provided to load the truck to support this voluntary effort?*

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

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, unfortunately this question did not come to me in the first set of questions from the House so, but I do have an answer. When I got the Order Paper two days ago I realised that there was another question from the Honourable Member.

Mr. Speaker, I as Minister of Works would be the first to say the roads, there are a lot of roads in this country that are in bad condition, I drive them every day and we are trying at BRAGSA to do what we can with the resources we have. I hope that we would have some resources in the very near future, some extra resources to deal with some of these roads. When you get the resources, Mr. Speaker, it would naturally be on a priority basis. I know that the individual Parliamentary Representative whether from the Opposition or the government will naturally have a different priority than if you look at the picture globally or nationally. But there is a commitment to improve on the condition of the roads that we have all just sat and listened to what the fiscal outturn is and the resources that are available and the proper management to keep us going.

So to give a commitment at this point as to when these holes will be fixed we are aware of the holes and I will say to the Honourable Member for Central Kingstown that maybe with the big pothole between Kenton Jacobs or the potholes in that area you could possibly park down the road on your frequent visits there, and save you some shocks problems. I know you visit those areas very frequently [laughter] if you can park down the road or [laughs] if you are on your way there and you wish a ride I could arrange for a ride to get you there [laughs].

Mr. Speaker, on (c) I find it strange that this a question brought to me in parliament Honourable Member, you have called me directly on little things in the constituency, I went visiting with you one day and got the problem

solve for you one day. So, the matter of a truck and a front end loader to remove some soil, I mean I, you know, just give me a call and let us see what we can do on it. You have my cell number, you forgot it?

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** I told you at the graduation ceremony.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Well, I did not recall that. I am sure you spoke to me at the graduation ceremony about many other things. [Interjection] I will ask BRAGSA to look at it and see what could be done. I am sure that if it is not a substantial thing ... I do not know what volume is there. As I said BRAGSA did not get this question but I would have the infrastructure department look at it.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** I would say Mr. Minister

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Three truck loads.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** At most. So it is done, consider that done?

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** No, I would transfer it to BRAGSA; BRAGSA did not get this information as I said. I will ... okay. You need to get in touch with me after tomorrow, well not tomorrow, tomorrow is Cabinet Thursday. [Interjection] [Laughter] Well, you have it in your phone.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question No. 8, yes 8, Honourable Member for Central Kingstown.

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** Thank you very much. I actually had assigned this question to the Minister of Finance but I see it show up here as Education, I hope I am not in any trouble here.

Major the Honourable St Clair Leacock (Central Kingstown) asked the Honourable Minister of Education:

At a recent graduation exercise, the Master of Ceremonies in addressing the graduants welcomed them to the army of unemployed.

- a. how many students have graduated from the secondary schools and Community College in 2012;
- b. how many vacancies exist in the government service to these graduates, and
- c. what is the current level of unemployment in St Vincent and the Grenadines as statistically reported and quite separately politically calculated.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister of Education.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Number of students graduated from secondary schools May-June, 2012 and I will call them by school and number.

Adelphi Secondary	32
Barrouallie Secondary	46
Buccament	...

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** The total.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Okay, you want the total, I thank you. Total for Secondary Schools: 1447; total from St Vincent and the Grenadines Community College 727. The (b) part

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

**HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK:** [Inaudible]

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** You got it? [Interjection] okay, the “b” part, how many are expected to gain employment over the next six months in the Government Service? Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I believe the Honourable Representative for Central Kingstown could perhaps in the future direct his questions to my esteemed colleague who holds responsibility for the Public Service. Certainly I would expect that the office of the Chief Personnel Officer would be able to provide detailed statistics on recruitment to the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Public Service over the years including returning students who have pursued Tertiary Education abroad and excluding those students graduating in any given year, who immediately pursue studies abroad.

Mr. Speaker, let me reiterate that the statistics which my Ministry provided in part “a” of the question are submitted every year to all relevant institutions who deal with Labour Market Issues. The Ministry of Education is not mandated to track school leavers entering the work force. We do not hire personnel to work in the Government neither is my Ministry responsible for garnering and providing employment or unemployment figures, thus, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for Central Kingstown by posing parts “b and c” of his question to my Ministry clearly demonstrates and continues to highlight the lack of adequate research on key topics and also a paucity of knowledge of public sector operations. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker [applause].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Supplementary Question?

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Mr. Speaker, if this was a public speaking exercise I would have failed her [laughter].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Supplementary [interjection] oh sorry.

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Actually the question was submitted to you, I do not know how it ended up there, but if it was a public speaking thing I would..., yes I do not know why... [interjection] hello. The question by me was framed to the Honourable Prime Minister.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Oh.

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** That is what I am saying.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Oh I see, okay. Question.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** The..., is on the ground.

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** You glad eh?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** But I answered you so much time already, ask me the next question [laughter].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question no. 9 from the Member for Central Kingstown.

9. *Major the Honourable St. Clair Leacock (Central Kingstown) asked the Honourable Prime Minister of Finance, Economic Development, National Security, Grenadines and Legal Affairs:*

*Even in the most recent World Bank Digest research report the question of institutional balance and affordability by targeted sectors for energy tariff has been raised.*

a. *How has the number of domestic electricity consumers changed over the years 1973, 1983, 1993, 2003 and currently 2012; and*

b. *How soon can consumers expect a reduction in the basic unit cost of electricity to offset the ever-rising energy surcharge.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I thought that my Honourable friend would have asked his whole set of questions on electricity on the 31<sup>st</sup> May, he is just trying to spin this one out of the..., he asked questions 10, 11 and 12 involving 6 and 2; 8 parts on the 31<sup>st</sup> May, which would have included precisely this, except to say, Mr. Speaker, there is a twist in the tail and I will come with the answer.

In that question, 12(c) he asked me, “does the Government intend to reexamine the fuel surcharge and the unit cost of electricity for consumers with a view to reducing energy to consumers.” He is asking me now, “How soon can we expect a reduction in the basic unit cost of electricity to offset the ever-rising energy surcharge?” So in May, he was contemplating perhaps I will reduce the surcharge, this is, he is contemplating that I will reduce the basic charge. Now this is when you are trying to put more politics than good sense into a question which I shall proceed to answer with good sense.

Mr. Speaker, the number of domestic consumers in the years is identified as follows. For some reason they do not have the figures from 1973, so I will give from 1983 - 11,507; 1993 - 19,664; 2003 - 29,535; 2012 - 36,153. So you notice that you have gone more than three times the number of domestic consumers since 1983.

It is important to recognize, Mr. Speaker, that currently as it was in 1974, when the fuel surcharge was introduced, the monthly fluctuations in the cost of electricity to customers are only as a result of changes in the fuel surcharge rate. Just before the introduction of the fuel surcharge, the cost of a gallon of fuel in October 1973 was \$0.52 cents, whereas in March 2012 the cost of a gallon of the same fuel was \$11.17 cents, fifty-two and a half cents in 1973 and \$11.17 cents, so that the fuel surcharge rate was \$52.73 cents. This is reflected in the fact that the average monthly fuel surcharge rate in 1974 was one and a half cents, whereas the monthly fuel surcharge rate in 2011 was \$46.07 cents.

Every single electricity company in the region has a variable component for the movement in the electricity for the cost of the electricity which is the principal input, sorry, the cost of the fuel which is the principal input. So that if I am to reduce the fuel surcharge you would want me therefore to increase the unit price, the basic unit.

If you reduce the unit price you would want me to increase the surcharge because I demonstrated last time in detail and I do not have to go over it again, the savings which we have made for the consumers in a number of ways, the problem of energy of fossil fuels of gas and diesel we have to deal with is..., this commodity on the world market is very expensive that is the point. It is simple straightforward.

We have done a lot in reducing line loss, a whole set of other efficiencies, the Petro-Caribe prices, because it is priced in US dollars rather than in Caribbean Mean Postings, we get some relief there, we get some relief in transportation and of course, the country as a whole we have savings on the financing arrangements. Mr. Speaker, we have outlined our energy policy, laid it out, we have published it, it is available, and I do not have to talk about the energy policy in a question time. I addressed it more than once a year. Other officials do so. I mean, we have done a number of things to help consumers, domestic and commercial and industrial, hotels, VINLEC pays a subsidy to cover a portion of fuel surcharge for the poor and vulnerable homeowners.

Mr. Speaker, when people say to me that I must increase..., they say, increase the basic charge, increase that because I hear people write, I hear them all the time on the radio, increase that because that was since 1974 and reduce the fuel surcharge. Now however the revenue comes, it comes to keep a supply on a regular basis and quality for the consumer. But hear this, there are a lot of people who talk about a lot of things, I reach the stage now that when I hear a lot of foolishness, if I respond to every bit of foolishness, Mr. Speaker, I would not have time to do the people's business. If they only read the VAT Act they will find out that VAT is only on the basic charge. VAT is not chargeable on the fuel surcharge. The structure of the law, we make it easier for people, in fact, because you do not pay VAT on the first 200 units, if you go to Dominica you have to pay on the first 75 units, you also have to pay on the fuel surcharge. We do not charge on the fuel surcharge, the VAT. So this is a matter where everybody is an expert on electricity pricing and a man read something here, he brief catch, he read something there, he brief catch, I am not talking about the Honourable Member of Central Kingstown, I am just simply making the point that the dance has to pay for the light. We have to look forward to other forms of energy savings and we have to look for renewable energy sources which are all part and parcel of the ongoing work and I have spoken about this repeatedly and so on and so forth.

The Honourable Member for Central Kingstown is a former employee of VINLEC. If he has any set of ideas which can advance the process, you know I am not asking him to come to me, Thornley Myers would see him willingly, Dr. Lewis over there will see him, say I am having this idea about so and so and the fellers will say, "Well this is the problem with that idea, but that idea, maybe possibly this may work or that may work", I do not play games with energy. So I answer you my dear friend in terms of the specific numbers and I answer you about the nature of the relationship between the fuel surcharge and the basic price that is all I can do for you at the moment within the context we want to see a more economic delivery of these things and look, we all have to educate ourselves to try to save electricity, the consumption of electricity and person will go and buy a fridge which is an electricity guzzler and there are ways and means you can check and other people can assist you, the consumers association, or we have to build that up. This is not a straightforward business really and I want us always to have a rational discussion on these things. Like a rational discussion on the NIS, a rational discussion on the fiscal, rational discussions in going forward.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Supplementary question?

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Mr. Speaker, I am mindful of your..., for us not to enter into debate over questions, but all that the Honourable Prime Minister said was in fact contained in the last question time and I was making the point and I really want him to get it or understand it, we are at one on the question of the energy surcharge, I have explained that VINLEC must, underline, must recover all energy that goes in and that we are looking the wrong place for solutions. It cannot be found in an adjustment to the energy surcharge because all of that must be recovered and what in fact we must be looking at is at the operational cost where the basic unit cost comes in and that is where I am directing my attention. So all I am saying is that the nation has been looking in the wrong direction for this issue and I am trying to reorient them to the operational aspect for the savings to be effective.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** With great respect to my friend, other persons might have been looking in the wrong direction. The last time I answered you I went through details, I went back to my answer you know, because I keep them, [interjection] wait nah...,

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

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** I did not ask for the domestic, the last time I asked for the commercial and that is why I had to come back.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, but you asked the last question on May 31<sup>st</sup>. You were asking about the basic charge and the surcharge in relation to domestic though you did not ask, quite correctly you are saying the number of domestic consumers. But the point I want to make is that VINLEC has been improving its efficiency to be able to charge basically the same basic rate and recovering and running the operations and making an extra dollar by more efficient plants, more efficient equipment and so forth, which we have been looking at. Direct whatever you are saying to uninformed people who get on the radio or who write in the newspaper and who do not understand the point that you and I understand here. So I am not looking in the wrong direction, I am looking in the right direction.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you very much, question no. 10 Honourable Member for West Kingstown.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Thank you. Question no. 10 to the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works.

*10. The Honourable Daniel Cummings, (West Kingstown) asked the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works:*

*The people of Edinboro and Ottley Hall remain at risk from being isolated in the event of any obstruction on or failure of the one access road from Kingstown. There is a short piece of road, less than sixty meters that is required to be surfaced in order to create an alternative route via New Montrose. Given that design work as done by the Ministry of Works prior to 2001, and given the urgent need for and relative small cost of:*

*Would the Honourable Minister indicate if this road is a part of his Ministry's plan for execution and if so how soon will it be done.*

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, the creativity in the question does not hide, it does not slip me, it does not, you know I..., if the road fails, it would be nice to have this other piece of road fix, but Vermont has one road in and one road out, if that fails everybody is stuck in Vermont, so we have to build a whole road go over Hope and come over, so I understand the creativity and the thinking that if you find a small piece of road, then you create a mishap on the highway, I go fix this small piece of road for you.

But Mr. Speaker, this is something that has been..., since first term we have looked at that piece of road and there has been consideration for it. Basically it would cost you about \$30,000 to get it done, but which is the better priorities, fix the potholes that takes [interjection] no, no, no it is not capital, you see this is, Honourable Member for West Kingstown, it is not capital, it is not a debate on it, it is not capital. If you ask the Accountant across from me he will tell you that this is not capital [interjection] no, it is not capital. I do not have capital funds for this, so if you are considering this under capital, I will say, no it cannot be fixed, if you are asking me to try and fix it, I can do it out of some recurrent money, but not immediately. It is not lost on us that there is a possibility of getting it done, but it is going to cost \$30,000 quite honestly, if I had \$30,000 in West Kingstown I will fix some of the potholes going around in Ottley Hall. Which is priority for you? You understand what I am saying?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Supplementary question?

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** The issue surrounding the failure of the road, the Honourable Minister would know, it is not trivial, the piece of road just before the Catholic Pastoral Centre is threatened and there is quite a possibility that that road could fail, so I just want..., that is the reason why I quote that question. If I may..., question no. 11.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I have not heard your supplementary question yet eh!

11. *The Honourable Daniel Cummings, (West Kingstown), asked the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works:*

*The people at Gunn Hill in the area closest to Ottley Hall have been experiencing increased incidents of house breaking. The police have a very tortuous route to access this area and there is only a dead end road. There is a short piece of road needed to link this area with Ottley Hall, and so provide easy access for the police who are stationed in that area.*

*Would the Honourable Minister give consideration to constructing this short piece of road to improve the network and help to fight crime.*

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Honourable Speaker, the creativity does not escape me using the words of the Honourable Senator. Mr. Speaker, Gunn Hill road needs to be fixed. I mean the residents there Murphy and her husband have approached me, other residents in the area have approached me, and it will be nice to have a road from Ottley Hall down at the bath come right up to Gunn Hill and motor able road. I do not have the estimates for it, you say there was an estimate, but I did not get the figure for the estimate, but it was in 2010 it almost got done when we had the special works of the \$5 million special works, but again dropped out because of other priority areas for consideration. So we are looking closely at a BNTF project, to have that

included under the BNTF project to have the complete link from Ottley Hall from the bath upwards. So it is under consideration and could very well be considered for maybe a next capital project.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question no. 15, from the Honourable Member for North Leeward.

15. *The Honourable Roland Matthews, (North Leeward), asked the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works: Will the Honourable Minister please state when will work begin to rehabilitate the following roads in North Leeward;*

- a. *the Spring Village road from the main road to Gordon;*
- b. *the Sharpes Village road in Chateaubelair;*
- c. *the road leading to the Troumaca Bay Beach;*
- d. *the Gordon Yard Cemetery Road; and*
- e. *the Longline bypass road, Coulls Hill, Belmont.*

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, I trust that the Honourable Minister of Finance is you know, listening to the questions and the answers that I am providing so I think that tells you what I want to say [laughter]. Mr. Speaker, all these roads need fixing, all these roads. I mean I really feel badly for Longline road. Longline road is such a beautiful piece of road into fantastic agricultural lands that it hurts my heart when I drive there. I have not driven there in years, but the last time I drove there it was in pretty bad condition and I believe that it is worse now.

But going from the top, Spring Village road into Gordon for cutting and patching we are expecting to..., it will run us about \$60,000 in cutting and patching and this is under consideration for a maintenance programme for this year. Please do not ask me for a specific timeframe. Sharpes Village road to Chateaubelair, we did carry out some minor repairs there some time ago, but there are larger more extensive areas that we proposed to get fixed under this year's maintenance programme once the resources come up to the big pasture gap and we have an estimate there of about \$135,000 and that would be for cutting and patching about 1400 square feet of asphalt road surface.

The road to Troumaca Bay, I do not think I would want to consider that an immediate. There is a priority programme, it is a tourist site and there is a..., well for recreation as well, but I would prefer to consider the worse roads. But it is I mean..., estimates are being prepared for it and we will give that some considerations at a later stage.

Gordon Yard Cemetery road again to be included in this year's maintenance programme, but however, there seemed to have been a failure of the road way at Gordon Yard at the hairpin bend, the main road and some attention is being paid to that. Those of you who drive on the North Leeward Highway would see some cracks appearing there. The Cemetery road also has been considered somewhat impassable due to occurrence of several landslides and they are looking at clearing those landslides in the next couple of days. Naturally when

you are clearing landslides you look for the closest place you can dump the stuff and disposal and reestablishment of the access is under consideration right now.

As I say Longline bypass road, a very vital link I believe more, if you had coined your question the way that..., crafted your question that the Honourable Member of Central Kingstown had crafted about a failure of a piece of road because you have a much longer Leeward Highway between Belmont and Coulls Hill [interjection] West Kingstown, yes, if you had put the creativity in it, I could have appreciated more coming from the North Leeward Parliamentary Representative because Longline is a nice bypass. For those of you who do not know, it starts at Belmont and come out on Coulls Hill gap. So we have all those very steep hills going down into Troumaca Bay and going back up to Troumaca which is more likely to fail than the piece of road going around to the Catholic Bishops place and Edinboro. But again we have asked Basic Needs Trust Funds to have a closer look at this to see if we can include it in one of their projects. Maybe substantial rehabilitation of the Longline bypass road. Thank you.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question no. 20 Honourable Member, Senator Lewis.

20. *Dr. the Honourable Linton A. Lewis, (Opposition Senator), asked the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works, Urban Development and Local Government:*

*Given the importance of tourism to the economy of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the dire need to improve access to touristic sites and in the light of the fact that both tourists and locals regularly use the Brighton Salt Pond Beach for picnic and other recreational purposes will the Honourable Minister please state*

- a. Whether there are any plans for the improvement of the road leading to the Brighton Salt Pond Beach;*
- b. If so, when is improvement work scheduled to start on the said road; and*
- c. What is the estimated distance of road that is earmarked for improvement.*

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, I am very sympathetic to the Honourable Member for..., well the Honourable Senator and naturally the Parliamentary Representative for East St. George. I am very sympathetic to his wishes as well, but the prospect approach to Brighton is also problematic because there is the Prospect end and there is the Brighton end. You do not get right down to the beach on the Prospect end and we are looking at the Prospect end as well as the Brighton road.

There is a commitment for the improvement of both these accesses and Mr. Speaker; I have spoken in this House on numerous occasions with regards to land developers. The Prospect end of this road and the approach to Brighton Bay is as a result of poor road construction by the land developers in those days. There is no question in my mind. I mean with the number of residences that are down in that area and all they provided in the development was a concrete wheel track, two wheel tracks in some areas [interjection] I know but I cannot help to lament it and I cannot help speaking about it so that future land developers would not put the pressure on the taxpayers of this country after having gained the profits from selling the lands. It is something we have to keep in mind.

I remember there is a land developer in the Glen area, developed some lands, two of them and after ten years a beautiful letter was written to me at Transport,

“According to the laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, I am now handing over to you this piece of road that contains 38 residences, so I will like the Government now to take over responsibility for this piece of road.”

When I visited the road, the road was built out of concrete with not a piece of BRC in it and that was before the trucks went in to build the houses, so you could imagine how quickly it deteriorated. But I send this message out to all..., some of them are very close friends of mind, and I say it to them on the telephone, I say it to them on the PA System and I say it to them here in the House of Parliament, please when you are developing lands, put in proper infrastructure like Housing and Land Development Corporation does when it builds its housing estates [applause]. Go to all of them, see the example there, put those roads in so the taxpayers would not be burdened at a later date to pay for these upgrading of the roads [interjection] no, Buddy Gutter is not a planned development by the Housing and Land Development Corporation. Remember that was an Informal Human Settlement like Diamond and other areas that we are now trying to upgrade slowly, but surely. So we will get there to Buddy Gutter on a different question period.

But Mr. Speaker, on the Prospect side we are looking at over \$500,000 on the Prospect side and for an approximate 2400 feet of road. The Brighton side has been earmarked since the start of this year for stabilisation in the reaches of the road approximately 500 feet to control drainage towards the sea that is the lower end from Sardine down, up to Doctor Cyrus gap there. It is fairly comfortable after the concrete area, but the water starts flowing wild after that. A full upgrade of the 1680 feet on the Brighton side was estimated in 2009 to cost \$577,000 so between both of them we are talking over \$1.2 million and as I say one of the estimates was 2009 and one was 2011.

We planned to spend about \$60,000 to control some drainage on the Brighton side, so there should be some relief and stabilisation and a full upgrade of the road way is being prepared to see if we can implement that on the Brighton side before the end of the year. But almost immediately we should be looking at some stabilising work and improvement on the drainage on the Brighton side.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you very much; we will now go back to as it were basics. I will move to question 4; I hope I would have facilitated those who would be going to the funeral, so question 4.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, apparently a couple persons here additionally would like to go to Bobby’s funeral, so what I was thinking if we finish all the questions, leave maybe..., is 2 O’ clock is the funeral?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yes.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Yes, yes 2 to 3, so that if we can do the balance of the questions and by that time we probably may reach close to 3 O’ Clock, two hours lunch then by the time we come back there is not a lot of time so perhaps we can do the question time, then take the suspension for Tuesday next week and we will just do the Bills next week. That makes sense.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** So we can also eliminate some of the supplementary [laughter]. Question no. 4 Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines.

4. *Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday, (Northern Grenadines) asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, National Security, Legal and Grenadines Affairs, Airports and Seaports:*

*The J. F. Mitchell Airport at Paget Farm has deteriorated, in that:*

- a. *The surface of the runway is unsafe for use by small planes;*
- b. *The perimeter fence is broken down in some places;*
- c. *The runway apron and the airport entrance are degraded and need resurfacing;*
- d. *The ceiling around the outside of the main building and in the departure lounge washrooms are badly broken or have fallen away; and*
- e. *The fire station lacks proper equipment and adequate accommodations for the workers.*

Will the Honourable Prime Minister please state whether small planes (smaller than the 19 seat Twin Otter) have been prohibited from landing and taking off there and, further, what his Government intends to do to repair the airport, when will the necessary work be done and will it be before the start of the next tourism season.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, may I just draw attention to something. I am going to answer the question. I know when I take up the rule book, the Standing Orders, my friend looks at me with the kind of crestfallen nature like how some legal counsel would do when they get to make a point in Limine as though they cause laws [laughter].

I want to say this, Mr. Speaker, the questions in relation..., I would not read everyone of them, the questions in relation to their length and statements of facts where the very facts when you state them you must be responsible for them, the questions should not really include statements of facts, that is a guiding principle, but what is happening now, there is a lot of preamble, because it is being broadcast live, I am not going to take issue with any set of facts now, but I only want [interjection] eh?

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** [Inaudible.]

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** No, no, I did not raise the facts I asked about 19 pieces of roads. It was one question with 19 pieces of roads [interjection] [laughter] Mr. Speaker, I want to say this, the BRAGSA has already been mobilised I have been advised to commenced the work to do some restorative work at the J. F. Mitchell Airport.

I do not know every single aspect of the upgrade which is going to be dealt with, but I just want to say this, we have provisions in the Estimates. But in addition to the provisions in the Estimates for J. F. Mitchell we have spent so much money on the restoration of airports in just last year we did Union Island. I think my Honourable

friend from the Southern Grenadines will know that. We did a \$4 million about two years ago at E. T Joshua and we have to do more again.

I want Honourable Members to understand the number of passengers which come in by J. F. Mitchell. Last year 8622 that is all the passengers that came through the airport. I mean the cost of running J. F. Mitchell I mean is extraordinary compared [interjection] eh? [Interjection] 8622 for the whole year, so just think of that. I notice my friend is now smiling, but I just want to make the point as to the extent of the expenditures there for it. You know you have very often; well it has dropped now to about two landings per day, not since the problem with some of the very smaller aircraft, a lot of people just going by the boat. This does not mean..., we have the facility and we have to upkeep it.

The estimated cost of the immediate set of works is \$210,000 and BRAGSA is dealing with that. They have been mobilised and they are going to do the work. I want to say this that we have some logistical issues in dealing with some things with the runway where the materials which is required for the paving in the runway it has to be a higher quality and sometimes they will have a particular quality to deal with the roads, but not necessarily with the runway, at least I have been advised. So to get the hot mix in sufficient quantity and quality has been a challenge, but we have been sorting that out.

Now the small planes 12,500 pounds and below currently prohibited from landing and taking off, but the important they having on Twin Otter, because I went there last week..., two weeks ago I passed you when I went to Bequia, I was coming down with Sir James and Louise in the car, I noticed you did not wave [laughter] I noticed you did not wave when we passed coming down after breakfast [interjection] no, no, no, no, no, in fact, I asked the question of Louise who was driving. I say, "You saw your representative there?" she say, "Where?" she say, "I hardly recognised him when he passes," so I just want you know, I did not mean to weave that in until you [interjection] he was not there, he was not there, he was not there, he would not be seen riding with you going up to Sir James' house, never in a million years. He will go up by Sir James' area but in a different vehicle [interjection] I do not know about the Leader of the Opposition. All I can say is that [interjection] [laughter] you glad you ain't going up there [interjection] [laughter].

Mr. Speaker, so I went there with the Twin Otter, but they are small category of planes as the Honourable Member says, but they are not landing at the moment and in particularly because of the area of the entrance, the landing area with the parking area, but BRAGSA is sorting that matter out. So that is the long and short of it.

Incidentally this question which is very long which..., the question is very long, but you could have picked up the phone and ask me, man BRAGSA working on the thing yet? I would have said, "yes" and I would have put you in charge of the people in BRAGSA, but you want to ask me here so that the people in Bequia will see you are representing them, but the point is this, the point that is what I am making, you would have known the answer [interjection] well if you do not know the answer, you asked me about the small planes and I told you that yes..., and I told you that BRAGSA is working on it. Those are the questions you asked you know [interjection] yes, but the preamble nah, the preamble, but you are trying to make the preamble long to see like you doing plenty work in Bequia. But this is not a lot of work [interjection] I answer you, I answer you. You ain't like the part with Mitchell [laughter].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question no. 5 Honourable Member for Northern Grenadines.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker, just for clarification, because we have to draft questions every time we come to this House, the Honourable Prime Minister says you are not entitled to use facts in a question.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Read the question, read the Standing Order.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Let me read what it says, it says, “a question shall not include,” let me find..., get the reading exactly, Mr. Speaker, [interjection] [laughter] Standing Order 20, contents of question, 1(b) “a question shall not include the names of persons or any statements of facts unless they are necessary to render the question intelligible”, those were necessary to render the question intelligible because I wanted to point to the Prime Minister to the specific things that needed to be repaired and he dodged every single one except the runway, so all the mulberry bush kind of talk that was going on is just to avoid the question.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question no. 5. Move on to question no. 5

5. *Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday, (Northern Grenadines), asked the Honourable Minister of Education:*

*Now that the school year has come to an end and we can look forward to the new school year starting in or about September 2012 when it would be reasonable to expect that staffing requirements will result in the hiring of new teachers and the transferring of teachers to work in the different positions and different schools, will the Honourable Minister please state:*

a. *Whether the three teachers who unsuccessfully contested the 2010 general elections for the New Democratic Party and have reapplied for their teaching jobs in keeping with the spirit and intent of the collective agreement between the government and the Teachers’ Union will be considered for reappointment in the new school year.*

b. *What efforts you will make to try to ensure that the services of these three highly qualified, experienced and capable teachers are utilised in the teaching service of this country for the benefit of our nation’s children.*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister for Education.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am happy to see from the question that the Honourable Representative for the Northern Grenadines acknowledges and accepts the superiority of the Constitution and other statutory mechanisms under which the collective agreement was made. The Honourable Representative for the Northern Grenadines further recognises that in keeping with the spirit and intent of the collective agreement between the Government and the Teachers’ Union that the three individuals had to reapply for possible vacant positions in the teaching service [interjection]. I do not say that I have complete command of syntax, but I can read and I can cipher and I can decipher. So please allow me to answer the question. You are always out of sync when you get into this House.

Mr. Speaker, I believe in future enquires regarding the status of any application should be channelled through the office of the Chief Personnel Officer to establish whether the persons in question have submitted applications enter the Public Service of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and as in the case of all persons who apply for employment within the Public Service to check on the status of their applications.

Mr. Speaker, I must caution that to avoid allegations of impropriety, neither the Minister of Education nor the Ministry has ever influenced or tried to influence the decision making process of the Public Service Commission regarding any applications submitted to that body. Clearly, Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak to specific applications submitted by the Chief Personnel Officer for consideration by the Public Service Commission. In the event that there is a need for additional staffing requirements for September 2012, neither can I guarantee the ensuing outcome after deliberation by the Public Service Commission, which is an independent decision-making body under the Constitution of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, I am obliged.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question no. 12 I think that is where we are now; yes 12 from the representative for West Kingstown.

12. *The Honourable Daniel Cummings, (West Kingstown) asked the Honourable Minister of Education:*

*The Honourable Minister had refused the offer of assistance from parents and constituents in the area of the Kingstown Government School to improve the school compound. The Minister further indicated in August last year in response to a question raised by me in Parliament that her Ministry was about to undertake the work. Nothing has as yet been done and for the current rainy season the situation is worsening.*

*Would the Honourable Minister reconsider the still valid offer by the parents, residents and their Parliamentary representative to effect repairs to the compound, with in kind contribution from her Ministry.*

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Mr. Speaker, one clarification, the question was first put in August last year, but was deferred to the following meeting in September when the Honourable Minister responded.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister for Education.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I do not want to say that my Catholic brother misinterpreted the question or the answers that we would have had in times past, but I know for a fact that I did not refuse to answer his question. I referred him to the Principal who is the Ministry's presence in the school.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the Kingstown Government School..., [interjection] I am not giving way.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Wait just a minute, allow the Honourable Member to answer the question and if there is any other thing then you make...,

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** No Mr. Speaker, under 45(b) Mr. Speaker,

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Hello, hello, I am saying, allow her to answer the question and you have a supplementary question that you will ask at the end.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** This is not relating to supplementary, it is a misinterpretation of the question.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Well I would allow it under that, so please allow her to speak and then whatever you want to clarify or say, I would allow it. We cannot be going through this kind of situation.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Well would you permit me to seek clarification when the Honourable Minister is misrepresenting what I said?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I am....,

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** You have ruled, I heard you.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I have ruled, okay.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the Kingstown Government School was built during the E. T. Joshua regime in the late 1950s. The school has been identified for possible civil works to upgrade it to hurricane shelter standards under the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines World Bank Regional Disaster Vulnerability Reduction Project. A structural assessment of the school is in progress which would have implications on the design phase of the project, school upgrading before commencement of renovation or construction is started.

Mr. Speaker, the entire process is expected to take approximately 24 to 30 months. The critical areas of the school to be renovated would be known when the consultant has completed the structural assessment. The construction phase is expected to take approximately 9 to 12 months. Mr. Speaker, please permit me to remind this Honourable House that during the sitting of September 29<sup>th</sup> 2011 I informed the Honourable Representative for West Kingstown that the blasting of the boulders that are in the unpaved patch of the yard of the Kingstown Government School was not the recommendation of the management at the school, instead the recommendation is for the filling in of the area with soil and then grassing it. The boulders would then be put to better use by painting them so that jingles can be written on them to reinforce concepts taught at the school.

I also informed the Honourable Representative at that time that a long-term solution would be to deepen the existing drains. Mr. Speaker, our Government does not intend to come up with interim solutions which will result in investment which may well be invalidated when the results of the structural assessment under the improved programmes are in. The Kingstown Government School facility may very well become a designated hurricane shelter in the near future and may consequently have to undergo major upgrading. We shall await the expert's recommendations and incorporate all stakeholders concerns into the structural assessment process. This cautious and thorough approach will no doubt help to mitigate against wastage of scarce resources both private and public amidst the hard economic and financial reality in which we are currently operating. Mr. Speaker, I am obliged.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Mr. Speaker, first of all, the Minister misrepresented what I said. I never said that the question was not answered; I said it was put back to the following meeting of the House. But Mr. Speaker, the questions never related to the structural integrity of the school, the questions related one, to the

removal of three small shops on the compound which have a problem of circulation and a security issue for staff and students as well as the malfunctioning of the toilet systems which result in faecal matter ending up in the yard which is not drained. Those matters are still current and are even more pertinent given that students from the Southern Grenadines are expected to be housed there during the vacation and work to be done is both urgent and necessary.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question no. 13.

13. *The Honourable Roland Matthews, (North Leeward) asked the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: will the Minister please state:*

- a. *whether or not the Government through the Ministry of Agriculture is engaged in any conservational or preservation arrangements with any overseas based organisation regarding the breeding in captivity of the Amazona Guildingii – the National Bird;*
- b. *if there is, were any National Birds exported in the process, if so how many;*
- c. *has the Ministry received any monetary contributions or donations for this arrangement and if so how much; and*
- d. *what are the terms and conditions under which the National Birds were exported.*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister of Agriculture.

**HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, an agreement was signed on October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011 between the Association for the Conservation of Threatened Parrots hereinafter referred to as the (ACTP) and the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. On December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2011; 15 St. Vincent Amazons from the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines were transferred to the ACTPs facility in Berlin, Germany. Finance has been received under the breeding loan arrangement; a total of 250,000 Euros was committed by the ACTP to support activities pursuant to the agreement. To date the Government has received \$120,000 Euros and these activities under this funding arrangement will commence shortly.

Mr. Speaker, the terms and conditions are encapsulated in the Breeding Loan Agreement assigned on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2011 and I have here, Mr. Speaker, a copy of the agreement which I will make it available for the Honourable Member for his perusal. I also have, Mr. Speaker, the labels of the 17, of the 15 sorry, Mr. Speaker, of the 15 parrots which left St. Vincent and the Grenadines. However, I will go through a few of the terms and conditions. This agreement was signed between the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the ACTP. It supports a Breeding Loan Programme for St. Vincent Amazon. This Breeding Programme comes in response to the recognition of the increasing potential threat to the wild parrot population by several natural and manmade factors.

In summary the Breeding Loan Agreement allows for the transfer of a number of parrots between the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the ACTP for breeding and scientific purposes. It establishes clearly the terms and condition for this transfer and other related matters:

1. The Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in transferring birds to ACTP will determine the number of birds to be moved from the Nicholls Wildlife Complex.
2. All relevant documentation regarding each individual bird such as sex, age, health, status, will be provided to the programme and,
3. There is a general agreement by ACTP that these birds, their eggs and off spring, while in the custody of the ACTP will at all times remain the property of the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, I must distinguish that in the past we have records where birds were given as gifts. Birds were given as a gift. In fact, I have notes here that in 1995 the then Minister of Agriculture give two birds as a gift, the department to date has no knowledge of the birds that was sent to Trinidad and yes, they remained the property of the Government and people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines as signatories' societies. Both St. Vincent and the Grenadines and the Government of Trinidad and Tobago may be able to arrange for the safe return of those birds I have been advised. We have no records as to whether the birds are alive or the birds are dead. I am not saying that to sidetrack from this question. All I am saying that those persons who would want to do a comparative analysis in the future that we have all the requisite documentation here available for you as to where the birds are, we have full tracking of the birds and it is for conservation purposes. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

### **Supplementary Question**

**HONOURABLE ROLAND MATTHEWS:** You mentioned about the health status of the bird that were exported, so my supplementary question is:

Are we saying that the strongest, the most genetically strongest of the birds were exported, is that what you are implying when you say that they were examined for health and so on?

**HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR:** Mr. Speaker, the issue of whether the birds exported are the strongest or the weakest birds that is definitely not the issue of the whole programme. In fact, just to allay some of the fears of the Honourable Member, if I may note, St. Lucia Parrot Conservation Support by the ACTP, the same programme has been launched in St. Lucia with the same objective. So birds are being transported are being transferred to the ACTP and there is the arrangement that the birds would be brought back to St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question no. 14 Honourable Member for North Leeward.

*14. The Honourable Roland Matthews, (North Leeward) asked the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries: Will the Honourable Minister please state*

*a. what is the present state of the banana replanting exercise throughout all banana planting districts in St. Vincent and the Grenadines;*

*b. approximately how many acres are targeted for replanting;*

- c. *what is the estimated cost of the replanting process to the Government; and*
- d. *how does Government intend to fund this cost.*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister of Agriculture.

**HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I go into noting some of the figures, I must place the whole replanting process within context and I must note that the farmers who are listening, I must note that whilst Operation Cut Back was an exercise that we had to do within a very, very short space of time because of the presence of the Black Sigatoka Disease and also the Moko Disease, Operation Plant Back has to be properly planned, structured and conceived.

We are not going to rush into a programme, of course we are not going to be slow on the take off and the continuation of Operation Plant Back, but what we want to ensure is that we have all the agronomics correctly and we are working with all the stakeholders, with WINFARM, with WINFA, with WINFRESH to ensure that in the rebuilding of the industry that we rebuild the industry on a very sound basis.

Mr. Speaker, \$29,100 plants have been replanted thus far and we have targeted thus far 53 acres. The demand however for tissue culture plants stands today at 223,000 on demand; 3000 acres on well maintained and productive farms is our ultimate goal in the medium term. Mr. Speaker, the Government will support in this investment in Operation Plant Back in the following ways: planting materials will be made available free of cost, each plantlet is valued at US\$1 based on requests already for planting material we are looking at US\$225,000, technical support services through the banana services units as outlined in the services for this year is valued at \$4.3 million, \$3 million of that would go to Black Sigatoka control. We are also being assisted, Mr. Speaker, by the FAO, also assistance is coming in from CIRAD I am not in a position to quantify the assistance from CIRAD; however, Mr. Speaker, there the Cabinet of the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines would have approved for a revolving credit facility in the first instance of \$1.5 million to be established for farmers who are..., most for the farmers who would benefit from this. Of course, there would be those who are presently part of Operation Plant Back, but it would be there as a credit facility for all farmers.

Fair Trade, Mr. Speaker, the Fair Trade Organisation has launched a core farmer's group programme and that is aside from the Governments support, but some 100 farmers are benefiting from that programme. Mr. Speaker, while farmer-driving investment will be an important source of funding, institutional funding of costs will be done as follows:

1. Through provisions made in the national budgetary estimates for existing technical support services including the banana services unit and technical staff of the Ministry.

Very importantly, Mr. Speaker, in 2013 we expect the industry will benefit from credit and other grant financing which will be available when the \$36 million from the negotiated EU finance banana accompanying measures programmes will become available. A programme of sensitization as it relates to BAM will begin in August. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question no. 16 Honourable senator Frederick.

16. *The Honourable Vynnette Frederick, (Opposition Senator) asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, National Security, Grenadines and Legal Affairs:*

*In light of the spate of crimes continuing to plague our nation will the Honourable Minister please indicate the following:*

- a. *The reported number of women and girls who have been victims of sexual violence, including rape and murder over the past five years;*
- b. *The number of accused persons in these reported matters who were married to, related to, or in common law relationships with the victims; and*
- c. *The number of matters falling in these categories that have been dismissed, or resulted in acquittals and the number of convictions granted.*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Prime Minister, Minister of National Security.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, the data for the year 2011, women who were victims of murder, four, one girl, four arrested and charged, one was married and one is a mother. Fifty-six cases of rape against women, 37 have been arrested and charged. There are data which I can provide also and I can get a sheet for the Honourable Member, she did not ask about these, but the incest intercourse under the age of 15 years and intercourse under the age of 13 years, indecent assault I can provide that data too. As seeking to compare from the earlier period, because one of the problems in comparing the data in the earlier time series up to 2000 is that they did not disaggregate the cases under rape, they just had all of them as sexual offences. So we are only able to do the time series data properly speaking from 2001 and as you would imagine it, it goes up and down. Some years it looks..., well every instance is bad, but some years you have the numbers which goes up and down, it fluctuates.

There is one bit of the data which they have not compiled it yet to send it to me, which I would get and at a subsequent occasion I will give my Honourable friend, is the extent to which those where they have charged because we do not have all the data in my possession, they are assembling the data as to dismissals and acquittals and convictions, but I able to give you those arrested and charged which they had at hand.

Mr. Speaker, this is a serious issue and we have to address it in a very focused way and what I want to urge all Honourable Members, is that when allegations of cases arise and particularly when they involve children, we must make sure that we have the facts, because there was a recent case which I understand had been in social media where there was an allegation which was false that a nine year old girl was at the hospital giving birth and the..., I understand even the T.V station said it unconfirmed report, but then they had to apologise in the same broadcast because Doctor Keizer-Beache called in and said , “well there is no such case at the hospital.” I just urged..., I mean we have to address it in a focused way, but we have to be careful that we do not go off and

say something that something exist when it did not happen because it detracts from the cases where it happens and that is all I will urge in this context, okay.

### **SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

**HONOURABLE VYNNETTE FREDERICK:** Just supplementary because I am seeking a clarification. Were we able to get any indication of the relationship between the accused and victims that was part of the question?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Oh yes, there is a ..., I give in relation to the married in the case of the murders where in relation to the rapes for instance the data they have not got it in respect of the relationship to all the relationships, so that is another area in which they will have to upgrade their data collection. They have obviously done much upgrade, but they need to do some further upgrading in the data collection.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question no. 17 Honourable senator Frederick.

**HONOURABLE VYNNETTE FREDERICK:** Again in my name again to the Prime Minister and let me just say Mr. Prime Minister I join with you on the issue of those who have to practice social media responsibility, I did follow that thread regarding, the what is now fictitious issue of this nine year old.

*17. The Honourable Vynnette Frederick, (Opposition Senator) asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, National Security, Grenadines and Legal Affairs:*

*Given the ranking of St. Vincent and the Grenadines on Tier Two of the Trafficking in Persons Report 2012 issued by the US State Department, part of the recommended strategy to improve the country's ranking involves awareness campaigns and additional training for police officers and social workers. In an effort to implement these useful recommendations will the Honourable Minister please indicate the following:*

- a. Whether any effort has been made by the Ministry to work with the relevant stakeholders to update the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Police Force Training Manual to include modules training all police recruits on how to treat with human trafficking and domestic violence reports; and*
- b. If not, will the Minister indicate whether such an initiative will be undertaken and give some indication as to when the general public can expect the changes to be initiated.*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Prime Minister, Minister of National Security.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, as is well known prior to the trafficking in persons report in 2012 by the US States Department, there was a ranking of Tier Two Watch List but it is..., there has been an improvement in the situation and it is just Tier Two. In the result indicators in the 2012 budget, we had said that we will establish a unit to deal with domestic violence and child abuse in keeping with

the prevention of Trafficking In Persons Act. That unit of course as we know has been established and I had made the announcement in the budget.

The unit was established at the Questelles Police Station and staff by senior police officers in January 2012 to address directly and to ensure that we improve all the legal and institutional frameworks and practices in relation to matters touching upon concerning this unit domestic violence, child abuse and trafficking in persons. The Ministry included officials from the Police Training School have been engaged with the IOM (the International Organisation for Migration) very important organisation in this regard, in a series of training programmes geared towards building capacity and public sensitisation.

The stakeholders who had been engaged in training since January 2012 includes the Police Department, the Labour Department, Immigration Department, Office of the DPP, Port Authority, Port Police, Ministry of National Mobilisation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry Health Wellness and the Environment, National Commission on Crime Prevention, Community Development including NGOs and including of course preparations of appropriate manuals.

As Minister and Chairman of the task force with responsibility for this particular area of trafficking in persons, a debriefing session was held with Ms. Chisinau Moeller, Regional Coordinator in the IOM along with other Cabinet colleagues, I had them all on the first training session that was conducted in early January 2012 and it was agreed that an after-hours contingency plan for immediate victim shelter and care be put in place. A final in the training sessions with IOM will be conducted during the month of August this year and then of course we will have a new round of training. Prior to the establishment of the unit in 2010 the topic of human trafficking and domestic violence was introduced into the police school's curriculum and incorporated in the school's manual and over the period the unit has been engaged in, a number of sensitisation campaigns including among staff and students of the school of nursing, staff at four health centres throughout the state, staff of seven primary schools and secondary schools, parents and members of the 18 police youth clubs and non-commissioned officers, both markers and posters have been widely distributed to aid in the public sensitisation process.

Mr. Speaker, I would say that I insist that I have bring annually here a report under the law on human trafficking or what I make sure that I do, I keep track of it as to what is happening by having quarterly reports. For instance I have June 1<sup>st</sup> the second quarterly report was sent to me and with details [of] the launching of the anti-trafficking in persons units, sensitisation campaign, investigations in possible cases and of course since then, there was another case which has been subjected to investigation and transmission of information to an enquiring agency from overseas. I want to give the assurance to this Honourable House that we take this matter very seriously that is why we have spent so much time in doing the legislation and in having the institutional arrangements in training and so forth put in place. I am obliged.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

**HONOURABLE VYNNETTE FREDERICK:** Just to be clear, the Honourable Minister indicate, whether the actual manual has..., I do have a manual and I am just asking whether..., the point is that my manual is out of date and whether the upgrade to the manual includes how to treat with domestic violence given our own

legislative changes that were made since 1995 in the area of domestic violence, whether there is an upgrade, because my manual comes from two years ago. So I do not know if there is a 2012 manual and if there is, I would appreciate being given a copy.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I have been advised that there has been an update in the relevant sections of the manual. What we have done also at the Police Training School, many persons may find this on the looking on, on the outside, but we have to put personnel, put a Superintendent in charge of the Police Training School and this particular Superintendent has a Bachelor's Degree in Criminal Psychology and is doing a Master's online at the moment, because we want the Police Officers who are coming out, they are going in now with better academic qualifications and we want to lift the extent of the training. In fact, the idea is, is to dovetail it with the Community College so that some of what training they do could be fit into an Associate Degree Programme in which their own training could go towards the Associate Degree Qualifications. So it is a real general upgrade. I will ask the Permanent Secretary or I will ask the Superintendent himself whether they have actually published the manual or just upgraded the sections in dealing with the training. I will find that out.

**HONOURABLE VYNNETTE FREDERICK:** And very quickly, Mr. Speaker, another supplemental...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You are entitled to one supplementary question.

**HONOURABLE VYNNETTE FREDERICK:** Oh, I beg your pardon, Mr. Speaker. I do not know if I may crave the indulgence of the Honourable Minister.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I have been bending it for the whole...

**HONOURABLE VYNNETTE FREDERICK:** The Minister indicated no difficulty, I saw the welcoming overture. Just with regard to the OAS and whether he was aware that the OAS offers module training that they will do for free for our police recruits.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I am aware. The OAS is one, but there are others too.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** All right, probably the supplementary will take care of the next question.

**HONOURABLE VYNNETTE FREDERICK:** Indeed, I do not believe I will have a supplementary for the...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question no. 18.

18. *The Honourable Vynnette Frederick, (Opposition Senator) asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, National Security, Grenadines and Legal Affairs:*

*There have been numerous cases where parents have been made to wait for every long period to receive monies paid to the treasury by spouses and intended for child support and maintenance. There was in place a system for those monies to be kept at the Family Court to be delivered soonest to the recipients, rather than being deposited into the treasury.*

*Would the Honourable Minister consider reintroducing this system to enable the dependant parents and children to have access to the needed funds; and if in the affirmative, is there a time frame for this to be done.*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Prime Minister, Minister of National Security.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, there is some statements in the facts which are not quite on the ball in question itself. I will explain what the situation is without dealing with the matrices of facts or alleged, in any polemical manner, just to say that there is a system at the Family Court where the Court is allowed by the Treasury to hold maintenance monies for two weeks to facilitate the ease of collection by the mothers. Every mother who has to receive maintenance monies can do so during this two week period. This is indeed a show of understanding by the Family Court and the Treasury Department and an effort to ease the burden of the collection by these mothers. So there is a system in place. It has not been changed as is been suggested. It is in place.

What we have to try and do is to see if we can..., this very system we have, to see if we can finetune it to enhance it to have greater efficiency, because obviously, the Treasury does not allow you to keep money for periods of time, because the money should either be paid in to the Accountant General's Account at the National Commercial Bank and the receipt taken over to the Accountant General Office, or you go with the money to the Accountant General Office, you pay it over and they give you the receipt for it. Because let me say this, if you..., I am coming back to the question, I give you Honourable Senator some practical issues, you take at the police, there are two vaults for money to be put in, one by the Commissioner's Office and one at a General Office and you have warrant officers who would go and collect fines, but they may collect it on a late evening or they may collect it on a weekend time and they had to put it in the vault with all the notations, but there is a case recently where someone who supposed to pay in the money put it in the vault or go and pay it in, this person went and paid it about \$3000 or three thousand and something dollars, paid it into their account. Now if you go to the bank to pay it into your account, why you do not put it in Government Account, you put it in your account for safe keeping, how you could put it in your account for safe-keeping? Eh, that is not a place to have it for safe keeping [laughter].

But you see we do have the cheques, we do have the cheques, so that you may have it there for safe-keeping for a week, but you ain't going to have it much longer than the week because it is going to come out back. Of course, issues would arrive from that, I am not getting into those other issues that persons are responsible for these things. I am dealing with my responsibility having systems in place.

Now, so you see the Honourable Senator Frederick, if you are holding the money there longer, it creates a problem. Now what do you do then when you have the two week grace periods and the monies that have not been collected, what do you do? They have to take it and deposit it into the bank for the Accountant General and take the receipt to the Treasury to verify that it has been paid in. Well at this point now you have the Family Court still who have to deal with it and the Treasury, what do you do now if people do not come within the two weeks? They have their respective accounting rules now. The best thing we have to try and do is in that two week period to make sure that the persons who are to be paid their maintenance monies come and collect it from the Family Court because when it goes to the Treasury it takes 2, 3, 4, 5 days for it to come to the mother.

Now one way in which you can do it is that when the money is to be paid in for the Family Court if they have a telephone number for the person, to call the person. Now which means that if you do that you have to increase the extent of the vote which you have for telephones, because it is a lot of calls you will have to be making and you will be making fixed line to cell. So individual mothers have to have an obligation on their part to check and organisations have to encourage this, but we will have to look at it to see whether we could strengthen the vote to do that. That is I talk to Honourable Member of enhancing the system which we have and I know that the Ministry of... that the Family Court which is under the Minister of Legal Affairs and also the Treasury under the Minister of Finance, they are one and the same person.

I am very concerned about this issue which you have raised so I have asked them from before to talk to one another to see if there is ways when you have to pay over the money because there will be monies which will have to be paid over at some time, because even if you were to call people some would not come in at the same time and Government cannot have its money..., the Honourable Leader of the Opposition as Minister of Finance, he is not going to want to have the money which supposed to come into the Accountant General's Account lying about inside of a vault or some facility which you have at the Family Court. There is too much temptation there.

So I am addressing..., you notice..., I am giving you what the system is and saying that we have to try to improve it, but some of the practical problems which exist and I am suggesting ways and means in which we can possibly deal with this. I want to assure Honourable Members, I am very sensitive to this question, because I know the problem with single mothers. I represented many of them, as a lawyer in the past and as everybody knows in this country, I am a rootical man, so I know what is happening with people, so these are things which I check and find out about to see what is happening to see how we can improve it for them. But I am glad the question was raised as a practical matter so it provides me with an opportunity to give explanation.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question no. 19 Honourable Senator Lewis.

19. *Dr. the Honourable Linton A. Lewis, (Opposition Senator) asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, National Security, Economic Development, Airports and Seaports, Grenadines and Legal Affairs:*

- a. *whether any investor, officer of investor or other person associated with Buccament Bay Resort has been granted citizenship of the State of St. Vincent and the Grenadines;*
- b. *if so, how many persons were granted citizenship and what were the nationalities;*
- c. *whether they were residents of St. Vincent and the Grenadines prior to becoming citizens and if not;*
- d. *on what basis were they eligible for citizenship and what were the factors taken into account in determining whether or not citizenship should be granted.*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Prime Minister, Minister of National Security.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, the rules of this House under Standing Order 20(1)(b) begins by saying:

“A question shall not include the names of persons or any statements of facts, unless they be necessary to render the questions intelligible.”

It follows therefore that the rules they are telling me and I have read the learning on this in the Bible of Parliamentary Procedures that we must not call people name in this House in relation to whether they granted citizenship or not granted, I am sure that if somebody comes and says to me in a question in the House that it has been stated that a building which houses British American Offices is too close to the road, not set back enough and whether Planning permission was given to that individual to do the thing, I tell them I am not answering that question. The Planning Authorities has a discretion and the Planning Authorities will deal with that matter as it came before them.

Similarly, I am not going to talk about an individual, it is public knowledge that there is an individual who is associated with Buccama who is granted citizenship and everybody knows that he is a British citizen, but for anybody to ask me about the basis that I exercise my discretion in applying the law, I apply the law, read the citizenship law. I do not have to give an explanation to this House about an individual person. What is happening now? I mean, why do we want to put things in this..., enclose things which are of a particular nature and you just want to play politics with it.

Mr. Speaker, all this hullabaloo is made when in 1997 the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Citizenship Honourary Citizenship Fees Regulation was passed and the Honourary Citizenship Regulations were also passed 1999 where all you had to do was to buy a citizenship, pay for it up front, pay money for it up front. Here, what the investment project had to do you know, Mr. Speaker, investment for an approved investment project not less than \$100,000 and if for the head of the household a fair amount into \$30,000 for the spouse, \$15,000 these are the investments and then the particular fees, I mean, some real minimal sums. So it bind a passport, it bind citizenship for \$100,000 and a little bit of money on top of it for a fee, eh? And people who passed that which I repealed have the gumption to want to ask me about how I applied the citizenship law of this country [applause]. I say to them, “Read the citizenship law and see the authority which is vested in the Minister responsible for Immigration.” When people elect Ralph Gonsalves in successive elections, they have confidence and trust in me as to how citizenship is dealt with. How is it that nothing unsavory has ever been spoken about anybody in relation to citizenship?

From the beginning, the Opposition opposed Buccament Resort. It is a phantom project said one, they led a protest against him, but what I want them to realise is this, you know, Mr. Speaker, you know people who do not have experience that is why I made a point two sittings ago that nobody on the Opposition side has it in them to do the job of Prime Minister for this country, they have to wheel and come again [applause], not one of them. I will say this, in the late 1980s, an Alien Land Holding Licence was given to a group of investors including a gentleman who had owned P.S.V now of blessed memory, they were supposed to do certain things, invest \$15 million, they did not do any investments.

In 2005 we moved to the court for what is prescribed under the law, forfeiture, and the court gave it, they went to the Court of Appeal, Court of Appeal say, “no” the forfeiture is in order. You know even after the High Court acted, the American Ambassador one day said to me after a parade, an Independence Parade, she wants to talk to me about the expropriation that is what she used, the expropriation of Americans’ property that is what they called it you know. So I say, “please you can come to the residence of the Prime Minister,” she came with her Deputy and a young man who was the political officer. I said, “Expropriation is not known to the law of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.” There are two ways property can come other than if you purchase it if you are the state:

1. By acquisition to which there is a law and you have to pay reasonable compensation within a reasonable time, and
2. Forfeiture.

The law says forfeiture, but we do not take it that the Executives can do it; we interpret that as meaning liable to forfeiture that is why we go to the court. The young man who was advising her told her that the Prime Minister is correct. That brought an end to the discussion.

Now I just want to say this, if Tom Brown is a citizen of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, nobody can come from a foreign land to tell me that any property in any situation is being dealt with in a particular way for their citizen. You know I just do not understand how some people..., this is a project where the Opposition is willing it to fail, they willing it to fail, it has challenges, but without projects like those, how are we going to move into the new period in delivering services? That is one of them, there are others, I just talk to the Qataris two weeks ago, including interestingly I want the Qataris to see if they can develop Isle A Quatre, I wish if they can develop it, because it will be a major boost to tourism and in addition to other projects.

I give context, but I also give text and the text I am giving is this, if the Honourable Senator Lewis wants to know how discretion is exercised in relation to the grant of citizenship under the law, rather than just reading it theoretically he must become the Prime Minister, which is an unlikely event. I am not answering the way I exercise my discretion, all I can tell you it was done under the law of St. Vincent and the Grenadines [applause].

**HHONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question no..., supplementary?

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE LINTON LEWIS:** Yes Mr. Speaker, but I have not received an answer to the question and I wish to draw, Mr. Speaker, attention to Standing Order 21(4);

“The Member to whom a question is put may decline to answer a question if the publication of the answer would in his opinion be contrary to the public interest.”

**HHONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yes, so what is the point you are making?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE LINTON LEWIS:** I am wondering if this is contrary for the public interest.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I know the rules better than my learned friend. If I wanted to tell him that I will tell him that I am not going there. I am saying I am not discussing an individual person's business. The individual person you are asking about, because it is there in the public domain I tell that we..., who you are talking about it is somebody from Buccament Project and he is British. I answered those, but you are then asking me now details as to what did I consider to grant citizenship and if he was first a permanent resident or not. What is this, an inquisition of personal business? I say to you, read the law and you will see under different sections of the law in which citizenship would legitimately been granted to this individual and I have acted within the framework of the law.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you and to answer the question as..., please have a seat Honourable Member..., to answer the question as to the point of order, I do not see this as being germane to the issue. Question no. 21 Honourable Senator Lewis. That is not yours? I am sorry eh.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE LINTON LEWIS:** Yes.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Oh.

21. *Dr. the Honourable Linton A. Lewis, (Opposition Senator) asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, National Security, Economic Development, Airports and Seaports, Grenadines and Legal Affairs:*

- a. *whether all persons living in the Glamorgan area of the East St. George Constituency whose properties were damaged during Hurricane Tomas and who sought assistance through NEMO were given assistance towards rebuilding those properties;*
- b. *it not, how many persons have not been assisted;*
- c. *whether there are any plans to assist those persons; and*
- d. *when will such assistance be given*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Prime Minister, Minister of National Security.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, NEMO has trained damage assessors and they do initial damage assessments and they categorise assessment after they have done it initially and also when they have done it conclusively.

Level 1, if there is no significant damage to the property; this is usually damage ranging from a few hundred dollars to about five thousand dollars.

Level 2, there is some minor damage to the structure.

Level 3, the structure has experienced major damage and

Level 4, the structure is totally destroyed.

Clearly, first priority goes to persons who have received level 3 and level 4, damage. This is any rational system of rehabilitation does that and homes additionally of the mentally, the elderly and physically challenged persons and those involved in younger children also become a priority.

Hurricane Tomas Reports – the summary of damage to houses from Tomas 1,986. Level 1 was 689 but in the constituency of East St. George there were ten which were assessed to be level 1, ten assessed to be level 2, zero level 3 and 1 in level 4. In Glamorgan there were two families which received level 1, damage and they were not prioritized, but I want to say in Glamorgan there are two persons up there who received assistance though they were not prioritized and in the whole of East St. George 22 of them. I have the list here.

Now I got..., this morning a lady came by me, they say they heard on the radio, I do not know which radio station that they hear about this question and they said that there is a lady who is being inquired about, let the man who asked the question fix the woman place. That is the paper I have in front of me here. I do not know anything, all I could tell you are the official report that two persons in Glamorgan were assisted. I am not telling you their names and 22 in East St. George. Incidentally they are supporters of yours who brought it for me eh, who you fall out with [laughter].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Supplementary Honourable Member?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE LINTON LEWIS:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Okay go right ahead.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Like you going fix the woman place [laughter].

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE LINTON LEWIS:** Mr. Prime Minister to you, are you aware Mr. Prime Minister of that lady the family of seven living in the house, one of those in Glamorgan that suffered major damage during Hurricane Tomas and they made a number of reports to NEMO and to the Ministry of Housing.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I do not know..., I saw two persons get assistance, and I do not know who this other person is.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE LINTON LEWIS:** Margaret Bradshaw.

I really did not want the person's name you know, but the damage there is a level 1 damage. I have a list of the level 1 damage there that is what they have here \$4,850 it is under \$5000 I did not want to call the lady name but I have a list of all in East St. George who got help and those who got damaged. But I want to say this, Mr. Speaker, it will be well established that I will not know the case in Glamorgan or anywhere else individually.

If an Honourable Member of this House want to find out about Ms. Bradshaw, all they had to do is call, if you checked NEMO and NEMO has not moved, call the Permanent Secretary or call me, the Member for..., the Honourable Senator Lewis calls me, he has my number, he calls me for all sorts of things.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE LINTON LEWIS:** Mr. Speaker, that is totally untruth Mr. Speaker.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Sorry, well I call you about all sorts of things then [interjection] no, no, no, no, I call you about all sorts of things, you do not really call me, you never call me, but we talk about all sorts of things then. I am not going to..., I mean but if you want to say you never call me to talk to me about anything I mean I would allow you to get a break on that, but I know you would not be speaking the truth.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you sir. Honourable Members, we have come to the end of question time and I [interjection] [striking of the gavel] Honourable Members, I know we are about to suspend until as we say next week, but there is an issue I want to deal with very briefly in relation to questions and I am doing it from the Standing Orders which says..., and I am doing this because is a tendency to be very contentious among Members and to be argumentative in relation to this whole issue of questions and I just want to remind Honourable Members that..., and I would hope that the Honourable Member for West Kingstown if he is not feeling well would stop lying on his desk, it is sort of very disrespectful. If you are not feeling well maybe you can leave, but I think it is disrespectful for you to be lying on your desk at this time, especially when I am addressing this Honourable House.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Mr. Speaker, I find it very strange you notice this, but I have a headache and I am resting my head anticipating the..., so I do not know what you are talking about.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** The question is, I am addressing is that...,

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** But I am listening to you [laughter].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Striking of the gavel. All right, it is a simple thing. The Member said he has a headache and I accepted that I am not arguing about it.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Yes, I understand that but the Honourable Minister for Education say how we...,

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Well I do not know.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** You are going to make a song and dance on that?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** As I was saying we tend to be too argumentative and contentious when it comes to the issue of questions and I want to remind Members that Standing Order 20(1)(d) says and quite clearly:

“No Member shall address the House upon any question, and a question shall not be made the pretext for a debate.”

And I want that to be understood, because sometimes we tend when question..., we tend to be addressing the House on those issues and then we try and make a debate out of it, but order 20(1)(d) is quite clear and I just

want to bring that to the attention of Members and if this continues and I have to rule you out of order, then of course I certainly will. That is all I intend to say on these issues.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker...; that could be none contentious.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I agree with that [interjection] just hold on, just hold on. I remember a senior statesman in this Parliament where I was a Senator, he stood up in this Parliament and he was questioned about a question he answered and he said, “Whereas I am bound to answer question I am not bound to answer them truthfully.” A senior statesman stood in this Parliament where I was a Member, a Senator and made that pronouncement [interjection] no not necessarily [laughter] not necessarily [interjection] [laughter] Honourable Prime Minister.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Mr. Speaker, I understand that Parliament is due to resume next Tuesday.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yes.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** I just want to inform you that I am unlikely to be able to attend on Tuesday because the people of West Kingstown have a very important function on Wednesday which is a public holiday and I was going this morning, Mr. Speaker, to invite you to come with all Parliamentarians to the \$5 meal, but having considered all things today I want to still encourage you to come, but I will charge you more than \$5.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I have no problem with that but I will pay you \$20 [laughter].

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Is that an invitation to everyone? [Interjection] oh I thought it was just for the Speaker [laughter] all right. That is a good note on which to end.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House do stand suspended until next Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> July, 2012 at 10:00 a. m.

**Question put and agreed to.  
House suspended at  
Until Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> July at 10:00 a. m.**