

No. 1

Wednesday

Third Session

28th November, 2012

Ninth Parliament

SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

THE

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

ADVANCE COPY

OFFICIAL REPORT

CONTENTS

Wednesday 28th November, 2012

Prayers	5
Proclamation	5
Obituaries	5
Congratulatory Remarks	11
Announcement by the Speaker	12
Minutes	12
Petitions	12
Questions for Oral Answers	12
Suspension	45

THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

OFFICIAL REPORT

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

FIRST SITTING

28th NOVEMBER, 2012

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

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

PRAYERS

MR. SPEAKER IN THE CHAIR

Honourable Hendrick Alexander

Present

MEMBERS OF CABINET

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

Member for North Central Windward

Attorney General
Honourable Judith Jones-Morgan

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

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
Honourable Dr. Douglas Slater

Government Senator

Honourable Arnhim Eustace
Leader of the Opposition

Member for East Kingstown

ST VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

WEDNESDAY 28th NOVEMBER, 2012

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Pray be seated.

PROCLAMATION

HONOURABLE NICOLE HERBERT (Clerk of the House): A proclamation by the Governor General.

WHEREAS by subsection (1) of section 47 of the Constitution of St Vincent and the Grenadines Cap 10 of the Revised Laws of St Vincent and the Grenadines 2009 Edition, it is provided that each session of parliament shall be held at such place within St Vincent and the Grenadines, and shall begin at such time as the Governor General shall appoint by proclamation;

AND WHEREAS it is expedient that the session of the said parliament shall be held at the Court House, Kingstown and shall begin on the 20th day of November, 2012 at 9:00 o'clock in the Court Room, now therefore, I Sir Frederick Nathaniel Ballantyne G.C.M.G Governor General of St Vincent and the Grenadines do hereby appoint the said Court House as the place at which the said session shall be held on Wednesday the 28th day of November, 2012 at 9:00 o'clock in the Court Room at the time in which the said session shall begin.

Given under my hand with the public seal of St Vincent and the Grenadines on this 19th day of November 2012 and in the sixty first year of the reign of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

God Save the Queen.

OBITUARIES

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, before obituaries may I crave your indulgence?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Go ahead.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I asked for this indulgence to indicate to Honourable Members what is the schedule in respect of the work of the parliament concerning the Estimates and the Budget debates, the debate on the Appropriation Bill. Today Mr. Speaker, which was the date scheduled for us to debate the Estimates, as I had indicated to the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, as indicated to the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, to you Mr. Speaker, and the Honourable Clerk, because the Estimates were delivered to Honourable Members on Monday, I believe even maybe one and two Members got them on Tuesday: that clearly there was insufficient time for proper preparation to be done in respect of today's debate and we are always mindful about that, Mr. Speaker. I think all Members are. I owe the Honourable House an explanation as to the lateness.

When I left here on Wednesday in the afternoon for Dominica to chair the meetings of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), the Authority Meeting, I was given the assurance that on Thursday in the afternoon the Estimates would be sent to the Printery. The Estimates did not get to the Printery I think until on Friday sometime after lunch and it is a long document. If we were to get it out on a Saturday it is still a challenge but we can make it the Saturday before the Wednesday but once that day had passed I realised that there would have been a difficulty. I have been advised that there were some delays in the production at the Printery despite the herculean efforts of the staff at the Printery whom I have to thank, so that is basically the reason.

The second thing, Mr. Speaker is that if we even had the Estimates on time I would have craved the indulgence of this Honourable House to do a suspension because at around midday 12:30 the latest I would be required to leave this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, because of a commitment to attend the funeral of my first cousin *Stilly* Fraser and I am on the programme to pay a tribute. Of course, as you appreciate, Mr. Speaker, family is important and our civilization is enraptured with life and production but it also about dying and the rituals as to how we bury the dead, and as a consequence I am required to be there both for *Stilly* and my father his uncle and for his mother of blessed memory, my aunt.

So, Mr. Speaker, here we are today the Estimates would not be laid in the House today on the table for the simple reason that the Finance Committee which was to be held yesterday and which was convened it would have been an act of bad governance to have had the Finance Committee even whilst the Estimates had just been delivered the day before. So, the Finance Committee Meeting was summoned but it is on Thursday of this week and Honourable Members have been so notified.

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank from the bottom of my heart the extraordinary efforts of the Director General of Finance and Planning, Mr. Edwards; Edmond Jackson the Budget Director; and Laura Anthony Browne the Director of Planning; and their respective staff for their extraordinary efforts in getting the Estimates prepared and brought to finality. And of course much more widely the Permanent Secretaries, the technical staff throughout the Public Service. And Mr. Speaker, because I do a lot of consultations, I seek to have all the consultations completed before the document is sent to the Printery and the consultation went up to the Tuesday night before I left on Wednesday, sorry the Monday night before I left on Wednesday. And there was a consultation on the Tuesday morning with the financial institutions.

Mr. Speaker, you know we make all the efforts to do things different and better, there was a time as you know, Mr. Speaker, when I was in this House in the Opposition that I used to get the Estimates the same day when the Budget was presented. You yourself were here, Mr. Speaker, as an Honourable Senator and you know that was par for the course and you had to respond the next morning both to the Estimates and the Appropriation Bill debate because all were done in a roll up fashion. We caused that to be changed in accordance with the Constitution.

Mr. Speaker, so that is the Budget debate, sorry the Estimates debate on Tuesday at 9:00 o'clock next week. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the debate on the Appropriation Bill there are two considerations which I have taken into account to have the debate on the

Appropriation Bill on Monday 14th January and I had that discussion with you, Mr. Speaker, and I had that discussion also with the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines. I tried to get the Leader of the Opposition but his phone was not ... I was not able to get through, either on the main phone or the cell.

I do so for two reasons, Mr. Speaker, first as Chairman of the OECS it is likely that in that week beginning the 10th which would be the time which we have to do the debate, Mr. Speaker, on Monday 10th in that week I am likely to be on one maybe two missions for the OECS and that had been planned originally. And the second, Mr. Speaker, I was touched by the report that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition who sadly is not with us today because I think the injury of the shoulder was a little worst as he told the newspaper, as he told the media than originally thought. And I think it is fair and reasonable also for a certain time to pass for him to recover fully to be able to participate fully in the debate.

Mr. Speaker, I assure Honourable Members and I assure the public that having the Appropriation Bill on the 14th January in no way compromises the work of the Government, because we would have passed the Estimates and the Estimates would provide the basis for the work plan of the Public Servants. So when this is passed on Tuesday next week between now and the end of the year, the Public Servants would be at work in respect of their respective work plans fine-tuning them because they would have had their work plans in their presentations in the meetings preparatory to the Estimates. Because the Law allows for the Appropriation Bill to be presented up to one month after the conclusion of the financial year, which ends on the 31st December in any particular year.

And what happens in January, Mr. Speaker, before the passage of the Appropriation Bill is that the Law allows the Government to spend one twelfth of the approved Estimates of the preceding year in the month of January that is to say the one twelfth of this year's Estimates. And in respect of this year's Capital Expenditure any amount of the Capital Expenditure in the Estimates which have been passed for 2013 could be spent but each has to be done under the specific Warrant of the Minister of Finance and that is just a very straightforward procedural step. So I assure Honourable Members that there is no disruption whatsoever of the plan of work of the Government in accordance with the Estimates which is scheduled to be passed on Tuesday next week.

Mr. Speaker, I should point out that I have also spoken personally to His Excellency the Governor General who as Head of State, Her Majesty's representative has a vested interest in both of these matters.

- a. From the standpoint of his proclamation today.
- b. And of course he has to be available for the Throne Speech

And in any event I am required under the Constitution to advise His Excellency on matters relating to the governance of the country. Those are the matters I would like to speak on preliminary, Mr. Speaker. I am obliged. I do not know if there is anything which I have left out which you would wish me to make any comment on. I cannot think of any myself, or if any Member, if the Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines has. I think I have covered all the bases. I am obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. [Interjection] Yes, of course.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just briefly, to note for the record of the House the obvious that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition is absent today recuperating from the injuries he suffered to his arm and his shoulder sometime ago, and he sends his regrets. Also the Member for Southern Grenadines and the Member for North Leeward who both will be absent today on pressing and important personal matters and send their regrets.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: May I indicate that the Honourable Minister for Foreign Affairs he is out of the state. He attended the meeting of Foreign Ministers in Suriname: the African Caribbean and Pacific Group, but unfortunately his cousin Maurice Slater who is head of Housing and Land Development Corporation, the General Manager fell ill and had to seek medical attention in the United States, and his cousin the Minister of Foreign Affairs who is also a trained medical doctor sought my permission and received it, Mr. Speaker, to travel to the United States from Suriname in order to be with his cousin and to help him settle in for his hospitalisation.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay that is it. Obits: Obituaries, Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to acknowledge the passing of *Stilly* Fraser and of Comrade Scipio. I would have an opportunity to speak at the funerals of both of these gentlemen. I also, Mr. Speaker, would like to acknowledge the passing too of Mc Cauley Daniel the brother of the Honourable Minister of Housing and Lands. Mc Cauley is going to be buried in Biabou on Sunday, Saturday, sorry, in the afternoon and I extend sympathy condolences to all the family and friends of these three individuals and of course a very special condolence and our sympathy to our dear brother who is here in parliament, if you would permit me to just use his name Montgomery Daniel.

We have a short day ahead of us, Mr. Speaker, with a lot of questions so I do not want to be detailed on the obituaries just to acknowledge them.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay. All right, Honourable Senator Francis.

HONOURABLE JULLIAN FRANCIS: Mr. Speaker, also to acknowledge the passing of Miss Ann Mitchell, I do not think many persons of the younger generation would know who she is but she has spent considerable times over the years ... She resided just below the Leader of the Opposition and she comes from the old school of that group of good old women, young women in their days with the Milton Cato administration and she was a stalwart of the St Vincent and the Grenadines Labour Party. In recent years she has been because of the age more restricted to her home in Ratho Mill and I want to extend on behalf of my family, the Unity Labour Party sincerest condolences to remaining relatives and to her close friends and may her good soul rest in peace.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Central Kingstown.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise on behalf of Members on this side of the House, Mr. Speaker, and on my own behalf to express condolences to the named members of named persons who have departed this side of life and have been expressed by Members on the other side this morning. I speak of the passing of *Stilly* Fraser an outstanding Vincentian businessman, social activist and one who has contributed a tremendous amount of time and effort and activity and successfully so too, Mr. Speaker to this blessed land of ours.

His work in particular at the famous Aquatic is now legendary and many would proclaim that it is the best cultural experiences they have ever had when it was under his stewardship. *Stilly* Fraser as we all know comes from an illustrious Vincentian family. It is always dangerous in calling names but there is Ken Boyea, there is Betty who is an Ambassador in the United States of America, there is Ann Joshua, there is Keith of my time: contemporary, there is Cally I think in Barbados, departed brother before him Bucky: an extensive family. So, one can reasonably well imagine that the attendance today in Bellevue and Colonarie and in Byera would be little short of a carnival. And I use the word carnival here guardedly: meaning very large numbers of participants and onlookers.

I had the privilege in earlier times through business to do business with him, and clearly his contribution would be missed in St Vincent and the Grenadines and we express our condolences to his grieving relatives and friends this morning. As I said before we acknowledge the passing of Mc Cauley Daniel, brother of the member of the House, Ann Mitchell who I knew quite well as neighbour to the Leader of the Opposition and I think the other name was Scipio of Largo Height, you cannot miss him. I saw him a few times in the hospital and I know that efforts were made to assist him and send him off to Cuba and he came back and he seemed to have been resigned to his fate. The last time I visited him he did ask me to get him two batteries for his radio because he was that kind of political activist that he would listen to the last to the end.

All know that he was a ULP warrior but he fought the game fairly and squarely. My condolences to his wife and on behalf of the Leader of the Opposition and all of us on this side we hope that they are all resting comfortably in the arms of Abraham. Much Obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Honourable Member for West St George.

HONOURABLE CECIL MCKIE: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to offer condolences to the family of the late Edna Eileen Hadaway of Villa, who died on the 24th November at the age of 88 years. Edna was the last of five sisters who established business in Kingstown first opposite the police station in Middle Street in 1947 and after about six years operation they moved higher up in Middle Street to a location that they still occupy up to today. Actually some of the members would have grown up at the residence as well.

Edna started sewing at the age of nine years as was the case with all of her other sisters and they made all of the items that were sold in the store, following on the footsteps of their father who migrated to Trinidad and opened a Shirt Factory. Shirts were sold here in St Vincent and were well known for many years. In addition to being a very kind hearted proprietor offering credit to many individuals who could not complete their purchase at the store, she also was a lover of property and would have constructed many properties throughout St Vincent and the Grenadines. I think many persons would know of the Hadaway Apartments at Villa and which is very popular at carnival time for persons and groups from the Caribbean. She was also a lover of flowers and of pets. In fact, the many cats and dogs she owned would have shown signs just prior to her death, so the family was forewarned that something was about to happen.

Edna of course, would be remembered for making a very outstanding contribution not only to business but also to the community at Villa where she was very well loved. And in fact, she had no children of her own but played a very motherly role to many of her nieces and nephews. This morning we pay tribute to Edna Eileen Hadaway and wish the family strength in their time of sorrow.

I would also like to simply recognise Faith Martin of Fairbaine, who also passed away over the past few weeks. Much obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member for Central Kingstown.

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Yes, I just seek your indulgence, Mr. Speaker, I have just committed one of those political sins and you know that charity begins at home, Mr. Speaker. I left Sharpes in the rocks where Alban [inaudible] a good supporter resides, and passed during the weekend.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Who is the person's name?

HONOURABLE ST CLAIR LEACOCK: Alban Ellis. I think he had prostate cancer and he passed on with that and Reese all the way over to Largo Height, you know those things he would never forgive and so I [laughs] make sure, Mr. Speaker, that I acknowledge that passing and extend condolences to his family. I think the funeral takes place this Sunday, Faith Deliverance, Pastor Louis, in Sharpes. May he too, Mr. Speaker, rest in peace. Thank you very much. [Interjection]

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: [Laughs] Honourable Member for Central Leeward.

HONOURABLE MAXWELL CHARLES: Thank you. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I feel compelled to stand here this morning to offer my condolences to the family of the late Mc Cauley Daniel. I sympathize with his family and also his brother Montgomery Daniel the Honourable Member. You know when someone your age passes one is always reminded of his own mortality [laughs]. Mc Cauley Daniel and I entered the Boys' Grammar School in the year 1966 September and I would always remember him as my friend. We were both country boys coming to town, we worked together, we solved mathematical problems together and he was always known as a cool customer and so today as we bid him good bye I want to again say: may he rest in peace. Thank you.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay that seems to be it.

CONGRATULATORY REMARKS

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

HONOURABLE CECIL MCKIE: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to offer congratulations to the Ministry of Tourism Sports and Culture and the Tourism Authority for putting on an action packed week of activities to celebrate Tourism Week 2012. The week will be celebrated under the theme "Tourism Is Everybody's Business: Live it, Love it, Embrace it". And while I extend an invitation to Members of this House as well as to the general public to participate in activities of the Tourism Authority and the Ministry of Tourism, I will just like to highlight some of the activities for the week, which commenced on Sunday 25th November with a church service at the Faith Temple Church - the Minister's message.

We also had the Minister's message read to the schools, we had a senior citizens field trip with the Biabou group on Monday and also the Bequia Tourism Association did a cultural welcome to visitors to Bequia on that day. Yesterday Tuesday you had Mr. Storm Halbich of the St. Vincent Grammar School coming out on top in the Secondary's School Youth Congress, and today Wednesday we have the Bequia Tourism Association again doing the Bequia Primary School's Debate; and we will have school visits by Mustique schools and schools on St Vincent and the Grenadines; and we will have a very special welcome put on by the Royal St Vincent and the Grenadines Police Band to the Cruise Line: the Cruise Ship Ventura. And those of us who came through Kingstown this morning would have seen the massive vessel at the Kingstown Port which has a capacity of 3600 persons; so a very special day for us today as we welcome our visitors.

On Thursday we would have the Cocktail and Awards Ceremony hosted by the St Vincent and the Grenadines Hotel and Tourism Association. On Friday Exhibition and Cultural Presentation at Heritage Square beginning at 10:30 a.m. and on Saturday we would have the Street 20 Cricket at the Arnos Vale Court Sporting Complex beginning at 5:00 p.m. and a number of teams would have registered for that competition. So, once again I am inviting all to participate in these series of activities put on by the Ministry of Tourism under the theme "Tourism is Everybody's Business, Live it, Love it, Embrace it". Much obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. No further congratulatory remarks.

CONFIRMATION OF THE MINUTES

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that the Minutes of this sitting of this Honourable House held on the 15th November, 2012 be confirmed.

Question put and agreed to

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members I think there is a matter I would have to address but I would rather we deal with the more substantive matters on the Order Paper and let us see how time permits in relation to that other issue. So, that is just my answer.

STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No statements.

PETITIONS

HONOURABLE MAXWELL CHARLES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to lay before the House the humble Petition of the Trustees of the Immanuel Christ Gospel Church. Secondly, the humble Petition of the Trustees of the Redeemed Christian Church of God Winners Sanctuary and the humble Petition of the Trustees of the Grace Community Baptist Church. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWERS

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 1 in the name of the Honourable Leader of the Opposition who is not here but would be asked by the Deputy Leader.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

- 1. Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development, Legal and Grenadines Affairs:*

Could the Honourable Prime Minister give an update on the present situation with regard to the Canadian Visa Requirement imposed on nationals of St Vincent and the Grenadines, particularly with regard to any reply to the Prime Minister's letter to the Government of Canada on this issue?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, as I had reported to this House and to the nation that on the 13th September, 2012 the day after the imposition by Canada of a visa requirement on nationals of St Vincent and the Grenadines, I wrote the Honourable Steven Harper, Prime Minister of Canada on the subject. Within a week or so thereafter just after a week, on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly in September, 2012 I held discussions with Minister Ablonsky and her officials and so reported to this Honourable House.

As a consequence of both the letter which I wrote to Prime Minister Harper and the discussions with the Minister on the margins of the United Nations General Assembly, the High Commission's office of Trinidad and Tobago for Canada dispatched the Canadian Liaison Officer at that High Commission, his name is Mr. Paul Jameson to St. Vincent and the Grenadines to visit us and he came in early October by mid October. Mr. Jameson held discussions with several senior officials, including the Honourable Attorney General, the Registrar of the High Courts who has responsibility for the Civil Registry, in this case birth certificates and of course discussions were held with the Chief Immigration Officer.

The main objective of the visit of the Canada official were first to have an understanding and appreciation of our laws governing the change of name in particular deed polls, birth certificates in other words the source documents. Secondly, to examine the process involved in the issuance of passports and the sharing and exchange of information relating to border control matter, and thirdly the procedure and laws governing the issuance of passports along with the various security features, checks and balances built into the system of issuing passports.

Mr. Jameson is expected to submit his findings to the Canadian Border Security: the Immigration Authorities in Canada after, which the necessary feedback in response to my communication, I expect, would be provided in relation to the imposition of the visas restrictions on Vincentian nationals. Mr. Speaker, I want to report that the Honourable Attorney General in her advice to me on the meeting with Mr. Jameson, which lasted in excess of an hour, that Mr. Jameson declared himself to have been quite satisfied with the manner in which St Vincent and the Grenadines address their source documents and the passports, the entire systems and the issuance.

I want to say this, Mr. Speaker, the Government of St Vincent and the Grenadines reiterates its insistence that the declaration of the evening of the 12th by the Minister responsible for these matters in Canada, where he lumped St Vincent and the Grenadines with St Lucia and a few other African countries and declared them as having the key reasons: the main reason or a key reason not the main one, "a" he said, the issue of unreliable travel documents. We reject that as far as this government is concerned that is a bum rap. Indeed the British

Government's Border Control Agency had come and given a clean bill of health to both the source documents and the passport system that we have.

Further, Mr. Speaker, two weeks after the Canadian Government had so made the declaration of visas restrictions; I dispatched our foreign Minister to Brussels where discussions were ongoing in respect of Schengen Visa Waivers to twenty eight countries. Twenty six of them in the European Union, sorry, twenty five of them in the European Union and three of them who are making applications to the European Union because the Schengen Visa Waivers they do not include Ireland or the United Kingdom, they have their own separate regimes. And our Foreign Minister raised very frankly with the Europeans in Brussels about what the Canadians had done and enquired whether this was going to have any effect on their decision, which had not yet been made by the European Commission on the matter of providing a Schengen Visa Waiver for St Vincent and the Grenadines and he was told flatly no that it would have no impact because the Europeans themselves had done their own enquiries and investigations and was satisfied in every material particular with our source documents and the system in issuing the passport and the passport itself.

Mr. Speaker, I want to remind everyone that the reasons proffered by the Foreign Ministry of Canada in their diplomatic note to us did not, I emphasise, did not include any reference whatsoever to unreliable travel document. The reasons given were the excessive refugee claims by Vincentians and also the immigration violations by Vincentians in Canada.

Having had a meeting with Mrs. Ablonsky I am satisfied that when she informed us - because I chaired that meeting as chairman of the OECS in New York that it cost Canada CAD\$50,000 on an average for every single refugee application and to keep the applicant in Canada until the whole process is completed. Well, clearly if you have 5000 applications over an 11/12 year period from St Vincent and the Grenadines at CAD\$50,000 that is CAD\$250 million; If you have 3000 from St Lucia in that same period that is CAD\$150 million, clearly it cannot be expected reasonably that a country will bear this.

And the suggestion I put in the letter to Prime Minister Harper is that the Law in Canada should be changed and they are considering this. Apparently even before I wrote them they were considering it, to have St Lucia and St Vincent and like countries listed in a schedule that from these countries you cannot have refugee application made because of the nature of our countries and the regime: the legal regime which we have here.

We must acknowledge that in Canada there is a big political constituency defending refugees and there is an industry as a consequence which has grown up on refugees, it is called the refugee industry with unscrupulous lawyers' middle men and women of all kinds seeking to take advantage of persons who want to stay in Canada and for absolutely no cogent reason want to ask for refugee status even in a context where it is very liberal in Canada, Mr. Speaker. It is very liberal in Canada, Mr. Speaker, the Laws and the interpretation of the Laws by the Supreme Court within the context of the Charter of Rights in the Canadian Constitution and I have taken time to read these matters. And it is absolutely amazing the liberalism and the generosity of those laws of which people, people take advantage they misuse and they abuse it.

Of course, I cannot tell the Canadians how to run their regime but what I can say is do not give St Vincent and the Grenadines a bum rap. And the extent to which our passports are reliable and our travel documents are reliable is evident in the fact that the European Commission has made a decision to waive visa requirements for Vincentians to go to twenty eight countries; twenty five in the European Union and three which are connected to the European Union in this Schengen visa regime and they are satisfied.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that this regime will be put in place within three to six months because that is what I have been advised that the procedure to get everything through the European parliament, the European Council and then of course for an agreement to be signed between the European Union, and St Vincent and the Grenadines. I want to say this, Mr. Speaker, I have asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to work with the Ministry of National Security to see which countries of those twenty eight we require visas for so that we could abolish the visas in relation to any of those countries, so that the same right that we would have to enter Europe those citizens would have the right to enter St Vincent and the Grenadines without visas.

I repeat the Minister who spoke on the night in Canada and put the matter on the website on the 12th that that was a bum rap for St Vincent and the Grenadines. Our passports are reliable, our systems are reliable, our source documents are reliable that from time to time they may be breached by unscrupulous persons that do not detract from the fact that they are reliable and they have been so assessed to be reliable by a very stringent adjudicator the British Border Control Agency. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, I want the Canadians to tell me as I have said to the British anywhere you see any weakness in our system that you would suggest that we strengthen them, tighten them I will do so: this government would do so. This is a migrant country as I have said before, if there are two books inside of a house which are treasured one is the Bible, and the King James Version just had four hundred years celebration earlier this year and the second one is the passport. The King James Version is authentic and reliable we cannot ever get the passport as reliable as the King James Version and as authentic but we will do the best we can in this earthly city. I am obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 2, Honourable Member. Again this question is from the Honourable Leader of the Opposition and it is being asked by the Honourable Member for Northern Grenadines.

2. *Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development, Legal and Grenadines Affairs:*
 - a. *Could the Honourable Prime Minister please indicate whether there will be any salary negotiation with the Civil Service for the period 2012-2014; and*
 - b. *if so, when is such negotiation likely to take place?*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, the long and short answer is that they will be negotiations, this is a Labour Government and we champion negotiations and collective bargaining as so indicated in a meeting a few weeks ago to the representatives of the Public Service Union. What the outcome of those negotiations would be in respect of any salary increase for 2012-2014 that is an entirely different matter subject to negotiations but there are also non-wage issues which usually form part of a collective bargaining agreement, so we expect those to start some time early in the New Year and I indicated that to the officials in the Ministry of Finance who would spearhead this negotiation.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 3, Honourable Member for Northern Grenadines.

3. *Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday Member for Northern Grenadines asked the Honourable Prime Minister, Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, National Security, Legal and Grenadines Affairs and Seaports:*

Within recent weeks vessels bringing cargo into the country intended to be delivered directly to Bequia were required to discharge the cargo in Kingstown for inspection by the Customs Department, resulting in additional shipping cost to stakeholders. Will the Prime Minister please state:-

- a. why this was done; and*
- b. whether this new procedure of requiring cargo shipped to Bequia to be discharged and inspected in Kingstown will continue?*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to read the answer that I got from the Comptroller of Customs and Excise and having read the answer I would make a comment because the answer tells me that something needs to be done. In fact, if I had any doubts before that something needs to be done the answer itself confirms it for me and I want to read the answer. Background, please Honourable Members, Mr. Speaker, I just want them to bear with me because this is an important issue.

“St Vincent and the Grenadines have thirteen ports of entry, eight seaports and five airports. On mainland St Vincent the two major seaports for the handling and processing of regional and international marine cargo are Kingstown and Campden Park. A limited amount of marine cargo is also handled and processed in the Grenadine Islands of Bequia, Mustique, Union Island and Canouan, since there are no adequate storage facilities for large consignments of cargo and for any length of time. Custom Officers at each of these seaports are responsible for the processing of all cargo manifested on any vessel arriving at that port of entry. Processing includes ensuring that all cargo manifested is properly reported and accounted for; that the requisite duties on each consignment are assessed and

collected from the importer and that the goods are released after all the necessary requirements have been met.

Each island is set up as a separate office on the ASYCUDA++ System henceforth cargo manifested in the Kingstown Office cannot be processed in the Bequia Office and vice versa. Section 27:1 of the Customs Control and Management Act 422 of the Revised Laws of St Vincent and the Grenadines hereinafter referred to as the Customs Act makes provisions for the movement of uncleared goods within or between any port, and any other place in accordance with the prescribed terms and conditions. Permission may be granted to a consignee importer in a Grenadine Island to move a consignment of goods from Kingstown or Campden Park to the premises of that importer for examination of the goods after the entry had been submitted and the duties paid to the Customs Office at the Port of discharge”.

Why this was done?

"The statement which proceeds the question

Which is the Honourable Member's statement

incorrectly suggests that there has been a new procedure adopted by Customs relative to cargo intended to be delivered directly to Bequia. The Customs have implemented no new procedure. On the 5th October, 2012 a consignment of cargo for a business entity in Bequia was listed on a manifest registered in the Kingstown office and was landed at Port Kingstown. Since the goods were manifested in Kingstown they had to be processed in Kingstown before the release was given however this procedure was not followed, the requisite entry for the goods had not been prepared and the appropriate duties had not been paid to Customs by the importer or his agent nor any security of the duty liability been input by the importer or his agent but efforts were made to transport the cargo to Bequia. Sections 61 of the Customs Act specify the time at which duty is chargeable and payable. It reads:

“No imported goods shall be delivered or removed on importation until the importer has paid to the proper officer any duty chargeable and that duty shall in the case of goods which entry is made be paid on making the entry”.

So, to say that the cargo intended to be delivered directly to Bequia were required to be discharged in Kingstown for inspection by the Custom is incorrect and misleading. As outlined above the proper procedure was not followed and based on the Customs record this was the only consignment in recent times that had this problem”.

The question posed here now; “Will the new procedure of requiring cargo shipped to Bequia to be discharged and inspected in Kingstown continues”? The answer:

“It must be reiterated that there is no new procedure, maybe there was a misunderstanding by the importer and his agent in relation to the consignment referred to above. It must also highlighted that the cargo in question on that day was not manifested for Bequia, it was manifested for Kingstown and should be discharged and inspected in Kingstown, however permission may be granted for consignments to be taken to Bequia after discharge, provided that the duties have been paid. This was not the case in this situation”.

Mr. Speaker, without any disrespect to this answer you cannot have a situation where the business community are complaining, the people in Bequia are complaining, I get them and you tell me it is one case and that case arose from a misunderstanding. I do not accept that because it means that I have to disbelieve all the complaints that I get including the complaint from the Honourable Member of this House, the Representative from the Northern Grenadines. I am saying in relation to this answer which has been given to me to read it is ignoring a lot of real facts, which are taking place and obviously not getting to the attention of the Comptroller of Customs. Because if I get an earful from the business community in Bequia and also here in St Vincent and in relation to Bequia you tell me it is one case you have on record: well the people who are giving the Comptroller information are not giving him correct information, cannot be.

It is all well and good to recite the procedure which we understand but the business of the Customs in addition to collecting taxes, collecting our duties is to facilitate and make business easier. We have gone past the colonial days, which emphasise control without proper management. We need control yes, but control cannot be the be all and end all of everything that you may give permission for the goods to be unloaded in Bequia. Why don't you simply say: when the people come it is consigned here to St Vincent not consigned to Bequia but you want it to go to Bequia that is fine we will allow you to take it to Bequia and we will have the people for customs down there in Bequia deal with the matter and collect the duties for the government? Bequia is part of St Vincent and the Grenadines, if you can take the goods from the Port and carry it somewhere on mainland St Vincent and have it examined after hours with abundant overtime why can't you do the same thing in Bequia? Make the arrangements for it to be done in Bequia, and I am calling for that here on the floor of this Honourable House. I am not going to take basket to carry water for anybody not in the representation of the people of St Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, we have to make changes at Customs, I am not talking about personnel; we have to make changes in the way we do things. A few days ago I had a meeting with the Comptroller of Customs; I had a heart to heart talk with him. He is a good man and he is very concerned about the collection of the duty and I agree with that. We also have to be concerned about the ease of doing business and sensitivity to business people. I know you have a few businessmen who will do anything to bring complaints to me to try to avoid or evade duty but the complaints I have received are from people who I am sure would not want to avoid or evade duty. In fact, some who are notorious for avoiding and evading duty seemed to be able in succeeding in doing it. I am not saying, there are nod and wink by anybody, I am not saying that at all because unless I have evidence I do not make accusations but I am dissatisfied in the way Bequia has been treated, I am dissatisfied with the way in which

businessmen have been treated by the Customs, very dissatisfied and I know that customs officers up there are also dissatisfied.

Mr. Speaker, while I am on the subject there are certain departments of government they have some people who believe they are a law unto themselves, they are a republic. They can be no republic we are all subject to the laws of this land. You know, Mr. Speaker, there are some people who are supposed to collect the taxes for the government and they are known to say, “Why *bothering collecting that fah* for Ralph them to misspend it”? They have become legislators now you know. So if you think ... Mr. Speaker, I just want to say to the Honourable Member if you think what you ask me here is all what I have beef about, you do not begin to know the beef that I have concerning certain things. I have it as a Result Indicator in these Estimates which will come up for a debate, we have to review the Customs, we have to review the procedures and processes and Mr. Speaker, let me say this in advance for those who would say the reason for it is because I get persons promoted in Customs who should not get promoted, I do not have anybody who got promoted in Customs, not one person. I do not interfere. I was involved in the choice of the Comptroller of Customs;

they just appointed two Assistant Comptrollers no one asked me and I am quite happy with that. For one post the Comptroller made a recommendation the Public Service Commission went in relation to that one post they said yes to him and for the other post the gentleman said he does not want promotion, so he sent up two other names and the Public Service Commission chose one out of those two names. I only know the result because I get the result, so I want to make that plain I do not get involved in these matters but I have an interest as the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and the Minister responsible for a Customs to see things go properly at the Customs.

I know a lot of customs officers are doing good work but we all know some are not pulling their weight. There is a minority not pulling their weight for one reason or the other and we have to make sure that there are changes in processes and I come back to the fundamental point, we have to manage efficaciously and bear in mind ease of doing business not just control. You can control to such an extent that operation successful patient dead, I do not want to see that happen at the Customs or any department.

I know historically that every single Minister of Finance has had difficulties to a greater or lesser degree with Customs but what is happening in Bequia from my vantage point is unacceptable and it must change. Yesterday I had a discussion with the Director General of Finance and Planning who is immediately over the Customs to make the necessary changes to facilitate the people in Bequia and in every part of St Vincent and the Grenadines and to do so within the framework of the law to collect our duties but to deal sensibly with business people. I do not think I could say it any plainer than that Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines. So do not think for one moment that I am on a different page than you with this. No one, I repeat in this job is going to give me basket to carry water.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 4, Honourable Member for the Northern Grenadines.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank you Honourable Prime Minister for the urgency and seriousness you give to this matter, not only have you spoken clearly I think you have answered all my possible supplementary.

4. *Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday Member of Northern Grenadines asked the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Sports:*

Given the many concerns that have been raised in recent years about the safety of yachts in our harbours and bays, including Admiralty Bay, Bequia and in light of the approach of the 2012-13 tourism season when many yachts are expected to come to our shores;

Will the Honourable Minister please state what will be done to protect the yachts in our waters so that they would continue to come here and so that Saint Vincent and the Grenadines would continue to be a premiere yachting destination.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Tourism and Sports.

HONOURABLE CECIL MCKIE: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, while the Ministry of Tourism Sports and Culture would have engaged all stakeholders on this matter, I think the question would be more appropriately answered by the Minister of National Security who has agreed to give the response.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, resulting from ongoing dialogue between the Honourable Minister of Tourism and the Tourism stakeholders in Bequia pertaining to the security of yachts in the waters of St Vincent and the Grenadines it was agreed that a patrol boat will be provided. It will also be recalled that in September 2012 the United States Government under the Caribbean Basin Security Initiative handed over two interceptors to facilitate further patrol of our waters thus expanding the coastguard fleet of vessels.

Mr. Speaker, in that answer I want to revert to the first sentence. The Minister of Tourism went with the Tourism stakeholders in Bequia pertaining to the security of yachts in the waters of St Vincent and the Grenadines, and it was agreed that a patrol boat would be provided specifically. The Honourable Minister has been on the issue repeatedly, I requested of the Minister of the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Tourism the Ministry of National Security to prepare a special warrant to buy the engine for the boat. The special warrant was sent as per usual to the Ministry of Finance officials and it had a long gestation period there. I enquired again and it was sent to me after that enquiry again prompted by the Minister of Tourism. I signed the special warrant, it went over to the Ministry of Finance and the person or persons who are responsible for addressing the special warrant in relation to this specific boat in my view did not act with the expedition.

As you would no doubt realize from my language that I spoke forthrightly on the subject and I have been advised and I have been able to confirm that with the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of National Security and I have so advised my ministerial colleague the Minister of Tourism that the engine would be purchased. What happened is this: there was an engine available I am told at Howards when all this *toing and froing* with the paper work was going on by the time it is now ready Howard done sell all their engines, so they had to get one now; here is where I talk all the time about getting small things right and that is why I love these questions so I can tell you exactly what is happening. The long and short of it that it is coming and you would appreciate that I am on the top of it.

St Vincent and the Grenadines is the best known best supported crew destination in the OECS. I noticed St Lucia's numbers as though they are creeping up close to us and what worries me about this matter, Mr. Speaker, is that two years ago I saw a beautiful article inside of a magazine called Yachting Essentials commending ..., I think the Honourable Member must have seen it commending St Vincent and the Grenadines and the author saying you know, the safest place now for the yachts people is St Vincent and the Grenadines. When we make progress we cannot have slippage and we have to correct the slippage.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, while I am on this from a security standpoint and this is why I am very happy to be given the opportunity to answer this question by the Honourable Minister of Tourism; it should have been originally put to me because it is a security issue. I get a feeling of despondency of which I quickly take myself out because I am an optimist by nature and I always believe where there are limitations we must correct them and in any even situation even where there are limitation there are also possibilities.

The policeman would do his work, catch somebody who steals from the yacht, the yacht persons would come and give evidence and then you would have a magistrate give a rap on the knuckles. This is our bread and butter, this is our breadfruit tree judicial officers cannot live in the sky they have to live on the earth like all of us and I get complaints all the time from the police. Mind you, Mr. Speaker, every sentencing is specific to an individual case and it may well be that in each case the judicial officer has all good reasons for the decisions which they have made. I can only talk as a representative of the people how we feel. I cannot go and tell the independent judiciary how they must do their job, no I cannot do that! But I also have to speak how all of us would feel and I am sure in this regard, I speak for the yachties and all the law abiding people in St Vincent and the Grenadines.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say this that despite that particular limitation which I just spoke about and we are correcting in terms of the special boat in the Grenadines, in Bequia the coastguard does a lot of unscheduled patrols especially to hotspot areas affected by yacht burglaries. For instance, the coastguard has made arrangements, very special arrangements, to patrol not just in Bequia but down in Mayreau and Union Island in collaboration with the Tobago Cays Marine Park to provide security to yachts. A similar thing takes place with the Coastguard patrols on the Leeward side of the island.

Mr. Speaker, we got three boats for the Customs, the Customs lent one to the coastguard to help them and the Customs and the Coastguard they work together and I asked the Customs to lend one to the Coastguard. I was told very swiftly that one was damaged. You lend them a second one it was also damaged now being repaired at the boatyard. I mean these are boats as you may recall which we just approved monies for here, how many years ago three years ago? I spoke to the Customs they have one story. I spoke to the Commander of the Coastguard he has a story, another story. All I am asking please we do not have a lot of money to throw about when we buy these boats let us take care of them, let us not be irresponsible with them. I do not understand how two out of three could get mash up so quickly, no one is giving me basket to carry water.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 5.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, just by the way of comment, Mr. Speaker, not a supplementary. I take it from the Prime Minister's answer that the patrol boat that we have been

asking for, for so long is on its way soon and I appreciate the answer and the seriousness in which it is presented. I am sure the Honourable Prime Minister would understand that when I raise these issues that this is a matter of serious national concern and that no one should play politics with these issues and that he would agree that my questions and the concerns I have raised publicly are raised in that context. I move on to question No. 5.

5. *Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday, Member for the Northern Grenadines asked the Honourable Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries;*

a. Has the Minister abandoned efforts to make the fisheries center in Bequia and elsewhere compliant with EU requirements for handling seafood intended for export to EU markets; and

b. If not, what is the status of the efforts to meet the said requirements?

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

HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to assure the nation that the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries is continuing the work to meet the requirements for the export of fish and fish products to the European Union market; so that answers part (a) of the question, Mr. Speaker. But, Mr. Speaker, before I go into the answer to part (b) of the question, I think that this question is of national importance and significance and that I need to detail to some extent, not only the background of the question, but the work that the government would have done over the last twelve years in reaching to the point where we are today, because the question only asks about the status where we are today. However significant work was done and I think that it is very important for the general public to be apprised of the information, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Fisheries Division and fisheries in St Vincent and the Grenadines it has the potential to be a significant foreign exchange income earner for St Vincent and the Grenadines: significant and I want to note that and I would detail further, Mr. Speaker, in the Budget Debates as to how we intend to manage the Fisheries Division going forward so that we can maximize the benefits to St Vincent and the Grenadines as a nation.

Mr. Speaker, I must also note that I am fully aware that the Member for the Northern Grenadines the fact that he would have noted particularly the impacts in Bequia that I am very cognizant and the government is cognizant of the fact of the importance of the Fisheries to the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, on the 22nd December, 2000 the European Union Commission made a decision and the number of the decision - decision 97/296/EC to exclude St Vincent and the Grenadines from a list of countries which the import of fishery products will be authorised to enter the EU market. Following this decision, Mr. Speaker, a mission team visited St Vincent and the Grenadines which comprised of two inspectors from the EU. The mission found that there were numerous deficiencies and this is back in 2000 which required remedial measures before St Vincent and the Grenadines could be re-included in the list for exporting to the EU. Some of these deficiencies I would list, Mr. Speaker.

1. A lack of a clearly defined competent authority.

2. Provisions regarding the health conditions for the production of fisheries products, were not equivalent to the EC requirement.
3. No official lab was considered to meet the required standard.
4. There were no clearly defined procedures for approval and suspension or withdrawal of fish processing establishments,
5. With regard to inspection of live lobsters and trading vessels exporting ice fish
 - a. There were no reporting procedures for inspections.
 - b. There was no lab analysis conducted on fish products and water.
 - c. No monitoring of heavy metals was conducted.

Mr. Speaker, if I may just pause for a bit because the issue of meeting the requisite standards for St Vincent and the Grenadines to trade with the European market is not only a question which touches and concerns fisheries. I want to look at it before I address the specific issue of fisheries for us to appreciate and understand that the EU market is a very important market for St Vincent and the Grenadines for agricultural products and also for fish and fish products. However, we have to meet the requisite standards detailed by the EU before we can trade and we can enter the EU market.

On the issues of bananas, Mr. Speaker, for persons who were involved in the production of bananas whether you are a banana farmer, a farm worker, an assessor, whether you worked with WIBDECO at the time or GEEST or the BGA if you are to do a careful study you would realise that today we have to meet a lot more stringent requirements to send bananas to the United Kingdom. There is a gentleman by the name of Baldswin Barnum who participated, Mr. Speaker, in the recent operations cut back and plant back, he has one of the most beautiful fields in St Vincent and the Grenadines that I have seen even though my eyes are very untrained, but Mr. Speaker, to date even though he has bananas in his fields that can be harvested and sent to the UK he is not yet certified. And he is not yet certified because he did not attend two training sessions for health and safety that are paramount to meeting the EU standards for export.

I am just using the example of bananas only to show that the markets that we are trying to penetrate in the EU that we have to do significant work and not only work done by government but all stakeholders we have to ensure that we play our roles. Not only in bananas, Mr. Speaker, but last week I received a document from the UK noting that there is a heavy trace of pesticides in the root crops sent from St Vincent and the Grenadines and that we can expect a report in 2013. We know that in the last three years the root crop subsector in the Ministry of Agriculture and in the agriculture sector in St Vincent and the Grenadine has played an excellent role, the gingers, the dasheen, the eddoes and we have to ensure and we are waiting hoping for the best that in 2013 that it does not signal something extremely bad for us, Mr. Speaker.

And Mr. Speaker, before I go back to the question, I just want to note as well that we would have received a document No. 1881/2006 from the EU pertaining to the issue of cadmium in the cocoa, found in and cocoa products exported to the EU and we are already on a watch list where before the end of next year, Mr. Speaker,

we have to do the requisite soil testing to ensure that the cadmium levels in our soils are within the range allowed into the EU market. Mr. Speaker, this information is very important to the entire agricultural sector and it was very important for me to lay that basis so that we do not go off on a tangent that the requirements which have not yet been met by St Vincent and the Grenadines since we were basically blacklisted since 2000 that they are only unique to the fisheries sector.

Mr. Speaker since we would have received the document which excluded us from exporting fish to the EU and fish products to the EU the Government has since then enacted the regulations namely naming a competent authority in February of 2001. The legislation was revised in 2006. In 2005 Mr. Speaker, the infrastructure of fishing centres, located in Kingstown and also in Bequia were upgraded to meet the international standards. This was a significant part of us getting ready.

In December of 2008, the EU Inspectors visited St. Vincent and the Grenadines and posted their final report in early 2009 which concluded that much progress has been made along the fish and fish product production chain to address the recommendations in 2000. They congratulated us about the improvements in the legislation and the organisation of the competent authority. In 2010 Mr. Speaker, three experts from the ACP strengthening fishery products health conditions programme were engaged. These experts reviewed the progress of implementation of the action plan. The first expert, Mr. Speaker, who visited in March of 2010 focused on the enhancement of the institutional capability of the competent authority to meet the sanitary requirements in order to maintain and expand on trade in fish and fishery products.

The second expert visited in June 2010. The purpose of the visit was to provide hands-on-training to the management and staff of business operators in the fishing industry in the development, implementation and verification of risk base, food safety, management systems according to international standards and some of the beneficiaries, Mr. Speaker, were the Bequia Fisheries Centre and Sabrina Miller Lobster Facility in Union Island, Union Island Fisheries Centre, also in St. Vincent, the National Fisheries Market Ltd., the Chateaubelair Fisheries Centre, Leroy Pike, the Barrouallie Fisheries Centre, Owia Fisheries Centre and the Calliaqua Fisheries Centre.

In October 2011 Mr. Speaker, the first expert engaged was again contacted and he came to St. Vincent and the Grenadines and he was able to conduct a final review as to the existing fish quality control system. In January, Mr. Speaker, January of this year, a visit was made to Bequia by the Japan International Corporation Agency. A senior fisheries expert and three members of the Fisheries Division to deal with issues of quality assurance and product development in the area of the export of fish and fish products to the EU, the purpose of the visit was also to assess the operation of the lobster facilities in Paget Farm, Bequia to ascertain their readiness to become EU certified.

Mr. Speaker, I am going through all of this, because sometimes I get the notion that in our ambition to reach the target, we are sometimes of the view that it is not a painstaking task. It is definitely one where we are working very closely for the inspectors from the EU, their visits are regular, and we are working with the Government and people of Japan to show that we reach the targeted goal. In July of 2012 Mr. Speaker, the Fisheries Division continued its work with the Attorney General's Office to review and revise the current national

legislation to meet the new requirements for the exports of fish to EU countries, specifically, Mr. Speaker, relating to provisions for illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing.

Mr. Speaker, this question and the manner in which we have to move forward again I repeat, will include every single stakeholder in the fishing industry. When the inspectors came from the EU and they recognised that there were many boats going out to sea not being iced or having containers where you could place the fish on ice, these are the matters that came up for significant considerations and it is definitely going to cost all of us in dangerous trade a lot in order for us to meet the requirements. The Government, I can assure this nation, Mr. Speaker, the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, we are doing our part. However, Mr. Speaker, we intend that in 2013 there are some monies allocated under the Banana Accompany Measures for us to also assist in the process. Mr. Speaker, I intend to work very steadfastly in 2013 with the stakeholders to ensure that we meet the requirements needed for us to export to the European Union Market. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: One of the things that you pointed out, Honourable Minister, is that one of the requirements has to do with testing and have facilities to ensure quality and so on. The efforts that you are making, this includes establishing and maintaining the lab facilities that we meet the requirements here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR: In fact we have contracted and engaged CARIRI to assist us in that regard.

6. *Honourable Daniel Cummings asked on behalf of the Honourable Terrance Ollivierre (Southern Grenadines), asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Development, the Public Service, Legal and Grenadines Affairs:*

- a. *will the Honourable Prime Minister please state whether a Coroner's Inquest has been conducted into the death of Customs Guard Mr. Othniel White;*
- b. *if not, will one be conducted and if so, how soon; and*
- c. *please confirm whether Customs Guard White was on lawful duty when he boarded the ship.*

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, a Coroner's Inquest into the death of Customs Guard, Othniel White of blessed memory has not yet been conducted. A Coroner's Inquest is legally required to be conducted and will be conducted.

Under the Coroner's Act Chapter 21 of the Revised Laws of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, any person who dies in a sudden or violent or natural death where there is on the face of it, no clear evidence that a particular individual or individuals may be directly criminally responsible, a Coroner's Inquest has to be held into a person who has suffered such a death to determine the circumstances under which the person met their death,

the causes of the death, the cause or causes of the death of the person and whether in fact anybody is criminally culpable.

The Coroner's Inquest is conducted by a Coroner who is a magistrate over whom the Executive has no responsibility in respect of appointment nor his or her supervision. It is an independent judicial officer. They appear, the Coroner has a jury of five persons selected in the same way in which juries are selected in indictable matters in the Supreme Court. Mr. Speaker, if I may say parenthetically, I was responsible for prodding the Honourable Attorney General at the time, Mr. Parnell Campbell, QC to change the law because hitherto a case in 1986 which I did when Harris "Boney" Sutherland was shot and killed at a police station by a police officer that the jury was selected by the Superintendent of Police that was the law and I was dissatisfied with the verdict and so too was the Coroner and I requested a change of method and Parnell Campbell surfed it and brought the relevant Bill to Parliament and had it passed. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, arising from that same case, where on the face of it, it does appear as though it was the Attorney General who was responsible for ordering any new Coroner's Inquest which Parnell Campbell did in that case, but the Police Officer brought a case to the High Court and before Justice Satrohan Singh, Justice Singh ruled that where you see the Attorney General in the law which was passed in 1963, it means the Director of Public Prosecution, because it is a quasi criminal proceedings and as a consequence you will see in the new provision, in the new statute you would see that judgement incorporated, so it is the Director of Public Prosecution.

I say all of that to say this that there would be a Coroner's Jury independently selected in the usual way and that it is the Director of Public Prosecution who has the responsibility of sending the case file to the Chief Magistrate either directly or by way of the Commissioner of Police. I have been advised that in this particular case, the Attorney General, I have sought her advice on this and she said that a file had been sent up by the police to the Director of Public Prosecution and the Director of Public Prosecution has requested further statements or information from the police, so no file as yet has gone up on the matter to the Chief Magistrate for a Coroner to be assigned.

I am hopeful that that would be done very shortly and in relation to the last part of the question, please confirm whether Customs Guard White was on lawful duty when he boarded the ship, that is an opinion and I am not required under the rules of the House to render an opinion and in any event it would be not proper to do so, especially in a case like this where the issue..., there is a prospective judicial proceedings, that is to say a Coroner's Inquest in which that certainly will be one of the matters which would arise. Of course I have my own opinion as a lawyer, but I am not free to give that opinion. In any event, Mr. Speaker, the rule..., Standing Order 20(1)(h) says, a question shall not solicit the expression of an opinion, or the solution of an abstract legal question, or of a hypothetical proposition. So the rules forbid me also from proffering an opinion in that regard. I am obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 7 oh, sorry.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, may I ask if questions 8, 9 and 10 which are in the name of the Honourable Member for Central Kingstown, which are the three remaining questions that I have, if I can be asked them so that if the occasion arises and it is necessary and desirable for me to make my exit before the session is complete. I have asked the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister to move the requisite

motion for the suspension of the Sitting until Tuesday at 9 O' Clock for the Estimates. So I [interjection] 8, 9, 10 those are the last three that I have, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Are you with the..., unless...,

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I am asking if they can be dealt with for me now, Mr. Speaker, instead of 7.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I do not know how..., so that I can get out if...,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member will ask the questions now.

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise to ask question 8 in my name, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, may I be permitted to make a slight correction to the b of question 8

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: All right.

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: The figure of \$100 million was taken from the regional budget, Mr. Speaker, that was incorrect and that figure was changed subsequently to be \$99 million so just in case of anything.

8. *Major the Honourable St. Clair Leacock (Central Kingstown), asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, Development, Information, the Public Service, Legal and Grenadines Affairs:*

- a. *Of the EC\$184.9 million allocated to economic affairs "... from which inevitably, flows jobs directly ..." how much was expended as at October 31st 2012;*
- b. *of the \$100,660.983 approved under the caption other receipts of the capital receipts how much has been realised to date; and*
- c. *which of the two factors viz, insufficient institutional and effective capacity of the public and private sectors and the delayed availability of the capital monies has more adversely affected poverty reduction and job creation.*

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

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Member, in relation to question 8, I am unable to provide an answer simply because \$184.9 million was not allocated in 2012 to economic affairs. "b" the answer is as at the end of September, \$14.3 million and "c" I mean drawing by rule Standing Order 20(1)(h) not to proffer an opinion.

9. *Major the Honourable St. Clair Leacock (Central Kingstown), asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, Development, Information, the Public Service, Legal and Grenadines Affairs:*
- a. *what is the exports f.o.b. for the first six (6) months of the year 2012;*
 - b. *what is the imports f.o.b. for the same period;*
 - c. *as our balance of trade continues to widen what is the most current figure available; and*
 - d. *how has our exports and output of beers, beverages, flour and galvanized sheets been performing.*

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

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, let me just say, if my Honourable friend looked a little startled by my answer for “a” is just that \$184.9 million are not allocated to economic affairs that was the capital budget, economic affairs was a lesser number. So that is why I did not answer the question.

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: I just.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I was just explaining.

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: I am not addressing that point Honourable Prime Minister.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Ah?

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: I am not addressing that point, I am just reminding you of the expression, I very much want to be referred to as Honourable Member.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Oh, yes, but the expression also, Honourable friend is not...

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Because we are not friends,

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Eh?

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: I want it to be understood that we are not friends. Honourable Member.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Well Mr. Speaker, I may have a friend, but the person may not be my friend [laughter].

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: That is possible.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: You know that is..., I believe, Mr. Speaker, that everyone is my neighbour and thus my friend. I take the position from the Book of Luke, indeed, Mr. Speaker, if I may say this that that proposition was very much addressed in the case of Donoghue and Stevenson, a very famous case where Lord Atkin delivered a judgement. He posed the question, “who is my neighbour” so I say that..., I understand the position of the Honourable Member.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to the answers for “a” and “b” I will give the exports and the imports f.o.b. for the first six months of the year 2012 first of all, and I will do so with a comparison to the same period in 2011 for it to be intelligible. In January to June 2011 the value of the total exports was \$43.37 million the value of the total exports in January to June 2012, the export value increased to \$57.4 million. You would see an increase in excess of \$12 million. Imports from January to June 2011 was \$437.1 million and there is an increase also of imports in January to June 2012, \$470.4 million.

Mr. Speaker, of course there is an imbalance in the terms of trade, but as every student in economics has usually asked, why is it that the Balance of Payments always balance because the Balance of Payments includes issues other than the issue of trade, merchandise trade that is.

In relation to “c” the figures currently, so I give January to June and now I will give January to September. Honourable Members would appreciate that that is the latest data which I have [interjection] you said current, but I think you know that will be reasonably satisfiable. I will make the same comparison with January to June 2011, total exports January to September 2011, \$73.7 million, total exports. January to September 2012, \$83.7; total imports January to September 2011, \$661.9 million; and in January to September 2012, \$710.5 million.

Now Mr. Speaker, I will try and go a little slower with this because there are a lot of numbers which my Honourable friend would have to...,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Well, I am a child of God.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Well, I recognise you all are brothers in faith...,

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I am a child of God, Mr. Speaker. Yes he is my brother in faith, he is a good Catholic. Mr. Speaker, galvanize sheets export sales the value in 2011 is \$3.4 million up to the end of September, for 2012 is \$3.76 million so you say \$3.4 and \$3.8 million, so we see an increase in the export value there. In relation to domestic sales \$3.3 million compare to \$3.5 million in the same years respectively.

Eastern Caribbean Flour Mills, production up to September 2011, \$25.2 million; production up the end of September 2012, \$28.1 million; the export sales \$19..., [interjection] this is now export sales [interjection] that is total production, export sales \$19.8 million in 2011 up to the end of September and to the end of 2012, \$22.6 million; in terms of the domestic sales for the Eastern Caribbean Flour Mills, up to the end of September 2011, \$9.86 million; to the end of September 2012, \$10.56 million. The Brewery products at the end of September 2011, \$5.2 million; and at the end of September 2012, \$6.6 million; I should point out, Mr. Speaker, the Brewery sales are going to be significant in the fourth quarter. For instance, if you look at 2011, it was \$5.2

million up to the end of September, but for the last quarter it was \$3.1 million. You know Independence and Christmas you know, a lot of drinks are consumed in that period.

In relation to..., oh that is it. Mr. Speaker, the galvanize that I give, the numbers that I got were from Eastern Caribbean Metals, they did not provide me with any from Giddy Browne, but I think that would give a fair trend of fair indication. I am obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 10

10. *Major the Honourable St. Clair Leacock (Central Kingstown), asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, Development, Information, the Public Service, Legal and Grenadines Affairs:*

- a. *what is the estimated level of unemployment in St. Vincent and the Grenadines as at October 2012;*
- b. *how does unemployment in Central Kingstown compare with the national average; and*
- c. *how many active manufacturing employers are there in St. Vincent and the Grenadines as at October 31st 2012.*

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I will give the numbers that I have to the end of 2011 and the numbers I will give are the numbers from the National Insurance Services to be used as proxy numbers, because as Honourable Members would realise that we do not have the Census Data for the period 2011. We will have those for the period 2012 and the Census Reports next year. We know the history of that issue.

All that the IMF will do is to come and do estimates. The only numbers we have for employment would be the proxy numbers which we have from the NIS, because there is no household survey done by the Government, none done by the IMF, so anybody's guess is as good as the next man, depends on what assumptions we use. So I use what are the proxy figures.

Mr. Speaker, let me just back up a little by way of backdrop for these numbers to be intelligent. In the intercensal period 1991 to 2001 unemployment increased by 1.5 percent to 20.5 percent. This increase took place despite the fact that for the first time historically, net migration exceeded the natural increase in the population, so that it tells us something about the structure and absorptive capacity for labour of the economy, the nature of the economy which we have that in the period 1991 to 2001 despite the fact that you had an increase in migration where it exceeded the natural increase in the population, in that period 1991 to 2001 unemployment increased by 1.5 percent according to the Census to 20.5 percent.

Now Mr. Speaker, it is going to be interesting to see, what is the situation between 2001 intercensal period 2001 and 2012 because I believe from the anecdotal evidence before us that again the net migration exceeded the natural increase in the population? In fact, I believe from the anecdotal evidence that net migration would

increase even more than in the period 1991 to 2001, increase more in 2001 to 2012. Not because of any particular economic challenge, but because migration assumes a geometric as distinct from an arithmetical progression that is to say, if you have five people who migrated, they will take ten families during the process, so it increases geometrically.

Now let us go further, Mr. Speaker, and look at the NIS numbers for the active insured employees, active insured employees, this is why I say, we use it as a proxy. Let us look at 2000 and if we add the active insured employees, the active employers and the active self-employed persons, we get an aggregate of 31,996 persons who are gainfully involved in employment either as the employees, employers, or self-employed persons.

We come to 2011, by the end of 2011 the number moves, the number moves, the aggregate number from 31,996 to 39,657 so that compared to the year 2000 you go to the end of 2011 there are 7,661 more active employees, employers and self-employed persons, an increase therefore of 23.9 percent. However, we have seen a gradual decline since 2008 because of the economic downturn internationally and its impact here. I will give that data for 2008. At the end of 2008 you had 41,634 persons as active employees, employers and self-employed. In other words, between 2008 and the end of 2011 there was a decline of actively engaged persons in employment either as employees, employers or self-employed by 1,730 a decline according to the NIS and I am using proxy numbers.

Now it does not mean that in St. Vincent today is just thirty nine thousand, six hundred and something persons employed or call it 40,000 because there are many, many persons who are employed but not active employees registered at the NIS. For instance, [interjection] that there are people who are not employed that they are paying.

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Who are also on the lists who are not working.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: No, who are paying, no if you take that number, the voluntary contributors I ask for that because I expect that question to rise, the voluntary contributors is very small. In 2011 it was just 176 persons, you get the point I am making. So these active persons, employers, self-employed and employees, you do not have in that number voluntary contributor that number is outside, but is very small 176. A couple of them overseas, who are contributing still nah, they are voluntary contributors. Some here who are not working but are still contributing, very few, because you take for instance, in fishing, in 2000 not one single person involved in fishing has registered with the NIS, now you have 38 still a minuscule number compared to the Estimate in 2000 plus who are engaged in the fishing industry that is what the Ministry of Fishery estimates.

You take private households, in 2000 you had 524 persons from private households registered at the NIS, now you have 621, but there are far more number of domestics than 621. Then you go also for minibuses drivers and conductors, there are active, about 1,200 minibuses, so you should have 2,400 people at a minimum from there, you have less than 10 percent. So the numbers are higher than actually who are registered. So I use it as a proxy in relation to the employment.

Now and I do not think it is a bad proxy. In relation to Central Kingstown unfortunately the data are not collected, it is a funny thing with the English Language, every time I say data you are attempted to say "is" but

is the Latin word “data” which has come into the English Language from datum, so data are, there is not a special Central Kingstown, even in relation to the Census we do not deal with constituencies, we deal with Census Districts, but I would say the anecdotal evidence would suggest that in Central Kingstown the extent of unemployment would not be much different than the national average and conversely the amount of persons employed percentage wise would probably be about the national average [interjection] well the point is this, if you have this number, and until we get the Census, I would say the number should be somewhere between 15 percent and 20 percent, because the last number was 20.5 percent. We have had some additions, but then we have had some declines, but we have had additions overall. The question one often has to ask is the actual Census definition of unemployment whether it accurately reflects the situation. It may be overstated in terms of the extent of unemployment.

Now in relation to manufacturing, again I have to give you the number of employers, I will again give you the number registered. I think this would be probably fairly accurate because the employers are all registered at NIS. I cannot think of an employer who would not be registered at NIS, a manufacturing employer that is. I could see it in the home, I could see it with fisheries self-employed, and I could see it on the farm. In manufacturing in 2000 there were 2,346 no sorry, that is employees; active employers in manufacturing there were 131 employers in manufacturing on the NIS lists. At the end of 2011 you had 122. Of course among that 122, well among the original 131 would be a fairly significant one Ju-C but just to add in relation to that ECGC seems to be moving ahead pretty quickly in relation to that and of course, all the Directors are on the same page now in ECGC to purchase its Ju-C and the process is ongoing. So hopefully that would come back on stream sometime early in the New Year.

I do the best..., I must point out, Mr. Speaker, the answer which I got from the Public Servants to the first question is that there were..., we have no data on it because the Census is not complete. The second one, we do not complete it on the..., we do not do it by constituencies and the third one was simply that we do not collect the data on employers in that way, the numbers. So I had to go and tell them send me all the sheets from the NIS and let me extract the data so that I can give you some proxy numbers which in an absolute sense will be in the ballpark even though there are some people who are employed, but who are not, significant numbers of them in certain sectors, but who are not on the NIS. I think I have done the best I can to help my Honourable Friend.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: Mr. Speaker, I assume that the Honourable Prime Minister has rejected out of hands the answers provided by the Public Service as being totally unsatisfactory. It is not a time for debate, but in Jamaica and other places employees federations and throughout the region, produce these data on an annual basis and in fact, they sell it and so it is ridiculous for us to tie those kinds of statistics to a Census and we are not going to go there this morning. I simply want to have it clear from you, because that is how I understood you said it, unemployment perhaps is now between 15 percent to 20 percent, so here is 1.5 to 2 persons out of every ten in Central Kingstown and throughout the country are in fact unemployed. The other eight persons are working.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I would think that that would be...,

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: A fair statement.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: A ballpark, I will wait on the Census, the Census may show that I am wrong. The Census may....,

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: In short, unemployment is going down in St. Vincent.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: The Census may show that it is 25 percent.

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: But you predict that it is going down, you anticipate that it is going down.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Well what I am saying to you....,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Striking of the gavel.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: on the basis of the NIS numbers....,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: All right, no I see two of you on the floor at the same time.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: I am sorry about that Mr. Speaker, on the basis of the NIS numbers, clearly there is an increase of registrations between 2000 and 2011 that is the point I am making.

MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK: That is fine.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: All right.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: So we go to question No. 7, [interjection] Honourable Member for West you were asking a question as well?

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: Inaudible.

DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES: Oh yes I had completed the answer, I just was thinking, I am sorry, I did complete the answer.

HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I was wondering if I would crave your indulgence, I did not want to do it earlier, but I am moved to offer very sincere condolences to the Honourable Representative for North Windward on the passing of his brother and I too Mr. Speaker, lost my first brother just over three years ago and I know how this is and I have known the brother of the Honourable Member for some time and for the record I want to offer my most sincerest condolences and to wish him all the very best.

7. *Honourable Daniel Cummings asked on behalf of the Honourable Terrance Ollivierre (Southern Grenadines), asked the Honourable Minister of Education:*

The teaching and learning process at the Union Island Secondary School has been disrupted during the past months, as well as the safe and stable environment has been compromised. Will the Honourable Minister please state:

- a. *Whether the problems at the Union Island Secondary School have been fully investigated;*
- b. *Have all problems been successfully solved;*
- c. *Is the Minister satisfied with work that has been done to ensure the best environment for teachers and students at the school.*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister responsible for Education.

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Part “a” of the question the answer is yes. Part “b” the answer is no, but I want at this juncture to congratulate BRAGSA for the quick response that they give as we asked them to help with problems at the Union Island Secondary School.

Mr. Speaker, they would have done many things and I would like to enumerate them here. Remove the breaker panel from stay away to inside of the building, rewired faulty circuit and block “B”, replaced the defective ballast and blown tubes in the classrooms, replaced ordinary outlets by RCD type outlets in Science Lab, replaced earth rods with earth mats at the main building block, replaced the damaged earth and main cables, replaced bulbs and outlets in principal’s area of the dormitory, labeled electrical panel in block “B”, tested all circuits. Circuit breaker was enclosed by wooden box to prevent vandalism, installed an outlet for washing machine at the dormitory.

They did some plumbing works, male and female student washrooms; they did teacher’s dormitory, the installation of a 1000 gallon water tank on the roof of the second pump room to supply the supper floor of the dormitory which houses the Principal and others. Now worthy of note BRAGSA says that we have a problem with the moisture content of the air. We have had to relocate a panel that was in the steps area of the main classroom block, to the inside of the classroom placing it in a locked cabinet to resolve the problem with the panel. Secondly, the outlet and light switches are also being affected by the moisture; we will step up our routine maintenance to deal with this issue. We may have to replace the outlet and light switches more frequently than we do on the mainland and secondly they said, where the school is located is dry and rocky and we have had to install additional earth mats to improve the quality of the electrical earthing. Mr. Speaker, BRAGSA is hoping to continue the works on the 17th December in 2012. I am obliged.

Question No. ... Where we are now 11? Question No. 11.

11. *Honourable Vynnette Frederick asked on behalf of the Honourable Roland Matthews (North Leeward), asked the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works:*

Now that the English Gutter in Troumaca has claimed it first property.

Will the Minister please state what actions will be undertaken in the interim to check the rapid erosion of this gutter so as to prevent other properties from being washed away.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Works.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Mr. Speaker, if I may..., just an observation on the question, Mr. Speaker. There is an inconsistency in the addressing of the Honourable Prime Minister and his different portfolios in the questions. If you check them you would see it varies in almost every question to him and I do not think he is any longer the Minister of Public Service and it has been repeated here in his portfolios, the matter of Public Service. But I find it very inconsistent in the way he is addressed in the questions.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: If do not know if it is what had come from the question asker or if it is a matter for the Parliament to correct. So if it is incorrect coming in the question form, then it should be corrected in the Order Paper.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: In the Order Paper, okay, I will look at it.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Eh?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I will look at it.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Okay. if you look at questions 1, 2 and 3 you will see particularly, he is referred to as Economic Development, the Public Service, Legal and Grenadines Affairs in number 2. In number 3 he is Economic Planning, National Security, Legal Affairs, Grenadines Affairs and Seaports and in 1 Finance, Economic Development, the Public Service, Legal and Grenadines Affairs.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Well if you notice when I am directing the question to him, I may direct it referring to him in the particular..., I mean in relation to the particular question, if he is...,

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: I was thinking of the students, who normally collect his...,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay that is fine, all right.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: And other persons not related to the Parliament who use this from time to time Mr. Speaker. It is not user friendly.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay, all right, we shall look at it.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Not consistent

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: [Inaudible.]

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: I am not suggesting that. I think he is quite capable of carrying all the portfolios if you ask me.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question please.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Mr. Speaker, sometime ago there was a question from the Honourable Member for North Leeward on the matter of the English Gutter or the German Gutter, there are two

gutters down there and in the World War, one was labeled the German Gutter and one was labeled the English Gutter. I do not know if the army is for them boy them in these gutters that is why they were so labelled, but I am not making fun of the situation. It is a very serious situation down there, Mr. Speake,r and this stretches back to the hurricane of 1898 which destroyed the villages of Silver Hill and Jack Hill and many of the residents of that area moved to a new location of Troumaca.

The new human settlement in the area..., in an area an increase house run-off and storm water caused progressively increasing soil erosion in two separate valleys. By 1940 the extent of land degradation and erosion had reached an alarming rate, 1940 I think that was before any of us inside here was born Mr. Speaker, you were?

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I was not here.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Okay.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I was not here [laughter].

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Mr. Speaker, over the last 30 years a variety of measures with limited success had been utilised including contour drains, land acquisition, relocation of persons, planting of Teak and Mahogany trees and the construction of several 20 feet high check walls in the German Gutter. So it is a matter that has been over the years civilisation in the St. Vincent been dealing with these two gutters, the German and English Gutters.

BRAGSA was part of a team which also included NEMO and Forestry Officials and they recently visited the English Gutter site. Recommendations surrounded the use of replanting vegetation as well as its strategic placement of gabion baskets, lined on the inside face of the created wall with a geo textile fabric material. This would serve to retain the much needed soil and allow water to percolate through the gabion wall structure. It is however, essential that efforts be made by homeowners in the region to substantially control all run-off and waste water leaving their properties and direct them to the public drainage system. Do not take the shortcut and run it down into German and English Gutters. Some upgrading and improvements to the public drainage system is also anticipated.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay, question No.12.

12. *The Honourable Vynnette Frederick asked on behalf of the Honourable Roland Matthews (North Leeward), asked the Honourable Minister of Tourism:*

The Almond Tree Restaurant at Richmond in North Leeward along with several buildings intended to be used as cabanas were part of the tourism project designed to provide sustainable livelihood for persons in the North Leeward area.

Will the Honourable Minister please give an updated status of this project seeing that the restaurant has been closed for over three (3) years and the cabanas are incomplete and overwhelmed by vines, trees and other wildlife.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Tourism.

HONOURABLE CECIL MC KIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines through the Ministry of Tourism has developed 14 recreational sites between 2006 and 2009 as part of the strategy to improve the national tourism product. These sites include the Dark View Falls, Cumberland Beach Facility, Hermitage Nature Trail, Walliabou Falls, Layou Petroglyph, Vermont Nature Trail, Botanical Gardens, Belmont Lookout, Rawacou Recreational Facility, Black Point Tunnel, La Soufriere Trail and Owia Salt Pond.

These are now successfully managed by community groups under the National Parks Authority and a part of the success story of the development of our natural sites which were ignored prior to 2001. Long before these sites were developed though, the Richmond Nature Park was developed in 2004 in a project between the North Leeward Tourism Association, the Ministry of Tourism and the National Parks Authority. Richmond Nature Park has been chosen as the official national site under the European Union Funded Caribbean Regional Environmental Project which was simultaneously implemented in 12 other Caribbean countries and coordinated by regional office in Barbados.

The North Leeward Tourism Association was established in 2001 to promote Community-Based Eco Tourism and Community Nature Tourism in the North Leeward area. It currently manages the Dark View Falls, the Richmond Nature Park, the Annual North Leeward Breadfruit Festival, Chateaubelair Christmas Lighting and Chateaubelair Beach and River Clean Ups. The Richmond Nature Park has four self contained cabins, a restaurant called “The Almond Restaurant” and a visitors public convenience. It also provides camping services and is a popular location for weddings.

The Government of Venezuela through ALBA had also provided assistance for the completion of the cabins. This facility was successfully operated between 2005 and October 2010 providing employment for several persons of the community and purchased fish, vegetables and other produce from local farmers. In October 2010 the Richmond Nature Park suffered severe damage due to Hurricane Tomas with several large fallen trees, broken windows and doors and damaged galvanize. The electrical power was cut, which occurred during Hurricane Tomas, also resulting in spoilage of refrigerated meats, fish and vegetable produce. In 2011 assistance from the Forestry Department was sought to cut and log the fallen trees and in March 2012 several broken doors and windows were repaired.

Over the last two weeks the North Leeward Tourism Association has cut the lawns and verges using a tractor swiper loaned from the National Properties Limited. The North Leeward Tourism Association plans to reopen the facility for the current tourism season. The Almond Restaurant will offer a wide range of excellent Creole foods, the cabins with a capacity of four self contained rooms will be available at reasonable prices. The Richmond Nature Park will also offer the facility as camp site services to groups and youth clubs. Tours will be available to tourism sites including the La Soufriere Volcano and the Dark View Falls.

The North Leeward Tourism Association has expressed its thanks for the publicity of the Almond Restaurant at Richmond and the Dark View Falls and will graciously welcome support from visitors and all well wishers.

The Ministry of Rural Transformation is currently responsible for monitoring the sites, but the Ministry of Tourism, Sports and Culture and National Parks Authority will also continue to monitor and provide support. I am much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 13 Honourable Senator.

13. *The Honourable Vynnette Frederick asked on behalf of the Honourable Roland Matthews (North Leeward), asked the Honourable Minister of Housing:*

Several persons whose homes were damaged by hurricane Tomas are still experiencing difficulties getting their lives back together. Included in this situation is an elderly and legally blind couple from Troumaca whose house still shakes whenever the wind blows. Will the Honourable Minister please state:

When will assistance be given to this elderly couple and other persons whose homes were affected and have not yet received any help from the state.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Housing.

HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL: Mr. Speaker, this Government has and is still providing assistance to persons whose homes were affected by Hurricane Tomas. Mr. Speaker, immediately after storm in 2010, \$5 million worth of materials were brought into St. Vincent and the Grenadines to assist persons who were affected by the storm and quite recently outside of an election period \$7 million worth of materials were further imported in St. Vincent and the Grenadines to continue with this assistance programme.

Mr. Speaker, it is the policy of this Government to assist the poor and the needy not only in housing development, but by and large towards the general wellbeing of Vincentians throughout the nation; therefore, Mr. Speaker, the blind couple, whether it is in Troumaca or Fancy or wherever in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, this programme targets to that assistance.

Mr. Speaker, when I saw the question for the Parliament, I went to the HLDC to determine whether or not if any application was made for any such assistance for this elderly couple and I found none. The records, however, shows, Mr. Speaker, that in North Leeward 322 houses were damaged by Hurricane Tomas and that in Troumaca 49 houses were destroyed including the blind couple where five sheets of galvanize were damaged and five sheets of galvanize were repaired to that damaged property. So that that house had some repairs at that time.

The records also show that many more persons got assistance including one Roland “Patel” Matthews and I would not say how much materials he got. Mr. Speaker, I have considered this as an application to the HLDC and so I have asked the assessors of the HLDC to do an assessment on the property of which on their recommendation such appropriate action will be taken, such assistance will be given. I am much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No....,

HONOURABLE VYNNETTE FREDERICK: Mr. Speaker, I wanted for clarification....,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: No you cannot, remember you cannot..., you are asking the question for another person.

HONOURABLE VYNNETTE FREDERICK: As so good, Mr. Speaker, I just was trying my luck.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: I was just wondering if the dimension of the Honourable Member who asked the question was necessary to make the answer intelligible or whether that will just go through a test....,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: We go still have to follow the rules. Let us go with the rules.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: That is part of the rules that is why I asked the question.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I ain't a lawyer, but I...,

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: No, no, Mr. Speaker, you in charge of interpreting the rules.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Let us do not argue.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: It says you do not call people's name unless it is intelligible.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Let us go with question No. 14. I do not see anything that is unintelligible about the answer, absolutely nothing.

DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY: Ah you miss the point.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: I am ruling that, let us go, question No. 14. Question No. 14 Honourable Member for South Leeward.

14. *The Honourable Nigel Stephenson (South Leeward), asked the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works:*

The York River, although generally seasonal in nature, has proven to be a menacing torrent whenever it rains heavily. A number of residents who live along its banks in the Bolomey area in Campden Park, have had their property constantly eroded to the point where they can actually collapse if the situation continues.

Will the Honourable Minister please state if and when river defence work will commence to protect residents from the erosive power of the river.

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

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Mr. Speaker, I think you would recall some years ago there was a particular question in this Parliament about that bridge on that river and I had given an extensive answer to that when that bridge was rebuilt by then my Ministry of Works.

There have been instances report of flooding reported along the York River in the area of the Secondary School and the Playing Field. BRAGSA has carried out site visits at the river crossing, but has not received specific complaints of houses being threatened. BRAGSA will continue to do investigation along the banks of this seasonal river to see wherever there is a threat that we can do some corrective work to reduce the threat.

Mr. Speaker, river defenses, if we take the entire budget to do river defenses it will still not be sufficient. The Walvaroo River which goes through Arnos Vale, the Calliaqua River, the Vermont Buccament River and many others, Spring Village, they pose serious threats, but it is of human nature to live as close to the river as possible. It is very soothing when the night comes when there is no storm. It is nice to hear the river rippling down the stones and in fact, some value is added to your property if you live close to the river. But in times of flood, it becomes a threat. So we understand the problems that you have in these areas. It is not just in St. Vincent, it is worldwide and we will do what we can, Mr. Speaker, to try and avoid any property being washed away or lives being lost. Thank you.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 15 Honourable Member.

SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Mr. Speaker, I just need to say that I hope the Minister is going to do some work expeditiously, because listen, the extent of which that river is causing erosion there, I am absolutely sure and I thank God that the Hurricane season is out, but there is a particular house there that can collapse at any given moment...,

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member...,

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: And this is not something that we should really slight.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Member,

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: I will move on.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Either ask the supplementary or continue..., go on to the question.

HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON: Yes, I am going to continue.

15. *The Honourable Nigel Stephenson (South Leeward), asked the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works:*

The road network from the Apostolic Faith Church in Bottom Questelles to the T Junction commonly called Merlene Hill is in a terrible state of disrepair, causing great difficulty to motorists and pedestrians alike.

Will the Honourable Minister please state when will repair work be done to that piece of road.

(I know you are delighted to tell me something was done, but the ...) [laughter].

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Obviously Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member has asked the question and has provided his own answer, so there is obviously no need for me to answer the question no more, Mr. Speaker. So I will allow him to go with the answer that he has for himself. But just to reassure him that on the matter of the York River, if there is a particular property, Honourable Member, please have them make a formal report to BRAGSA. Let us not use the floor of the House to lodge a formal complaint. All right, concerned.

On the matter of Merlene Hill, Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member knows that work has commenced on the area and we will be resurfacing the worse part and I think the contractor is there again from yesterday cutting. You would see the areas cut out, but paving will not take place till late in the week or early next week.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Question No. 16 Honourable Member of South Leeward.

16. *The Honourable Nigel Stephenson (South Leeward), asked the Honourable Minister of Tourism and Sports:*

- a. *Will the Honourable Minister please explain the role and function of the National Sports Council and the Sports Department; and*
- b. *outline what plans are in place to host the Windward Islands Games next year.*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister, I cannot attempt to answer you, but this question really should not have been allowed. I think there is an Act which governs the National Sports Council and would have outlined the role and thing, but it is up to you.

HONOURABLE CECIL MC KIE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I agree with your assessment of the question there and I could refer the Honourable Member to the Sports Council Act 9 of 1988. So it would be very useful if you can familiarise yourself with that document and of course you can get the information on the Department of Sports from the Estimates and the Result Indicators that will give you quite a good idea of how the Department of Sports operates.

Just to mention however that it is involved in enhancing sporting skills through training at schools and the community level and deepening links with other national, regional and international sporting organisations. Of course, programmes, the department will be involved in the Wellness Revolution programmes, walks and

fitness sessions, sporting activities and development programmes and training programmes. So that should give you an idea, but of course you can get that information readily available.

Relative to the hosting of the Windward Islands School Games which really is not related to the other aspects of the question, but I will provide the information, a Committee has been established, of course the Ministry of Education would be leading in the hosting of the games, but working very closely with the Ministry of Tourism, Sports and Culture and in particular the Sports Department and that Committee is being led by the Deputy Chief Education Officer and would also include members of the National Schools Games Committee.

Sub-committees would have already been established as well and they are looking at the five sporting disciplines that will be hosted during the Windward Islands Schools Games. That is Volley Ball and Basket Ball where there are male and female components, and then we also have Track and Field Athletics, Football and Netball.

Relative to our own performance and what our objectives and expectations are, it is interesting that when we last hosted the games 2005 and 2009, we were joint winners with Grenada on both occasions and we actually won the games in 2010 in St. Lucia all on our own. So we have a history of winning the games when we host within recent years and in this regard, the teams for Netball and Football would have already been selected, because the school games would have been completed last weekend and we had the presentations last weekend for both Netball and Football. So those teams would have been selected.

In January, the Volley Ball team will be selected, Basket Ball is currently taking place and December, January that team would also be selected and of course the Interschool Athletic Meet would take place in March and immediately thereafter, a team would be selected to participate and represent St. Vincent in the Windward Islands School Games.

So I think that we are well on our way. I mean I am sure that I speak on behalf of the Minister of Education as well. It really would be glorious if we can win the competition in 2013 and therefore we are doing everything in our power to ensure that our teams are well prepared for that competition. I am much obliged.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Thank you. Question No. 17 Honourable Senator Lewis.

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

The river that runs between Calliaqua and Villa is virtually clogged up with silt upon which grass and shrubs grow. Rodents reside in the overgrown grass and shrubs and are creating a health hazard for the residents of the bottom town area of Calliaqua. Moreover, the high level of silt has now made the river bed shallow; consequently when there are heavy rains and high tides the river banks are easily overwhelmed thus causing heavy flooding in that area of Calliaqua, will the Honourable Minister please state

a. Whether there are any plans to remove the high level of silt from the river bed and if so;

b. When will work commence to effect such removal?

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

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Mr. Speaker, I want again like the German Gutter to say that this problem with Calliaqua River is from time immemorial and I want to give credit to Kelectric and Karib Cable who in the past have thrown their equipment and everything into the river to try and help us to keep it clear. In fact, the river exit Mr. Speaker, had been cleared three times thus far for this year, during the months of June, July and August and we continue to collaborate with the Coastguard who would alert us in the event of the need for clearance and other situations.

BRAGSA would again carry out siltation reduction works during its upcoming road cleaning programme which is commencing yesterday [interjection] eh? [interjection] is that a supplementary? It is the wrong river, the Calliaqua..., the river between Calliaqua and Villa is considered by BRAGSA an important critical waterway in the mitigation of flooding. He tells me I am referring to the wrong river. Which river are you talking about?

DR. THE HONOURABLE LINTON LEWIS: [Inaudible.]

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Oh you are talking about the one over by the Fisheries [interjection] no, no, no, no, I know which river I am talking about, Karib Cable has cleaned the one by the bridge, the Calliaqua big bridge at the Coastguard on numerous occasions in the past. The one between the boat yard and the playing field and the hard court that river in fact, I remember the last flooding where the Green Party Leader and Bongo Shines were down in the flood waters trying to create an impression that they were clearing the river and almost had to be rescued [laughter] when the river water was flooding down. You recalled the scenario out there, but Mr. Speaker, it is a river that we all know is shallow. In fact, Calliaqua generally is below sea level.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: That is true.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Lots of drainage in Calliaqua including the Villa strip going across to Kelectric it is one of the most frequently flooded areas whenever there is consistent persistent heavy rains which does not give you time and when there is a high tide, you get a back up of the water in that area. But it is a common practice since Public Works days, now BRAGSA to do siltation or silt reduction in that river. So Mr. Speaker, it is under surveillance and the Coastguard normally helps us to monitor how the situation is.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Good.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: I understand the rodents in the river and so on, but I am sure there are also mullets, because of the condition, so we cannot have the benefits without the negatives.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 18.

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

The Lewis Punnett Home in Glen is in a serious state of disrepair, will the Honourable Minister please state;

- a. *Whether there are any plans to improve the physical infrastructure of the Lewis Punnett Home, and if so;*
- b. *When will work to carry out the improvement commence and the extent of the work to be done.*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister of Transport and Works, Urban Development and Local Government.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Mr. Speaker, correctly this should really go to the Minister of Health, but I do not think that they have a prepared answer for it, but BRAGSA has the responsibility to maintain Government buildings and we have had several maintenance jobs at Lewis Punnett Home. I am sure the Senator would like to ask a separate question of 19 himself, so I would not answer that one yet. But Lewis Punnett Home is an old facility, Mr. Speaker and there are plans like Milton Cato Memorial Hospital, an old institution put in place long before any of us inside here were born.

So there is need in fact, there is need for new facility for Lewis Punnett Home. It is something like the Leeward Highway, South Leeward Highway, you have to constantly maintain it and repair it until such time that you can have the complete works done. BRAGSA gets the report from the Ministry of Health and they respond and try to keep it as comfortable as possible in the meantime.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Question No. 19. Honourable Senator Lewis.

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

It is almost three years since the male section of the Mental Health Centre was gutted by fire, will the Honourable Minister please state;

- a. *Whether there are any plans to repair that section, and if so;*
- b. *When is work likely to commence to effect repairs and improvement to that section.*

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Minister responsible for Transport and Works.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Mr. Speaker, it is not fair to give the impression that nothing was done since the fire.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay.

HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS: Some repairs were done and the Honourable Minister of Health who happens to be the Parliamentary Representative for that area can speak to the matter if I so direct the question to him. But just to indicate that the Mental Health Centre again one of those old institutions and buildings, but I just drove in by chance last week Saturday and quite honestly Member, I expected to meet from the outward

appearance a physically rundown structure, but I must admit that I was quite pleased with the way that the building is maintained.

Physically from outside it looks good, the roof might need some paint on it, but it is strong, solid and in good structural condition. However, there is a programme to rebuild and I believe put on a second floor on the total rehabilitation of that building. In fact, the jury is out now on a temporary location for the patients, is that the correct word in health, patients at the Mental Health Centre and once that has been secured in the condition necessary to house them, because you cannot have them in an insecure or unsecured area. So there are several buildings being looked at to move the residents to and in fact, the last matter that came to Cabinet on it, they are even thinking of the relocation as soon as January 2013.

But I do not see it practically being put in place that soon, but there is a deadline to the EDF, the 10th EDF monies and it has to be repaired within that timeframe, so that we can expect almost immediately following the relocation of the patients that construction will be started on the Mental Health Centre.

HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER: Okay that brings us to the end of question time, before the Minister move the suspension I which to inform Honourable Members that a delegation of the European Parliament Committee on development which comprises of two Parliamentarians I would not venture to call their names along with another gentleman whose name I may have a little problem calling will be visiting St. Vincent shortly from about the 30th November 2012 to Sunday 2nd December, 2012.

They will be accompanied by His Excellency Ambassador Mikael Barfod of the European Union Development Delegation in Barbados and they are requesting to meet with of course myself as Speaker and other Members of Parliament at 11 O' Clock on Saturday 1st December 2012 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Conference Room and they are also asking us to join them at about 12:15 on that very day for lunch at the Grenadines House.

The reason for this is to find out how many persons would be able to attend lunch and also to attend the meeting at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. What I would have my staff to do just to send a note to each Member so at least you would have a proper understanding of what this thing is all about. So that is it. So if you are available and you can tell us that are available for lunch we would like to have names, because you know these things of course reservations will have to be made. So that is the position and the meeting is expected to be on 1st December, 2012 at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Conference Room and of course the delegation has to do with whole question of development and I am sure that we would like to be..., each of us would like to be part of that meeting. Thank you very much.

HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the suspension of this Sitting until Tuesday 4th December, 2012 at 9:00 a.m.

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

**Question put and agreed to.
House suspended at 12:08 noon
Until Tuesday 4th December, 2012
At 9:00 a.m.**