

**No. 9**

**Tuesday**

**Second Session**

**31<sup>st</sup> May, 2012**

**Ninth Parliament**

**SAINT VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES**

**THE**

**PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**(HANSARD)**

**ADVANCE COPY**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

**CONTENTS**

**Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2012**

Prayers	6
Announcement	6
Oath of Allegiance	6
Obituaries	9
Congratulatory Remarks	15
Confirmation	17
Announcement by the Speaker	17
Statements by Ministers	21
Reports from Select Committee	26

Questions for Oral Answers	26
Resolutions	87
Adjournment	88

**THE PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES**

**OFFICIAL REPORT**

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

**NINTH SITTING**

**31<sup>st</sup> MAY, 2012**

**HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**

The Honourable House of Assembly met at 11:00 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  
Minister of Agriculture, Forestry

Member for East St. George

and Fisheries and Rural Transformation  
Honourable Montgomery Daniel

Member for North Windward

Minister of Tourism and Industry  
Honourable Saboto Caesar

Member for South Central Windward

Minister of Health, Wellness and  
The Environment  
Honourable Cecil McKie

Member for West St. George

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

Member for Central Leeward

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

Member for South Windward

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

Government Senator

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

Government Senator

Honourable David Browne

Government Senator/ Deputy Speaker

## **OTHER MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE**

Honourable Arnhim Eustace  
Leader of the Opposition

Member for East Kingstown

Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday

Member for Northern Grenadines

Honourable St. Claire Leacock

Member for Central Kingstown

Honourable Daniel Cummings

Member for West Kingstown

Honourable Roland Matthews

Member for North Leeward

Honourable Nigel Stephenson

Member for South Leeward

Honourable Anesia Baptiste

Opposition Senator

**ABSENT**

Minister of Foreign Affairs, Foreign Trade  
And Consumer Affairs

Government Senator

Honourable Dr. Douglas Slater

Honourable Terrance Ollivierre

Member for Southern Grenadines

Honourable Vynnette Frederick

Opposition Senator

# ST. VINCENT AND THE GRENADINES

## HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

THURSDAY 31<sup>ST</sup> MAY, 2012

### PRAYERS

**HONOURABLE HENDRICK ALEXANDER, MR. SPEAKER:** [Mr. Speaker, read the prayers of the House]. I wish to apologise of course on behalf of the Parliament for all those who have been here also of the Members for the late start to our proceedings today. This is as a result of matters entirely beyond our control and we are indeed sorry about this start.

### OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

**DR. THE HONOURABLE LINTON LEWIS:** I Linton Lewis do solemnly and sincerely swear that I will be faithful and bear true allegiance to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second, her Heirs and Successors according to law. So help me God.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I know we are running extremely late, but I am sure that it would be in order for us to extend some words of congratulations to Dr. the Honourable Linton Lewis on his appointment today (excuse my voice) as a Senator to this Honourable House. I wish him all the best in his dearest endeavours here as a Member and expect that he will add to the uplifting of the quality of the debate in this Honourable House.

I am a bit disappointed though because as a Calliaqua man he did not invite me to his celebration party and I feel aggrieved and I want him to know that [laughter]. All right any further congrats?

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, I want to join you in welcoming now Senator Lewis to the Parliament of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Like you, I am of the view that his contribution to the Parliament may be something that will add and make some difference to our deliberations on the various laws, bills whatever that comes before us. And I sincerely welcome him at this time.

I recognise that we are short of time, but I simply wish to indicate very clearly that we on this side of the House are very pleased. I would suspect is the same on the side over there. I cannot speak for the other side; we are pleased to welcome him to the Parliament of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. I am much obliged.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Any further word of congratulations to the Honourable Member?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I want to welcome and congratulate Honourable Senator Lewis to this Honourable House. I wanted to preface my remarks by

affirming that he is my friend, but I know that that will get him into trouble with certain people. He has clearly the qualifications for Membership of the House. He is of age, he is not a Pastor, he is..., no I think Pastors can be Senators, yes, they cannot be representatives. He can read and write the English Language, he has a sufficient degree of proficiency to understand the proceedings of the House and he has not been disqualified in any way in relation to any matter which had come before the court and he is certainly not an un-discharged bankrupt, he is a man of means, I notice, Mr. Speaker, he opened his eyes when I said that, he would know that when I congratulated him on being very progressive to build his building, some on his other side, I am not talking about Parliamentarians here, did not want to really congratulate him because you know some people do not really like to see others progress. I always like to see everybody progress, including those who are on the other side; I want to see them get on and progress in their life.

Mr. Speaker, I think that the Honourable Senator Lewis must have been wondering what has taken his leader so long to bring him to the House. Even amidst all the congratulations, we have to be very..., we have to keep our feet firmly planted on the ground. There were six opportunities to have had the Honourable Senator Lewis appointed here, but there was a preference given to Burns Bonadie, Rasum Shallow of blessed memory, two colleagues now who are representatives of West Kingstown and Central Kingstown when they were Senators and of course the two ladies the Honourable Senator Frederick and the former Senator Baptiste and really, for a man who has played cricket as an opening batsman, one would have expected him to be batting higher up the order. It is only when 11 positions have been exhausted that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition brought him here. Because I mean you have seven representatives, elected representatives, I do not want to double count the two who were Senators and who were representatives and; therefore, four other Senators, so that is 11 with only really he has made the opportunity to come here and I am happy he is here. Because let us face it, Anesia Baptiste interfered with the Pope and the Catholic Church, but I know that my Honourable friend is ambitious and you have to have ambition to get along in life.

But in politics I want to advise that he remembers those two principles since they are wrapped up in dealing with things in the Catholic Church, there are two principles in the church from leadership which he should take note. The first is once you sing in the choir you can be Pope and there are many others on that side who equally want to be Pope. In fact, perhaps more than you [interjection] you too? [Laughter] Mr. Speaker...,

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, just keep the..., keep it narrow, keep it narrow.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Senator Lewis has been singing in the choir for a long time so the people see his, it is not out of his reach. But I just want to remind him that the ambition inherent in that proposition is levelled by a lovely principle in a beautiful hymn in the church, "The good Lord shows his face on he who waits his turn." Now I know that, I know those principles very well and I have waited my turn, but I want to say equally I know he has lost on three occasions before the polls and he would say, well the Prime Minister lost three times before he won, but there is only one comrade and lightning does not strike twice at the same place, same time, so Mr. Speaker, I want to advise all these things as I welcome him to this Honourable House.

I want to say this, Mr. Speaker, I give advice to the two lady Senators when they came. But I do not think they took my advice. It is 44 years I am an activist and I am the longest serving member in this House. I am giving

it free. Among the things I told them which I will say again, you may be a good lawyer but do not confuse this and the law court. This is a very peculiar institution, the Parliament and it shows up persons in some remarkable ways positive or negative. I will expect diligence in preparation and balance in submissions because the people of this country have moved on to a particular type of politics. That is they elected the ULP and we are still consolidating the politics of rationality, the politics of commitment, the politics of seriousness, the importance of service, all of these things. Some of these things may sound old fashioned, but I want from my experience to advise that they be reflected upon.

I am sorry that I missed the bum drum celebration in front of your father's shop out Calliaqua on Tuesday night and when I heard about it last night, I said, "well if a man is just appointed barely as Senator and where his leader obviously went kicking and screaming to that appointment given the length of time and he has a bum drum celebration, what about if something a little higher happens" is a fete he is going to give for the whole month, like he going to bring in Third World?

Mr. Speaker, I just want, Mr. Speaker, to say that your appointment as Senator was long overdue and I am genuinely happy that you are now here and that you have given the allegiance as you are required by law swore it to Her Majesty the Queen, but fundamentally it is to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Welcome my friend and I hope you have a good ride. God bless you.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I really intended for just two persons to speak and asked the Honourable Senator to respond because we are actually pressed for time and I really..., we can probably give him the congratulation outside the Parliament, because we are really pressed for time and we have a long meeting. Honourable Senator, would you like to respond? You do not have to if you do not really want to.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE LINTON LEWIS:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Members of Parliament on both sides of the House, those in the gallery who has come here to support me this morning, my godmother, my sister, my staff, my relatives and friends...,

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Your first principle, you address this Chair.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE LINTON LEWIS:** I want to first thank God, Mr. Speaker, for giving me the patience and also the wisdom, the knowledge and understanding to be able to weather the storm political, storm outside of Parliament and to present myself in such a way that I became worthy to be a Member of this House not as yet as an elected Member, but as a Senator. I would also like to thank the Leader of the Opposition, the Honourable Arnhim Eustace who for some strange reason has had a very significant role to play in my life's progression from since the year 1985 until now and it was through his advice and support that I was able to depart these shores and qualified myself as an accountant personally. The same thing when I returned to St. Vincent and the Grenadines to computerize the National Commercial Bank, when I returned to the Offshore Financial Sector it was he who called me in about six and seven times in England to return home to assist in the development of the Offshore Financial Sector and now this morning to give me the opportunity to stand before this Honourable House. I want to say to you, thank you and I can assure you that I will not in any way disappoint you. Like everything else I am not perfect and I will make mistakes, the House is new to me, but I endeavour to minimize them as much as I can.

To you, Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the power and the discretion given to you by Standing Orders 40 and 41 and I intend to respect them in your position as judge and as Chairman. I also when I looked at those two Standing Orders I am also mindful of Socrates and Jerry Bentham. Mr. Speaker, they both said, “What can we do for humanity, something that is humanitarian, what can we do.” And they grappled with that idea for some time as to how they should answer that question, but interestingly came along Thomas Frank another philosopher who died in 2009 on the 31<sup>st</sup> May interestingly, I am being sworn in on the 31<sup>st</sup> May, 2012 and he answered the question very simply by saying, “that you must do that which is fair.” Fairness of Justice, Mr. Speaker, there are two very important principles that I intend to adhere to whilst I sit here as a Member of the House of Parliament. Looking at those two Standing Orders Mr. Speaker, I am also mindful of the political and legal philosopher John Rawls in his writings on Justice and one of his very significant principles is that of the quality of opportunity and Mr. Speaker, I know that your task is not a very easy one and I do not intend to burden you more than the burdens that are already heaped on your head.

The last time I came to this House, Mr. Speaker, I sat in the strangers gallery quietly awaiting the presentation from Members of Parliament and I was asked by a police to leave because others, Mr. Speaker, seemed to have done that which is not acceptable in the House. So the entire gallery was removed. Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that is the last time that I will be removed from Parliament in such a unceremonious manner. I can assure you that I will, Mr. Speaker..., you know what is interesting, Mr. Speaker, there is the book that is called, “The House” that is written in 1963 and it says that apart from the requirements of Standing Order 35 when you can stand on a point of order, when a new Member of Parliament is making his maiden speech, he is expected not to be interrupted [laughter]. So Mr. Speaker, as I said, I would not burden you and I want to thank again my colleagues. Thank the Honourable Prime Minister for his congratulatory remarks, even though they seemed as if they were sending cliché terms, to use your words, I look forward to do well in battle and I hope that I would be able to, with the support of my colleagues bring a level of discussion to the debate to the House of Parliament that will interest not only my colleagues in the house but assist in the development of St. Vincent and the Grenadines as a whole. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker [applause].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Let us move on. Before you move to Obituaries, I just want to recognise that we have in the House here today 27 students from the New Grounds Primary School, I did not get the name of the teachers who are with them, but we want to welcome them to the House here this morning. Welcome and we hope you enjoy being here.

May I just say that in the long tradition of the House the Honourable Representative for the area, that is to say the Honourable Minister of Agriculture has already made arrangements for them to go to Kentucky, so I do not know how long they are going to be here, but those arrangements have been made!

## **OBITUARIES**

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring sincerest condolences to the Commissioning family from the passing of Mrs. Althea Commissioning yesterday. Mr. Speaker, before I reflect further on her life, please permit me to say these words, “he who would through valour see let him come hither, one here will

constant be, come wind come weather, there is no discouragement can make him once relent, his first avowed intent, to be a pilgrim.”

Mrs. Althea Commissiong worked for many, many years at the St. Vincent Girls High School as one of our very excellent teachers. She also worked along with the Girl Guide Association and she would have done so until her death. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members if there is anyone who would have championed the cause of the girls of our country is Mrs. Althea Commissiong. I know for sure that the education sector would miss her and also the Girl Guides Association in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. May her soul rest in peace.

**HONOURABLE CECIL MC KIE:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to offer condolences to the family of the late Frank O. Mason better known as F. O. Mason. F. O. Mason was a giant, but a gentle giant of a man. He was born in 1926 and spent 85 full years with us here on earth in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. He represented St. Vincent and the Grenadines in both football and cricket, but he was also an outstanding athlete. F. O. Mason as he was fondly known made a significant impression on the cricketing scene in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and in the region. His achievements would have been widely publicized in the print and electronic media and I would not go into them to repeat them. But in addition to his cricketing achievements, he also spent a full term from 1972 to 1999 as President of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Cricket Umpires Association and also President of the Windward Islands Cricket Umpires Cricket Association from 1981 to 1993. I must however mention his feat when he bowled the great Sir Frank Worrell for duck right here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines and that brought him to the attention of the West Indies Cricket Board. Unfortunately he was never selected on the West Indies Cricket Team and; therefore, never made it to the very top.

I also want to pay special tribute to two community builders Ms Pearl John and Mr. Sheldon Morris of Queens Drive, may they all rest in peace.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I would like to join Honourable Members who have spoken thus far in their expressions of condolences, sympathy for the passing of our worthy citizens. In the interest of time I would not add though there is a great deal which could be added. I want to acknowledge the passing of Mr. Othneil Sylvester who served in this Honourable House and who was a Minister of Government for a short period of time. He was of course an astute businessman, a distinguished lawyer; he was a good family man. Othneil made an important contribution to this country.

Mr. Speaker, it is true that there is a particular constellation of events which brought in a situation that he was no longer practicing in the courts, some short time before his death, but when you look at a man's life, you have to look at the entire balance sheet, you have to look at the entire ledger and at the end of the day I think we can say that Othneil Sylvester made a very important contribution to this country in public life, in law, in the church, the Methodist Church in the community general. I believe, Mr. Speaker, we have a tradition in this Honourable House and at the end we ought to do it that anyone who has been in this House and who has gone to the great beyond we spend a minute silence in recognition, in appreciation and our thanks.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** One minute of silence.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, may I also acknowledge the passing too of titan of a Jurist, Justice Albert Matthew. His funeral is in the next day or two in Dominica the land of his birth. Mr. Speaker, he made an immense contribution to the development of law as a Judge in the High Court and on the Court of Appeal. He came out of retirement to take on an assignment here, Chief Justice gave him the assignment to set up the rules, the framework for the application of a very important piece of legislation, the Possessory Titles Act which has made a splendid difference, for many persons who did not have title to their lands and of course to give them good and proper title and change the social condition of persons, because of this law which we passed. And Mr. Speaker, I remember his judgement in the Attorney General and a Chief Magistrate in Antigua against Tim Hector, the High Court which declared a particular provision of a law unconstitutional which was designed to muzzle comment. The Government in Antigua went to the Court of Appeal and reversed Justice Matthew. Justice Matthew was indicated in a brilliant judgement by the Privy Council. He is a man of subtle intellect, wise judgement. Anyone who reads his judgement too which the Government..., in relation to the case which the Government brought to establish forfeiture of the hundred acres of land down at Chatham Bay we see also an excellent mind at work. That is without prejudice to the continuation of the matter beyond the level of the Court of Appeal.

Mr. Speaker, I was honoured when Justice Matthew asked me to do the forward of his book which was part of his annatto biographical work but also of his judgements. I want to thank him..., well I thank his family, I thank him already for allowing me that particular privilege. He was a fantastic cricketer. He represented Dominica. He was community spirited man, a Caribbean nationalist, I am really very saddened that he has left us.

Mr. Speaker, may I just say one thing and I think if I do not my 16 year old daughter would not forgive me. She said to me, “Dad say something very special about Mrs. Commissiong.” I just want to say that she is a very special lady. She was Girl Guides in this country. It has hit the Guides and the Rangers very hard and I know they are very saddened. I urge all of them, however, as I urged my daughter this morning when she was going to write her Chemistry exam to devote their time school and in their examinations, do it for Althea, do it for Althea, do well, do it for Althea. She is a remarkable woman. I had been assured by my 16 year old daughter to use the word among the young folk; she said she will have a humongous funeral, all the Guides and all the Rangers in St. Vincent and the Grenadines will be there and I am sure that the angels will say, “We welcome her into paradise.”

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer my condolences to the death of the following persons; Mr. Othneil Sylvester, Mikey De Freitas, Lafern Millington, Althea Commissiong, F. O. Mason and Sheldon Morris. I would say a little about some of these, given our time constraints. Othneil Sylvester made his contribution to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines in many ways. In a certain unfortunate circumstances which affected his life in his latter years, but that does not detract from the contribution he has made to this country, in this Parliament as a lawyer and as a human being. I was very struck at the funeral service that was held in his home town at the Methodist Church at the number of persons of all walks of life who came forward to pay tribute to Mr. Sylvester. Those tributes lasted from 10 O’clock in the morning until 1 O’clock, three full hours of tribute, family members from here and those who live abroad and probably the most outstanding feature, Mr. Speaker, of those tributes was the extent of his kindness, the use of his financial resources to assist his fellowman. It was really an amazing revelation to me, the extent to which

people made sure they came forward, came from far and near to pay tribute to Mr. Sylvester and ensure that his family, particularly his daughter and his son would have felt lifted by the support that was given to their father. I want to offer condolences to them more sincerely, especially to Nicole who has lost both father and mother in a period of about seven months. May he rest in peace.

Mikey De Freitas, Vincentian businessman in the insurance field mainly and in other areas, the importation of motor vehicles and also a very serious Lion in the Lion movement in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, he also passed away since we last met. He had been sick for quite a while and we remained in contact with him, but he too made his contribution to the people of St. Vincent and the Grenadines, not only in business but in the service and support he gave to the Lion's movement in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, at the Kingstown Methodist Church, Lafern Millington was laid to rest. Here is a lady who made a contribution in a very meaningful way to sports and culture in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Indeed it was the Minister in her homily yesterday who is new to St. Vincent who was very amazed at the extent of the contribution from this humble lady to sports and culture in St. Vincent.

Everyone knows the amount of rain which fell yesterday afternoon, but the Methodist Church was packed to overflowing despite that. Her contribution to Star Lift Steel Orchestra and to the various sporting organizations, we heard tributes from the Football Association, we heard tribute from the Netball Association and indeed the day before she took ill I was with her at the Arnos Vale Netball Complex watching the match between St. Vincent last match and the under 16 tournament and I chatted with her then not know by the next day she would fall ill, an illness from which she did not recover. I want to say to her family particularly her son; we offer them our deepest condolences.

Althea Commissioning's death was really a shock yesterday, Samuel Commissioning her husband, he spoke to me this morning and he too and his daughter are in deep shock at the sudden passing of Althea. I last saw her at the Jubilee celebrations at Government House when she spoke in relation to the Guides and the Duke of Edinburgh Awards and as the Prime Minister indicated; her contribution in the field of Guiding is unmatched and I wish the family all the best.

Well everyone knows F. O. Mason. I would not go into any detail there, because of time and I also want to send condolences to the family of Sheldon Morris. Sheldon Morris worked with the public service for a long time in the Ministry of Works. He is the brother of the late Kerwin Morris who used to be the General Secretary of the New Democratic Party and Sheldon was a very hard worker. He too has passed on and I offer sincerest condolences to his family. I am much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

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

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to join with the Honourable members on both sides of the House in extending condolences to a number of individuals and their families. The longest, Mr. Speaker, between the last Parliament and this one, this is almost the most people I have heard died at least in my own constituency in such a short period of time. I am so appalled, Mr. Speaker, on the condolences to Othneil Sylvester, I mean and to make a point that we in this Honourable House, it occurs to me that in Parliament, we have not even taken a photograph of ourselves and we have not done so for past Parliaments as well, and I believe it is an

exercise we should attach some significance to in this Honourable House that we have some..., you know we have come in the House with the records for generations of politicians but I do not think we should continue much longer without doing the same for ourselves, not self serving, but I think that it is the highest institution of the land that we should really address that to happen, serious.

Mr. Speaker, I would stay a little longer on Lafern “Fernie” Millington who was laid to rest yesterday because she was as people would say, “my right hand man/woman” in this case in Central Kingstown. There was a standard routine in which I would go to Galaxy, collect her, take her home, allow her to have a fresh, go and pick up Ava, proceed to the constituency and knock on every house in Central Kingstown and I have no doubt that my presence in this Parliament goes a long way to the person who sacrifice and contribution that she has made. I think the tributes yesterday captured it all in as much as she was a diehard in politics when there was a netball event, football event, or a Starlift event, she made sure that she asked for time out to attend to those, because she certainly would have her own priorities.

I did say in the church yesterday that as one who is close to her, I had observed that she was able to be just as well as I was accustomed to, and I had stopped and asked her when she is going to talk to me and she held on to my hand and said, “I will tell you.” Well she never got around to tell me, Mr. Speaker, because she never recovered from that heart attack and went into a deep coma in which the brain and the heart suffered and despite the very valiant efforts and I want to underscore that of the professional staff at the hospital, they did see her through, and I am speaking in particular about those who work in the Intensive Care Unit. I did try my own interventions to see whether a neurosurgeon or heart specialist could have been of assistance to for the hospital to find out whether they have the capacity here to handle the case and they did their best. She has passed on, Mr. Speaker. She will be missed by all of us in Central Kingstown and by myself and we ask a repose on her soul and to continue to support the families and we hope, Mr. Speaker, one day I will see her in the bye and bye. I am much obliged.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Mr. Speaker, I will be very brief, quite a few persons within recent times passed away in West Kingstown, the late F. O Mason is a man whom I have the privilege of sitting in his house for several hours in a number of occasions, a very interesting human being. Also who are nation builders in Millicent Adams of Cemetery Hill and Bernard “Buda” Mascoll, a very well-known van driver from Edinboro who recently passed away and would be buried on Sunday, my condolences to the family! I am much obliged.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, I want to join with other Members in the persons who have been acknowledged passing to persons mentioned before and I single out “Buda” at one time a very close friend, but I particularly want to speak on two individuals that is Mikey De Freitas and Eurlin Veira. The Honourable Leader of the Opposition did spend and said a lot on Mikey, Mikey is..., well my grandmother was a De Freitas, so there is some blood, connection there stretched but blood. Mikey was a prominent Lion and businessman. In fact, not many persons know that he was a shareholder of SVG TV and was one of the first directors of that operation and as the Leader of the Opposition said, “he was here for a while and has been out of circulation” and I want to extend sincerest condolences on my behalf and the Unity Labour Party and the Government to his wife Pat and Rohan and Michelle. He also adopted the two children for his brother Joe who lived with him and his other children from the previous marriage Perry, Mark, Rochelle, Randy, Rohan and his

daughter also Sharon. I want to extend sincerest condolences to them naturally the Clouden family and Rochelle is married to Steve Ollivierre so that entire extended family, please accept our condolences and may he rest in peace.

Eurlin Veira, Mr. Speaker, very simple and humble woman who lives in a very strategic location right at Sally Spring Corner, the wife of former Doc Veira of the Doc Veira Market Shop. A very pleasant lady, mother to only four children but she mothered many more. All those who came by her, she fed them and clothed them and she is always a very pleasant face, she has a very pleasant smile at the market shop for Doc and she ran it until she took ill. Her daughters Jean, Pearl and Ann and her son Conrad, Jean is married to Dougie Cole, so we extend to the Cole family and Pearl who lives overseas and Ann is married to Julian Clarke who is from Vermont, Gloria and Jevie, those of us from that area who knows J. V Clarke so we extend sincerest condolences to immediate and extended families. She was only 70 years of age and we will miss seeing her smiling face on the corner of Sally Spring whenever we pass there. Naturally one of her favourite colour..., or her favourite colour was red. A beautiful woman and also she was before marrying the Veiras, she was of the Mclean clan from Revierre, a very extended family, a very large family connection in that area, so our condolences extend to all those of the Mclean clan as well. May their souls rest in peace, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I just want to express sincere condolences to the Baptiste family of Sandy Bay on the passing of their daughter Arlene who died at her matrimonial home at Prospect three or so weeks ago. Arlene who was born and grew up in Sandy Bay is the daughter of Beresford and Beresford is one of the oldest persons in Sandy Bay who still have that knack of building good buses. Not very many people is still around who would do that kind of job and Arlene who got her both primary and secondary education in Sandy Bay then moved to Prospect ten years ago after she became married. Unfortunately, she died suddenly and left behind three young ones.

Mr. Speaker, when the news broke that very day it sent shock waves through the communities north of the river, particularly in Sandy Bay and I know it was not easy for her immediate family to cope with that situation, but Mr. Speaker, at the funeral service, at the Church of Christ Church in Kingstown one would have seen their characteristics that exhibited where hundreds of persons came out of Sandy Bay to pay their respects to Arlene. Indeed it was a touching moment, Mr. Speaker, not only for the family, but all those who journeyed to witness that activity, Mr. Speaker, and so immediately following the next day, her father took seriously ill and was hospitalized. He is now recuperating. I want to wish him well because I know it was not an easy time for him. Mr. Speaker, Arlene was laid to rest on the 19<sup>th</sup> May, 2012 at the Kingstown Cemetery. She was loved by many. May her soul rest in peace, I am much obliged.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Well before we come to the end of Obituaries, I would like to extend to the Dougan family of Calliaqua, a very prominent family in Calliaqua our deepest sympathy on the passing of John Dougan and son who is quite known in Calliaqua, the late John Dougan and of course for the passing of their son and brother and other relatives, was known as Tracy. Tracy lived in England for quite a number of years. Of course we all came from Calliaqua, Ratho Mill and he lived in England for quite a while. He died there, but he is survived by many brothers of course and sisters, those we know quite well, Carlyle Dougan is one those, Dr. Hughes Dougan, Kens Dougan, Wavel, Nicholas, and quite a number of other relatives and friends. I wish to extend our deepest sympathy to them on the passing of their relative.

Also his body was cremated and the remains would be buried at the Calliaqua cemetery on Saturday at 3 O'clock. I also wish that his soul would rest in peace. Thank you very much.

Before we move on to the other agenda matter, we know that we took quite a long time with the Obituaries because these are very sensitive issues and of course we would like to take as much time as we want with them, the excitedness coming up now on the agenda has to do with Congratulatory Remarks and I wish we could make these brief as we possibly can because we are running definitely against time. So I wish Members could go on to do that.

## **CONGRATULATORY REMARKS**

**HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR:** Mr. Speaker, quite briefly I would like to congratulate the Fisherman's Day Committee and the organizers 2012 for organizing the 37<sup>th</sup> year of celebration for our National Fisherman's Day Activities which was held on Monday 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2012. Mr. Speaker, the fisherman of the year Mr. Winston Edwards, his boat slipped away, captained by Ellis Roberts. The catch was 512 pounds. The event was well attended. Thank you, Mr. Speaker [applause].

**HONOURABLE CECIL MC KIE:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to offer congratulations to the Department of Culture on two achievements. First of all on the very successful staging of Gospel Fest 2012, this activity continues to attract more and more local participants as well as those from the region. In fact, we had over 100 persons coming from the region to support this activity. I want to congratulate Mr. Peters and organizers for a job well done.

I also wish to congratulate that department for launching the review of the National Cultural Policy. We announced that a couple months ago in the House and that process has now began. Mr. Speaker, I also want offer congratulations to the Carnival Development Committee, the National Lotteries Authority and Karib Cable for the very important innovation and launch of VC 3, VC4, and VC5. These channels, 203, 204, 205 would allow Vincentians, returning Vincentians and visitors to look at these channels, VC3 first of all, ongoing carnival activities over the years and that would be on, on an ongoing basis and VC4 and VC5 on a pay for view basis where persons can pay and see live action of shows on 204 and on 205 can pay to see past shows of carnival here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

And finally Mr. Speaker, I would like to offer congratulations to the Ministry of Tourism and the Tourism Authority, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, we have again come to the attention of the world. We were awarded the best consumer newspaper feature in the category [applause] for the Caribbean Tourism Association. This happened in 2011 when we brought journalists here to St. Vincent on a familiarization tour and that journalist Jeremy Peters, an American, would have written an article that captured St. Vincent, the Grenadines Islands special feature on Bequia. We would receive an award on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> June during the Caribbean Tourism Week in New York and of course we would be there to share in that very special moment. I am much obliged.

**HONOURABLE MAXWELL CHARLES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I rise to congratulate personally all the footballers from Central Leeward. Few weeks ago we walked with all the trophies in the

village competition that was held [laughter]. I want to congratulate the [applause] under 13 team that won that competition, the under 17..., well when I said under 13 they were from Layou, the under 17s we won it that is the Barrouallie team and the seniors we walked away with the trophy also, the seniors from Barrouallie and all this comes on the heel of our school victory where we in the secondary school competition where the juniors and the seniors won the island competition. I want to say a hearty congratulation to all the footballers in Central Leeward, Layou and Barrouallie, so whether it is Layou or Barrouallie, Central Leeward [applause] [laughter]. Thank you for making me clarify.

Also I want to recognize the contribution to football, the Harlequin at Buccama on the Bay bringing again the Liverpool Football Team to help to lift and raise the standard of football in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Last but not least I want to also congratulate one of our past sportsmen, Lancelot John better known as “Lance John” of Barrouallie having been chosen to be one of the selectors of the Windward Islands Team, congratulations to you [applause]. I am much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Before my Honourable friend speaks, I think the children would like to go, it is midday.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker, I rise to offer my congratulations again to the Bequia Sailing Club for hosting another successful Regatta Event over the Easter weekend. It has been a while since we were here in this Honourable House. Mr. Speaker, I would like also to congratulate the organizers of the Canouan which is more recent, I know we have not said that [laughter] and I know my Honourable colleague from the Southern Grenadines would have liked to have been here to do it and will do it in his own stead, but the number of competitors from Bequia who went down and they always compete well and keep our sailing traditions alive and I wish them all the best this year and for the future.

And on a happier note, Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate Metalina “Tinique” Glenn; she is a centenarian in my constituency on the celebration of her birthday just about two weeks ago. She is now 102 years old and is still doing well, Mr. Speaker. She is very clear in her head and being well tended and cared for by her family and we wish her a happy and a joyable life in the remainder of her life that she has with her family and thank God for the longevity that he is giving her and the blessings that he has poured on her family. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I would just like to congratulate the new Prime Minister of the Bahamas and his party, my friend Perry Christie. I already send him promptly a letter of congratulations and I also want to congratulate the new President of France Francois Hollande, I also sent him a letter of congratulations. He is of course like the Unity Labour Party members of socialist international.

Mr. Speaker, if I may just say this, I know it takes up a lot of time Obituaries and Congratulations, but I say this, especially on the Obituaries, there is something which comes over the House, is as though we recognize what is important in life and we make some judgements which are very sound and then very often the rest of our work in life we get consumed with so many vanities and things which are not as important as we think they are. I just want to say that that struck me very much today especially. I am obliged.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, I would just like to briefly extend congratulations to the Unity Labour Party, the Youth Arm of the Unity Labour Party on another successful staging of Miss Unity Youths, the 5<sup>th</sup> in a row [applause] a Beauty Pageant that second only to Miss SVG show and to congratulate Leekonney Bentick, sponsored by Pizza Hut as Miss Unity Youths 2012. Congratulations to her.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Okay that seems to bring us to the end.

## **CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Sitting held on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> March, 2012, copies of which had previously been circulated were taken as read and confirmed with no amendment.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I thought you were going to move before the confirmation, the vote on the confirmation.

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** All right, Mr. Speaker, thank you for your assistance. I have to allow the Minutes to be confirmed because what I am saying it does not challenge the accuracy of the minutes in any way.

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

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** So it is just information.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Okay well let me hear you, let me hear you.

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Well basically, Mr. Speaker, thank you. I was making the point that in the Minutes that we have just confirmed in particular on page 12 of the Minutes, I wanted to draw to the attention of the Honourable Prime Minister that I have raised the question and he had provided an answer to Parliament which is quite inaccurate and I do not think that the Prime Minister set out to be inaccurate in the answer, but to the extent, Mr. Speaker, and this is the importance to the matter that the Bank of St. Vincent and the Grenadines is now intend to make an IPO a public offering and we have to be careful in the House that we did not provide the information here that that can be interpreted as misleading the investing community and maybe the Prime Minister may want to revisit the answer to the question and in his own time and choosing, just make the records correct so that we are not guilty in any way in this Honourable House of misrepresentation, that it has serious financial consequences and I am speaking to the question of the Market Share, Mr. Speaker, of the bank and I wish the information provided, the financial information is not in order and we cannot be seen as a House to have that record stand un-correctly because of its far reaching consequences.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Okay. All right, I guess he will take note of that. The Minutes confirmed. In making an announcement to the Honourable Members, I just want to mention briefly that as a matter of fact to indicate to Members that I attended a Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference for the region in Jamaica between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> of this month and theme of that conference was “Low citizen confidence in governance, how can Parliamentarians build trust in Caribbean Legislatures”, and most important there was a particular session on robust debates versus uncivil conduct, do Presiding Officers and Standing Orders need to draw the line more effectively. And they had two excellent presentations, one from the Speaker of Trinidad and Tobago the Honourable Wade S. Mark and the other was from Peter I. Foster of St. Lucia and these were excellent and I want to state that of course coming out of those discussions and debate, I see them as guiding me at least, my own conduct in this Honourable House and I want to state that there are some orders, rules of orders which I intend to seriously enforce. One is order 37(1); 41(1); 42(2); 40(d) and (e) and of course wherever relevant rules 43 and I will like also to draw Members attention to rule 81(3). These are new rules that need in our conduct in the Parliament here that we need to observe and we need to ensure that our Parliament runs like a Parliament. All right, thank you very much.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Mr. Speaker, following up on your recent comments with respect to the operation of this Parliament, Mr. Speaker, it has been a year and five months....,

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, I am not going debate into that issue. If you have a difficulty with the Speaker there is an order under which you can bring that matter. I am not going to open to debate anything with you here in the Honourable House.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Mr. Speaker....,

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

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** May I clarify Mr. Speaker?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Huum.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** It is under a prerogative of statements of the Speaker and it is under this category that such issues have in the past been dealt with, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** But I have just give you a ruling and....,

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Mr. Speaker, I have waited long for you to address an issue which you promised.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I said, I have just given you a ruling, would you please sit if you do not, I will have to....,

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Would you kindly repeat your ruling for me...?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** The ruling is that if you have a difficulty with me on any matter that you seek to bring it under rule (let me get it) where it says, “That you cannot continue in the Parliament and openly challenge any ruling by the Speaker.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Mr. Speaker, there has been no ruling and I am not challenging your ruling.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Well, okay, I am ruling now that I would not be order....,

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** And I asked again for your clarification on where I may bring my challenge.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Just a minute. Okay 41(1) The Speaker in the House and the Chairman in Committee shall be responsible for the observance of the rules of order in the House and Committee respectively and their decision upon any point of order shall not be open to appeal and shall not be reviewed by the House except upon a substantive motion made after notice.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Again, Mr. Speaker, I am not asking for any order made by you. I am not quarrelling on any order in fact, it is an order that you have not made and which you have promised to make, Mr. Speaker. I am not challenging..., and that is why I wanted you to allow me to finish what I was saying thoroughly, Mr. Speaker, so you can understand the point I am making. I had raised the matter in the House more than once, Mr. Speaker. You give an undertaking that it will be addressed. Mr. Speaker, in the interest of justice the matter relates to my character assassination in this House by the Leader of Government Business which was reinforced by you, Mr. Speaker, in the normal course of business, if a Member of the House accuses another and it is challenged, it is the requirement of the accuser to present the evidence. I have vehemently held that the accusation made by the Honourable Prime Minister against me is absolutely false. You have heard, Mr. Speaker, that you yourself have heard it in the normal process of business in this House under those circumstances, it is the requirement of the accuser to provide the evidence failing to do which, it ought to be withdrawn and a suitable apology be made and I am asking, Mr. Speaker, in the process of justice that my name be cleared. My name, Mr. Speaker, means more to me than some people think. It is what I come into this world with and I intend to go with and I will not allow it to be dragged into the mud warmly and apparently with very ulterior motives and I ask that in a year and five months, it is more than time that this matter be resolved and I thank you [applause].

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, may I say this if you may permit me. There seems to be a misapprehension as to what the House is about. The House is not a court of law. If an Honourable Member makes a statement and he says that he has heard that, the person says, no he did not make that statement and asked that it be withdrawn and I said, yes that I heard it, what can he do? No one can [interjection] no, no, no, no.

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, this is not a court of law. I am not obliged under any particular rule after the passage of the time in the House to bring a tape recording to say that this was said or not that was said. This is not a court of law. I made my point, he made his point and as I understand it, we move on.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Honourable Member, unless you are going to raise something new other than what you have raised before I was about to say, of course there has been some time passed on

this and for some reason or the other, these matters have not been attended and..., Honourable I am supposed to be heard in silence, so why you are disrupting me? [Interjection] no I heard, Mr. Speaker, so I just..., [interjection] no, no, what are you [interjection] well, what did you [interjection] yes, let me hear you.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** I notice that you use the plural in introducing saying, these matters, because if you know, I do have a matter of the similar nature and in that matter you had asked for evidence which I have brought to this Honourable House about a statement that my friend, the Member for South Leeward had made in this House and the Honourable Prime Minister had contradicted it and you asked for the evidence which I had presented to you as you had required and you said that you would rule on that and you have not, so in the context of the issue which is raised by my Honourable friend from West Kingstown I think it is an appropriate time to raise that issue again and to ask you for your decision on it.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** These matters have been lingering for some quite some and I am not going to give an undertaking now that I am going to rule on them at any particular period. I am not going to give it. Let us move on. That is my ruling. If you have a problem as I say, bring it under substantive motion of notice from..., place it on the floor. Let us move on please. I said, let us move on please. Honourable Member, would you please sit down.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker...,

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I am ruling that I am moving on.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Mr. Speaker, again may I explain to you...,

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** No, no.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** The Honourable Prime Minister was permitted to rebut my statement...,

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** No.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** And he made a statement...,

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I said “no.”

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** In error. During the Sitting of the last Parliament, Mr. Speaker, I pointed out to you very pointedly you know...,

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, would you please take your seat? I do not want to hear nothing more on this issue.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Okay.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Right.

## STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I have a few matters on which I would briefly like to inform this Honourable House. Mr. Speaker, the first of the matters concerns my visit to Taiwan and the United Kingdom. I would not go into all the details, Mr. Speaker. I went into the inauguration as is known and there were many formal events. I want to really report mainly on the meeting I had with President Ma at which, Mr. Speaker, the issue of further assistance in respect of the airport was raised and agreed to in principle in which we will follow through.

The issue on energy was raised, alternative energy and that is a matter with work in progress and thirdly, Mr. Speaker, I raised with him, and this is importantly, the question of the indebtedness of the Government of Grenada to the EXIM bank of Taiwan and I have outlined to him that they are a part of one currency and to look for some ways in which some forbearing can be given to the Grenada Government. It is not the first time I am making representations but I made it now personally to him. I have done it hitherto in writing. I met the students from St. Vincent and the Grenadines and that, Mr. Speaker, always pleases me.

In the United Kingdom, Mr. Speaker, on the night of the 29<sup>th</sup> that is night before the last there was a very important ceremony put on and the word ceremony which 50 Vincentian Entrepreneurs were recognised and honoured and there is a Mr. John, a relatively young man who got the top award, he actually runs three restaurants in London and it was very well attended at the Mayfair Hotel. I want to congratulate the office of the High Commission and more particularly Mrs. Doris Charles who had been given the responsibility for organizing this event [applause].

Mr. Speaker, last night I returned to St. Vincent and the Grenadines from London at 7:00 p. m. and at 8:00 p. m. I had a two hour meeting with the Emir of Qatar who was here in our country, I met him on his yacht and I wanted to say I was there with the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that the relationship between our two countries is deepening. A delegation is coming from Qatar soon to deal with a series of matters in relation to investments, not only in St. Vincent, but on the Grenadines Islands and in relation to the airport and there are also offers of scholarships for our students. But they have to be excellent students because what they have there now, they have a university city in Qatar where there are six branches of world renowned universities out of the United States, Carnegie Mellon, for instance Cornell Medical School and I would be very good for us to broaden the number of scholarships which we are getting to top class institutions for our students. I am going very briefly on these, Mr. Speaker, given the time.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, to make an announcement that on the 15<sup>th</sup> May, shortly before I left St. Vincent, pursuant section 4 of the International Banks Act, Minister of Finance, Prime Minister he granted approval for RBC Royal Bank Holdings ECA Limited a class B International Bank Licence. I think this is worthy of mention because, Mr. Speaker, you know we have..., when we came to office there were about 40 quote unquote “offshore banks”, very swiftly because of the changes in legislation and demands we have put upon them, they were whittled down to nine and then there were four or five. With this one we have been trying to get a bank which has an international bank which has a big brand name and this is one RBC which has already a huge domestic presence in the Caribbean and I think that we should..., that is an important announcement I think in

relation to the growth of our Financial Services Sector. Those who are involved in this matter would know the significance of such an institution.

Mr. Speaker, I want to read a statement because of the importance of the subject in our foreign policy. I would make a copy available to the House, Mr. Speaker and there are some editorial corrections so I will have them done. It is on Syria.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, as whom to a small but vibrant community of Syrian and Lebanese immigrants whose presence we welcome and celebrate. As responsible members of the national community, pledge to uphold the principles of the United Nations charter and as representatives of a peace loving and God fearing country whose Coat of Arms is emblazoned with the Latin Phrase, "Pax et justitia", Peace and Justice, the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines wishes to make the following statement on the recent evidence of a massacre in the region of Houla in the Arabic language, it is spelt, Elhouleh, but on CNN and BBC you have it as Houla in Western Syria and more broadly on the civil war currently on the way in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Mr. Speaker, in recent days Houla was the site of a protracted military conflict between the Syrian Government forces and those of the free Syrian Army, the main Opposition force. Additionally, there is uncontroverted evidence that scores of civilians in Houla was subjected to severe physical abuse and many were shot at close range. The parties responsible for these dastardly crimes have yet to be determined and are still at large.

The Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines condemns in the strongest possible terms the abhorrent killings and wounding of civilian men, women and children in Houla. The Government extends its deepest and more sincere condolences to the affected families. We also call for the relevant national and international authorities to conduct a full investigation into the atrocities committed in Houla with a view to ensuring that the perpetrators are held accountable and brought to justice.

Mr. Speaker, the deepening civil war in Syria is of grave concern to the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines. We are also concerned with the potential for the conflict to spread beyond Syria as has been the case with recent cross border skirmishes in the Lebanese Republic and the Republic of Turkey.

The active presence of radical Islamic terrorists including the confirmed involvement of Al-Qaida in anti-government violence is of particular..., is cause for particular alarm. The complexity of this conflict is potential for further escalation or expansion to neighbouring states, the increase in sectarian strife and the growing Al-Qaida presence in Syria all demand coordinated diplomatic efforts that will lead to a cease fire by all the parties, the commencement of a genuine dialogue between the Government and the Opposition and a peaceful resolution to the crisis. St. Vincent and the Grenadines is guided by three clear principles, when formulating its foreign policy posture on situations involving civil war and sustained violent conflict as in the case of Syria.

These are one, the immediate cessation of all violence between and among all parties to the conflict. Two, the commencement of inclusive political process geared towards the locally crafted and negotiated solution to the conflict without undue outside interference. And three that the international community should not take actions that will exacerbate the violence making negotiated solution more difficult or serve as a pretext for military intervention or undue external interference in the sovereign affairs of states.

As such in the case of Syria, the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines remains committed to the application of peaceful diplomatic and political solutions to the root causes of the ongoing civil war. We are fully supportive of the efforts of Kofi Annan the joint United Nations and Arab League envoy to Syria. Kofi Annan six-point plan must be actively supported by all peace loving states and fully implemented by all parties to the Syrian conflict. In that regard, care must be taken to ensure that the mandate to assist all victims of the Syrian's conflict is not misused as a pretext to engage in activities that will exacerbate or prolong the civil war. Sets of intervention or efforts to further militarise the conflict only undermine the efforts of the special envoy and a delegitimising of the internationally agreed six-point peace plan. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, this position which I have just articulated about efforts not to further militarise the conflict is a position which was articulated earlier this week by the White House Press Secretary on behalf of President Obama.

Mr. Speaker, the vicious massacre of innocent women and children in Houla is but the latest deeply disturbing example of a rapidly deteriorating situation on the ground in Syria. Our country proudly counts among the citizens and we reiterate the many individuals and families who were born in Syria and Lebanon and who make myriad contributions to the vibrant tapestry of a modern and cosmopolitan Vincentian society. Do we put our Syrian brothers and sisters at the deepening spiral of violence, unrest and loss of life occurring in this civil war, while steadfastly advocating a course of peaceful diplomacy and a strong commitment to sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of Syria as well as to the purposes and principles of the United Nations charter.

Mr. Speaker, if I may remind the Honourable Members, what is the text of the Kofi Annan six-point plan, which this Government supports and we do all our work at the United Nation's in this regard and through our Foreign Ministry to uphold these six points. To give the plan a chance:

1. commit to work with the Envoy in an inclusive Syrian-led political process to address the legitimate aspirations and concerns of the Syrian people, and, to this end, commit to appoint an empowered interlocutor when invited to do so by the Envoy;
2. commit to stop the fighting and achieve urgently an effective United Nations supervised cessation of armed violence in all its forms by all parties to protect civilians and stabilize the country.

To this end, the Syrian government should immediately cease troop movements towards, and end the use of heavy weapons in, population centres, and begin pullback of military concentrations in and around population centres.

As these actions are being taken on the ground, the Syrian government should work with the Envoy to bring about a sustained cessation of armed violence in all its forms by all parties with an effective United Nations supervision mechanism.

Similar commitments would be sought by the Envoy from the opposition and all relevant elements to stop the fighting and work with him to bring about a sustained cessation of armed violence in all its forms by all parties with an effective United Nations supervision mechanism;

3. ensure timely provision of humanitarian assistance to all areas affected by the fighting, and to this end, as immediate steps, to accept and implement a daily two hour humanitarian pause and to coordinate exact time and modalities of the daily pause through an efficient mechanism, including at local level;
4. intensify the pace and scale of release of arbitrarily detained persons, including especially vulnerable categories of persons, and persons involved in peaceful political activities, provide without delay through appropriate channels a list of all places in which such persons are being detained, immediately begin organizing access to such locations and through appropriate channels respond promptly to all written requests for information, access or release regarding such persons;
5. ensure freedom of movement throughout the country for journalists and a non-discriminatory visa policy for them;
6. respect freedom of association and the right to demonstrate peacefully as legally guaranteed.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that our country as a responsible member of the international committee make the statements so that everyone knows where we stand. The world is a like a village, a very small place, not only because we have Syrians and Lebanese here, but what happens elsewhere affects us intimately. The very petrol which we buy, the competitiveness for our tourism product, all of these things hinge on we having peace and in this particular case, peace from settlement of disputing in the Middle East and very much so in Syria.

Mr. Speaker, our competitiveness is affected by things which we do and things which are outside our control. For instance, the price of oil I mentioned shipping and when we have a fixed exchange rate and matters which at the same time would affect your competitiveness, it means that it can have an adverse effect on your earning of foreign exchange, wealth creation and so on and so forth. So apart from the issues in themselves as I have addressed them they touch and concern real practical things on the ground and we wanted to make sure that we put down our marker on this issue in our Parliament.

Mr. Speaker, I want to say that the issue in Syria has been of such great concern to us that when in February there was a vote at the General Assembly when this country had abstained for a particular reason. We laid out our position in a ten page document to all of CARICOM because we have to make sure and to everyone, to all our allies and friends. We are a small country; we have to make sure that our voice carry some kind of moral weight and authority for good reason. I believe that the statement today will go somewhere to contribute to that. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Mr. Speaker, while I express appreciation for the Prime Minister's statement and I know you do not entertain questions, but there are times the Prime Minister has allowed questions for the BAICO/CLICO matter as the case may continue within the statement. But one cannot help, Mr. Speaker, observing that while we are addressing a series of questions and rightfully so, Mr. Speaker, domestically there is not a Vincentian who is unaware of what is happening right here in St. Vincent on the ground at Buccama on the Bay with Harlequin. Where for over ten months people cannot be paid, investors, business houses, employees and there is a potential for a business to belly-up, leading to violence, at

that work site we have had a cottage burnt already, mysterially burnt and we cannot pretend that we are unaware of that matter.

Equally, Mr. Speaker, in the same way we have welcomed and rightfully so, RBC to the financial architecture there is the Millennium Bank's situation for which we believe in St. Vincent and the Grenadines a statement should also be issued in this House because it is no less of importance to us than those that could be identified. So we are interested in both acts of omission and commission and I am inviting the Honourable Prime Minister to soonest share with this Honourable House, work in status of Buccament Bay, Harlequin Resort in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, because injury on the financial front are no greater than those on the financial front in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker [applause].

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** May I just say this? A few days before I left on the trip to Taiwan I had a discussion with the persons whom are responsible for the investment at Buccuma and a number of issues were raised. We get a lot of statements which may or may not be factual, so part of my job is to ascertain the facts. I have some of the facts in my possession and those at the time I shared with the persons concerned, the investors concerned.

This morning one of the matters which I discussed with two members of staff at my office, senior members related to precisely the question which the Honourable Member for Central Kingstown has raised. Now I should add that there are mechanisms within our legal framework to address certain matters including institution..., for instance workers who may have challenges, there is a Labour Department which is the first port of call, which is the institution to carry out the investigation and to provide the necessary advice in addition to whatever other advice is required.

Mr. Speaker, in relation to the Millennium Bank, you see when that matter first arose, I made a full statement on the matter, I read a full statement on the matter at a Press Conference which was carried live and which there was report. Now I said then and I say now that the Millennium Bank, whatever issues were involved in persons who invested money and yet the money did not play that issue..., that question of any fraud or anything connected to that was not dealt with in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, but in banking institutions in the United States of America. In fact, the very FCC complaint had those facts and if Honourable Members go back and look at it, they would see the way in which the authority here in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, that is to say the International Financial Services Authority, dealt with this matter in a proper and scrupulous way. Like everybody else, I hear rumours as to who got money from whom and so forth, well I do not know about those rumours, I do not know about those rumours and I am not dealing with those kinds of rumours. What I can tell you is that all the authorities involved in this thing, including the authority of the Minister of Finance under which the International Financial Services Authority is located. All act most scrupulously on this matter.

## REPORTS FROM SELECT COMMITTEES

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to lay on the table the Minutes of the Committee on the Cooperative Societies Bill and the Report it. I think it was circulated to all Honourable Members already [interjection] eh? I thought it was circulated to all Honourable Members, yes.

Mr. Speaker, may I just before the question as you said, we have a long agenda and obviously we are not going to finish this agenda today. We will have to come back some time soon to complete the agenda and we can work out that date before we suspend our Sitting today, but just to say that tomorrow morning we have a Sitting specifically for the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty.

## QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWERS

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

*Please indicate the fiscal outturn for the period ending 30<sup>th</sup> April 2012 as compared with the same period 2011.*

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I am obliged, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, may I just say this before the..., the original question which was circulated had 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2012, I mean you have the substitution, no problem whatsoever, Mr. Speaker, in the circumstances. I just wanted to say that perhaps, it is a suggestion and I believe that several questions which have been changed that when indeed they are altered, when the alteration comes in maybe the office of the Clerk can have them sent promptly, because for instance, I called in from overseas to ask if there was any alteration of any questions and if any notice, they said, 'no' but it would have been in the document but the document from the House would have been in an envelop directed to me and therefore my staff would not open such an envelop from the House unless I authorized them to open it. So that it is last night that I saw the changes to several questions when I came in, in fact after meeting with the Emir. Fortunately we fairly efficient shop around the office of the Prime Minister in the Ministry of Finance that I was able to get all the data. But I just make that for what it is worth, I am not complaining, I am just..., for instance, some persons may not have been in a fortunate position that I was even though that I only got them, I would have seen them up to 9 O'clock last night [interjection] well after 10 O'clock, thank you.

Mr. Speaker, let me say first of all that the fiscal situation for the first four months of this year compared to the four months last year, the first four months last year, the fiscal situation has improved, but I want to reduce the force of that statement by saying it is still a challenging situation and we are not out of the woods. So I want to make that point even though we have seen improvement.

Total revenue and grants for the first four months \$152.4 million compared to \$144.7 for the corresponding period last year. Current revenue \$148.3 million for the first four months this year compared to \$142.6 million

for the first four months last year. Total expenditure this year \$159.3 million compared to \$176 for the same four months last year. Recurrent \$157.6 million compared to \$172.6 million. The current balance a deficit of \$9.26 million for the period first four months of this year compared to a deficit of \$29.9 million for the comparable period last year and in respect of the overall balance \$6.89 million deficit compared to \$31.3 million to the previous..., sorry, overall balance \$6.89 million deficit compared with a deficit of \$31.27. Well it has a lot of squalling I have on it with other things; I would not want to show you my squalling. I am answering the question which is asked.

I have on it here a lot of the other details, the precise amount of taxes and incomes and profit and international trade and the itemized issues nah and I am not..., I am giving the fiscal outturn as I am asked. So as I say a little better than last year, or you can use the formulation, improve somewhat, but still we have our challenges.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question no. 2.

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

*Please indicate the number of subscribers to the Government's recent \$40 million Bond issue other than the underwriters.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I would provide the data in relation to the question. I just want to preface that by explaining to Honourable Members when you float a bond issue on the Regional Government Securities Market, how we proceed so that one would have an understanding beyond just the numbers. Indeed, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition would have an idea about this and moreover, if I may say this, when I had called the Leader of the Opposition shortly before I left for Taiwan to tell him about the special sitting for June 1<sup>st</sup>, I took the opportunity to give him information and background about this because I know that there was some discussions in the public media.

Mr. Speaker, sometimes I have read some comments and people tend to forget. Mr. Speaker, just bear with me how proceed with these matters with a certain organization and discipline. In my budget speech I said among other things that I would be going on the Regional Government Securities Market for \$40 million in ten year bonds to part finance the capital programme of the Government. So this \$40 million is part of the budgeted arrangements. Now when you are going to..., I also said that this would be the first time since the global economic meltdown from September 2008 and continuing that this would be the first time that we are going on the market for medium term monies save and except when we go and borrow on very concessionary terms like from ALBA or the CDB or the Royal Bank.

We then set about to get an intermediary, a financial institution to manage this bond issue for us and we selected the First Citizens Investment Services, which is a company associated with the First Citizens Investment Bank in Trinidad and also related to the Caribbean Market Brokers Limited. They are all in the same network of companies and there is a local branch of First Citizens Investment Services headed by Ms. Norlann Gabriel here locally. So we want to help to build the local entity too and they had the job. All the requirements, the prospectus, everything is done and Mr. Speaker, a date is had with the Regional Securities Exchange and we

[interjection] no, I am coming to the data, it is not land skills, because you see, Mr. Speaker, what happens, there are a lot of people who talk a lot cliché talk and shorthand and I have to explain, because part of my job is to lift the level of understanding of everyone so that when people are confronted with untruths that they can get what is the true picture. So the date was selected and that date April 27<sup>th</sup> if I recalled that that was the date, and it went on the market and within..., I was overseas, I was in Barbados, I was recuperating and I called, the Director General of Finance and Planning said, PM, it was a Friday, he say, you have been oversubscribed within an hour and a half already, we have gone pass the \$40 million.

Now, Mr. Speaker, when you have the \$40 million and the entity like First Citizens Investment Services, they would not only do the job for you, but they will with the Ministry of Finance and do the preparatory work. They themselves if they are satisfied in that they have confidence in the management of your economy, they will also buy bonds, they will buy it for two purposes, for themselves to keep and or to strip them down and sell them in smaller denominations to other persons or institutions that is how it is done. And they had the confidence and they said that they would purchase \$20 million.

Now that is immense confidence. This is not a statutory body doing that you know, this is a financial entity, they buy it to either hold themselves or to strip down, because there is a secondary market for it, because they are in the business of making money and that is how markets operate. So they took \$20 million, I read things on the internet, I read in the newspaper here, say that people want to know who subscribed, who buy. Now if the Honourable Linton Lewis goes to buy \$200,000 worth of bonds, I must broadcast that he buy \$200,000 worth of bonds? That would be known to the and that would be known to the exchange because it has to go into the depository, so all the issues relating to payment of the interest out of the sinking fund which is put in the Estimates or the amortization of it annually into the Estimates, so that when the ten year is finished that you know the money is in the sinking fund that you will get your money. Because that is the way we operate that is why people have confidence in the issue [applause]. You do not take shorthand cut for these things.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the question is intended to create some kind of a mischief. They want to know other than the underwriters, how many other subscribers to the bond issue, but the fact that the underwriters take \$20 million is not a reflection of a lack of confidence, they are taking that because they themselves are a financial institution, they would not take it unless they have confidence. So that is the first point which has to be made and to avert the mischief and to throw smoke in people's eyes.

Then, Mr. Speaker, in addition to the underwriters which took half of it, really well \$19.7 million, but say \$20 million, there were 17 other subscribers. I would not call the name of the other subscribers, I will give you the number [interjection] I know, but that is not all what you have been saying in the media first. You say you want to know the names, you want to know the names and people who may not know that you misspoke will think that well okay they could get the names and I had to tell Kojah Anthony at a Press Conference, if you buy I cannot tell people your name. There are 17 others and I made the point at the Press Conference which I shall repeat here, the only name that I am obliged to reveal is any institution of the Government. In this case, the National Insurance Services where they purchased \$5 million because that would come in the audited accounts which we would lay here of the National Insurance Services and you could ask me that and I could say that, because that is public business and the National Insurance Services were wise to buy \$5 million because they get 7.5 percent interest from a Government which pays its debts and which has the sinking fund arrangements

set up properly and we have it in our Estimates and we keep our sinking fund payments going out of which the bonds would be paid and if it is..., you see when people do not know things and they chuckle, there are a lot of people who want to be Ministers and want to be Prime Minister, they do not..., I will say this, there is not one person on the Opposition who understands what it is to be Prime Minister, not one of them. They do not have a clue about this job, not one of them, not one single one of them. Because the Honourable Leader of the Opposition was Prime Minister for five months, Sir James was looking over his shoulder in the office next door. So he does not understand what this is and this is not only about items which go up, Mr. Speaker. Expenditure goes up or revenue goes up and it comes down and Arithmetical or escalator view of economics. Being Prime Minister is far more evolved, far more profound [interjection] I am answering the question you see, you asked the question. You cannot control me answering it. You can control Anesia, not me [laughter] [applause] not me, not me, not me.

So, Mr. Speaker, there are 17 subscribers other than the underwriters. In fact, Mr. Speaker, I even said to him, the Leader of the Opposition, you know there are several local people institutions who bought the bonds you know, there are several local people who bought the bonds you know.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** [Striking of gavel]

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I went away and I came back and I am surprised to see this was on the Order Paper; I am surprised to see this on the Order Paper. I am obliged.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Supplementary?

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** I am glad the Prime Minister answered the question.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you. Question no. 3 then.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** He alone knows.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I alone do not know, but you talking as though you know and you do not know.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** I understand it fully and this is no sign of confidence.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** You know.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** As you are trying to give the public.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Striking of gavel, question no...,

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** You go ahead man, the underwriter have to take 50 percent and you telling me it is a sign of confidence, who you think you fooling?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Your partner in St. Lucia he went for 50 he got 30 he has to go back again. Why your underwriter did not take him.

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

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

*At the last sitting of Parliament, the Honourable Prime Minister gave a report on the CLICO/BAICO situation.*

*Is there any further update on the OECS Government's contribution required to ensure that Special Annuity Holders will receive payment or part payment.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I will give the information as to where we are in terms of the new developments. First of all, just refresh Honourable Members' memories in relation to BAICO, Honourable Members would recalled that since the last days of the Manning administration I had secured for the currency union US\$50 million from Trinidad and Tobago to be put into our Central Bank for purposes towards the situation of BAICO.

I reported that we had had to move from plan A to plan B that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago said that they were only going to put US\$50 million additional of new money, Cabinet decision was made on that. We had a meeting on the margins in March of the CARICOM meeting and we got from Prime Minister Persad-Bissessar, that \$26 million for the previous year in the CARICOM petroleum facility which no one had informed us that it was still continuing through all the discussions that we can take that \$26 million and then I asked for a further \$24 million to put it up to \$100 million in all, so I was trying to get more than that and a memorandum has been drawn, it has been sent, in my own absence I had asked Prime Minister Anthony to have it sent on to Trinidad and Tobago. In fact, this morning I spoke to the Chief Technical Adviser to the Committee, the sub-committee and insurance which I head in the monetary council, Mr. Antoine of Grenada and he said that he has been informed that the matter has been sent on. Hopefully just for signing that we do not have to talk again about that.

We are having a meeting of the monetary council on the 29<sup>th</sup> of this month and I am hoping that at that date, in fact, I am going to ask the committee to give us at that date with \$100 million plus the original idea of US\$75 million from the OECS countries what all we can deal with in so far as we are talking about the annuities now and what are various sliding numbers from US\$75 million coming down to say US\$25 million as to what we all can put together.

So I am hoping we will have that for the monetary council [interjection] no, there are some people..., some Governments are saying when they originally talked about plan A they could get..., they would contribute towards the \$75 million some are saying no, they do not think they could contribute as much to \$75 million so we have to get the technical work to see where we are with the \$100 million from Trinidad plus the..., because you remember most of that is from Trinidad of the first \$50 million is going to the traditional life, so we are talking really about the 50 million plus a little from Trinidad and as much from us and we will find out by the 29<sup>th</sup> with all the technical permutation with different numbers as to what various Governments can put.

In the meantime, St. Vincent and the Grenadines as we had promised through the Supervisor of Insurance, Mr. Maurice Edwards in claim 148 of 2012 has sued a financial institution for \$135.6 million, this is for St. Vincent

and the Grenadines BAICO. This here is a suit that I have and I will make a copy available..., I have asked that they get me a copy so that I can give the Leader of Opposition one. This money would be for St. Vincent and the Grenadines policy holders.

Now this is going to take some journey, this is going to be taking some journey but we are confident about this. Mr. Speaker, may I just say this, I am amazed, I did not call the name of the defendant company, financial institution, I said what the claim number, unless I missed it anywhere, I have not seen when I looked at the newspapers last night about midnight, for the last two weeks that I have not been here, I have seen anybody..., it looks as though anybody has gone, any of the newspapers have gone to the court house and get a copy. I do not know if other media houses have done it, I do not know, but I specially gave the number so that they can go and look for it. I repeat it again 148 of 2012 it is a civil suit in the High Court. There is nothing wrong in calling the name of the company, but the important thing is not for me to call the name of the company, the financial institution. Just that the suit has been filed against them and we think we have a strong case. That is so far as the update I am getting.

If Mr. Speaker, I may just add this out of the interest for the nation and the region and given my regional responsibilities on this matter is this, a meeting is taking place today in Grenada between our technical team and the judicial manager of CLICO Barbados and personnel from the Ministry of Finance in Barbados. They have a proposal which they are putting to us to see if we can sort out the CLICO Barbados end with some finality. So that is where we are. This I want to repeat it, this matter has consumed so much of my time over the last three years. It has not been easy going. We made progressed as is clear, but the journey is still not complete. This kind of work requires focus and discipline and clarity of thought, keeping the interests of the policy holders and our financial system uppermost. Thank you.

#### **SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION**

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** At the last sitting of the House when the Prime Minister made his presentation, you had indicated that you are expecting \$100 million from Trinidad and Tobago. I would assume then that that \$100 million...

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Excluded the other \$50 million.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Yes, so in effect what would be available for meeting part of the \$325 million when annuities are only \$50 million?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** US\$50 million.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Yes and that in relation to the OECS countries, it is somewhere between zero and \$75 million.

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

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** So the situation in effect is more difficult than I thought.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, let me say this, for the entities which we have below \$32,750 we are able to take care of all of those and they would be about 70 percent of the policy

holders. It is where now we are going above that and where we are looking for monies and how we can streamline that and..., so as I say again it is a work in progress. We want to pay out certainly everybody with the minimum sum first and then continue.

4. *Dr. the Honourable Godwin Friday (Northern Grenadines), asked the Honourable Minister of Community Development, Youth and Sports:*

*Given the desperate condition of the pavilion at the Clive Tannis Playing Field in Port Elizabeth, Bequia:*

*Will the Minister please provide an update on the Government's promise to repair the facility so that the many people who use it may do so safely and with dignity.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker, in the interest of time if the Honourable Member or the Honourable Minister wish to simply give a start date on the extent of the work to be done, I would be satisfied with that.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Just a moment, I am wondering if there is a misprint here, because I am seeing Community Development, Youth and Sports. To who is the question is now being directed? Minister of Sports [interjection] striking of the gavel. Just a minute, just a minute please. No hold your question, the reason why I asked if it has been a misprint because I notice it is embracing your Ministry, they are two different Ministries. So I am asking now if the Minister of Sports whether he is in a position to answer this question. This is not a question that nobody could not answer; I will ask him because maybe he did not see it. Minister of Sports.

**HONOURABLE CECIL MCKIE:** This was not provided to me so I do not have the information.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** You do not have it, right. Then we move to question no. 5.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Let me say this, if there is a question and you did not get to the Minister, the Minister can certainly provide a written answer to you and it could be read out on the next occasion without any prejudice to anything else because the Government considers question time to be a very important exercise in democracy and accountability, so that we are accountable to the people as a whole. That is why I take question time and this Government takes question times very seriously and that is why we allocate so much time to it. That has never been the case before my time here as Prime Minister. It is a very important measure of accountability and we take it seriously, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I understand that, Prime Minister, but also too maybe if we..., one of the guiding principles you know we can follow here is the Minutes of maybe the last meeting, because that would..., I suppose this is an oversight some how, I believe it is. Well one of the guiding principles we can follow is that of the last meeting, or Minutes of the Meeting of the House where we have all the Members and their various portfolios outlined so that when addressing our question, you know if we could just refer to that you would not have these you know, these things mixed up. But as the Prime Minister says and I rightly agree that the Minister should provide the answer at a later date. I am sure the Honourable Member will be happy for that okay.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Having changed the question, Mr. Speaker, how we are going to know which Minister is going to provide the answer?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Well we..., hold a second, hold a second [interjection]

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** So obviously we know who the Minister is, so why you did not provide the answer?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** No, that is not the question. Honourable Member, wait, wait, just a minute.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** No, this is just playing games, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Just a minute please. The Honourable Member said he did not get the question, therefore he could not provide the answer to the question he did not get. That is what he said. I am saying [interjection] well that is a different situation [interjection] why are we going to debate that now? He is promising...,

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** To just say this, the way it happens there is no need.., it is not anything with games, because we have been known for answering questions all the time and we bend over backwards even when they asked them to the wrong persons. Mr. Speaker, when these questions come in, for instance, Community Development, Youth and Sports, more than likely the Office of the Clerk would have sent it to Community Development. So the Permanent Secretary in Community Development, who would have gotten that, was no longer the Permanent Secretary for Sports, properly speaking that person should send it on to the Permanent Secretary up in the Ministry of Tourism, Sports and Culture. So that..., and it is quite possible in not to actually get it until you see it late when the Order Paper actually comes out itself with it. So I want Honourable Members to appreciate too that Permanent Secretaries are a critical component of the Constitutional Apparatus of the country and the Permanent Secretaries have to provide the data to their Ministers. The Ministers are the ones who would answer and they would take what information in and out to fashion it in accordance to all the circumstances. So I just want to..., I do not think..., we have too many important things to discuss rather than to fight really over a matter which is of frankly speaking, of no real moment in all the circumstances.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question no. 5.

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

*What is the status of plans to repair the main Kingstown (deep water) wharf and, specifically, why is the work so long delayed, well beyond the initial projected completion date.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, all scheduled repairs works to the Kingstown (deep water) wharf, all, all of it is completed on time and within budget, so I do not understand the status of the plans to repair the main (deep water) wharf and specifically, why is the work so long delayed well beyond the initial projected completion date? So you have some information that really I do not have. All it

required is for you to just make a telephone call and say, Ralph, what is happening up there? You know I mean it is a simple thing.

During the period 2008 to 2010 no less than three assessments on the structural integrity of the Kingstown (deep water) pier were undertaken. Assessments were prepared by the Port Authority Civil Department, Lee Young and Partners and Port of Palm Beach, Miami. All reports pointed to the need for work to be done on the access trestle to the pier. Following a tender process that received submission from five companies, three from Trinidad and Tobago and two from St. Vincent and the Grenadines, a contract was awarded to Capital Signal of Trinidad to repair the access trestle at a cost of US\$546,254.70. This project began on the 11<sup>th</sup> April 2011 and was completed on the 8<sup>th</sup> August 2011.

So the project consisted of the removal and replacement of approximately 1250 square feet of deck material and repair to the concrete piles and beams. No further work is scheduled or planned on the pier as the port is awaiting the finalization of the Caribbean Development Bank Port Rationalisation Study currently being conducted by a consultant from Mott Mac Donald out of Great Britain. This study would determine the best mix of Port facilities for St. Vincent and the Grenadines up to the year 2030. This project is scheduled to be finalised later this month. I am talking about all the studies. Preliminary work with options is under discussion. We have..., this is the interim report of the Port Rationalization and Development Study by Mott Mac Donald and the idea behind it is to move the Port from up there down to the Western side of the city and to do developments from further developments on the water front. Depend on what components you are putting in or not putting in, so far you are looking at a number in the region of US\$100 million. So I have actually held discussions with some financiers. We are looking for public/private partnership. It would hopefully change the..., not the face of Kingstown, but it would change the way in which several areas of the town would live, improve the quality of their lives; improve to fish and sea etc. This is another big project.

The Port..., it is since about 1960 they built that Port up there you know. It is an old Port. We have the one at Campden Park we had to shift a lot of container work down there, Mr. Speaker. But we have to do something. We cannot just leave up there and just patch it, patch it all the time. We have done a significant amount of repairs, but we got to try and look strategically as to where we are going to be 2030/2035 that is the point. So somebody gave you some wrong information really. You notice again inside, you got to check your sources.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question no. 6 Honourable Member for Northern Grenadines.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE GODWIN FRIDAY:** Mr. Speaker, nobody give me any wrong information but I am grateful to the Prime Minister for the answer. He give more information than I have anticipated.

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

*The Bequia Anglican Community High School needs a lot of repair work to bring the building and its environs up to reasonably acceptable standards, including the fencing of the school grounds.*

*Will the Minister please state whether the long-discussed plans to fence the school grounds will be implemented and if so when.*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister of Education, question no. 6.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would like to remind the Honourable Member that this question was dealt with at the sitting of Parliament on August 11<sup>th</sup> 2011, but nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, I will refresh our memories.

Upon coming into Government in 2001 the ULP had to make right an historic wrong in Bequia. The NDP had taken away the Anglican Primary School from the Anglicans, the ULP returned it to them 2002 the building was strong; the Ministry of Education saw the need to have the compound fenced. An assessment was done and the technical team saw the need for retaining walls for proper completion of the fencing. On August 30<sup>th</sup> 2010 I informed this Honourable House that the Ministry of Education has already procured some fencing wire and poles. BRAGSA had recently reassessed all our schools that need to be upgraded, but, Mr. Speaker, the Bequia Anglican Community High School has been re-vested absolutely to the Anglican Trustees.

Following discussions held between the Trustees and the Ministry of Education the Right Reverend C. Leopold Friday, Bishop of the Windward Islands informed the Ministry in 2011 that the Church had nominated several persons to serve as Board Members. The Anglicans have decided that the best way forward would be to conduct a study along with consultations in Bequia in order to determine the best approach to managing the school. After the consultations and study had been completed, the Ministry of Education and the Anglican Trustees continued dialogue aimed at moving forward with the development of the school. The first consultation took place on Thursday August 18<sup>th</sup> 2011 in Bequia.

Mr. Speaker, under the 9<sup>th</sup> EDF Education Support Programme co-financed by Government and the European Union, a modern fully equipped Science Laboratory was built for the Bequia Anglican High School. BRAGSA conducted significant upgrading work on the school during the 2011 Summer Vacation. Elements of the upgraded works included replacement of ceiling in specific areas, conducting of repairs to roof, windows and doors, repainting of interior and exterior walls, replacement and repair of electrical fixtures and fittings, conducting of repairs to washroom and kitchen areas, repairing of broken furniture and the new furniture was also sent.

Mr. Speaker, it would be remiss of me not to mention that while we looked at the upgrading of the Bequia Community High School, this Government embarked on a significant project and give the people of Bequia a new State of the Art Primary School at a cost of \$6.6 million [applause] with project financing via a Caribbean Development Bank Loan and additional counterpart financing from the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

This school was made of concrete and was opened in 1955 and further had pit latrines up until 2002. The Ministry of Education continues to use a participatory approach to management, administration and governance of the education sector. Mr. Speaker, I would further like to remind us all of the severe financial and economic constraints under which the global community is operating, but we are working along with the Anglican Trustees in whom the school has been vested and expect that the school would be further upgraded in due course. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker [applause].

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question no. 7 Member for..., supplementary? [Interjection] oh question no. 7 sorry. Let me apologise, I should have announced that the Honourable Member for Southern Grenadines would not have been at this meeting today. Sorry about that.

7. *The Honourable Terrance Ollivierre (Southern Grenadines), asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, National Security, Legal and Grenadines Affairs, Seaports:*

*In the 2012 Budget Address, the Honourable Prime Minister stated that \$950,000 grant by the United States of America was allocated for the construction of a Coastguard Base at Canouan, which was to commence in mid-January 2012. Will the Prime Minister please state:*

a. *Is the project still on-stream from 2012;*

b. *Where in Canouan is the Coastguard Base is to be constructed; and*

c. *What is the status of the project.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, the construction with the proposed Coastguard Base in Canouan is under the direct control, note, direct control of the US SOUTHCOM Military Division of the United States Embassy in Barbados. The US Defence Department awarded the contract on the 27<sup>th</sup> September, 2011 to Palgag Building Technologies, a company from Israel, Palgag. The US Department of Defence in correspondence dated the 29<sup>th</sup> December 2011, further advised that the project's start up date was mid January 2011, the project start-up date, 2012 sorry. This does not mean the actual on site construction since it is a design on build contract, so the project starts in mid January 2012, but the actual construction will commence later. The companies in the design phase, discussions are ongoing with the Chief Engineer in the Ministry of National Security. A concept design was received and the feedback provided. I brought the documents so I could have shown the Honourable Member the draft designs, but he is not here. So he will probably have to drop by me sometime and I will show him.

The company is in the process of doing all the mobilization for the commencing of the construction. A soil test was carried out February 2012 and all the application for work permits have been filed with the Ministry responsible and those which they ever asked for work permit from, I have granted those work permits. I do not know if there are others pending for me to approve for persons who would be working with this company, those who are working with Project Building Technologies. A Coastguard Base will be constructed in the Charles Bay area in the area of the old fisheries. The Chief Surveyor has this matter in hand. Once the designs are completed of course and they have to be signed off by the Chief Engineer, who is responsible overall for works which are done even though he does not do the design, he signs off on it and the work will start. So the project is on, the project is on, but we have to..., remember building a wharf is not like you just digging a foundation by a 4 x 6 house, you got to design the thing properly.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question no. 8 Honourable Member for Southern Grenadines.

8. *The Honourable Terrance Ollivierre (Southern Grenadines), asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, National Security, Legal and Grenadines Affairs, Seaports:*

*A number of crime fighting activities and initiatives which include the establishment of a police substation in Mayreau to assist in the strengthening of public safety on the island and the safety and security of yachts anchored at various Bays on Mayreau were to commence in 2012. Will the Honourable Prime Minister please state:*

- a. Will the police substation be established in Mayreau in 2012; and*
- b. How soon will this project become a reality.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, it is well-known in this country that I take the work of the security of this country very seriously and the Ministry is always conscious of the security of our people. While the substation would boost security on Mayreau and the yachties, I have to remind the Honourable Member that a mobile patrol was established in 2011 involving auxiliaries on a boat that was outfitted with an outboard engine and maintained by the St. Vincent and the Grenadines Coastguard, it did not exist down there before.

The Ministry of National Security has been in discussion with the Chief Surveyor and the owners of lands in Mayreau, the land has been identified, a site visit was undertaken by the Commissioner of Police, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of National Security and the Chief Surveyor and the team is satisfied with the parcel of land identified for the substation. The design work for the substation is in progress and of course once all those preliminaries are completed, I want the work to commence. I will have resources released to have the commencement of it.

You notice..., I like when you ask me questions you know. These are Ministries works you know, these are Ministers works. I think everybody has that clearly in their heads now.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question no. 9 Honourable Member.

- 9. The Honourable Terrance Ollivierre (Southern Grenadines), asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, Economic Planning, National Security, Legal and Grenadines Affairs, Seaports:*

*The Canouan Wharf has over the years posed a major risk to daily use and public safety is of major concern.*

- a. How soon will work be done to rectify the difficulties faced in using this facility.*
- b. Has a tender been awarded to any contractor in relation to work to be done at the Canouan Wharf.*
- c. What is the cost of the work to be done to improve this facility; and*
- d. Which contractor/firm has been given/awarded to contract.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, the original Canouan pier was built in 1980 with an extension in the late 1990s. As early as 2003 the extension which was built in the late 1990, not the original one in 1980, in the 1990s it started to fail. This failure was way below the normal 25 years lifespan of a pier. Now Honourable Members may recall who was running the affairs of this

country in the late 1990s, I do not think I need to remind anybody about that, as noted in two reports, one by CCA and Mott Mac Donald, poor supervision and construction were the main reasons for the rapid deterioration of the pier, poor supervision and construction.

Closer inspections of the pier indicate that corrugated steel was in some instances replaced by smooth steel and in some cases BRC. Imagine building a Port to take Baracuda, a wharf sorry, with BRC [laughter] no, I just want all these things to shoo in when people having amnesia. You putting up Baracuda with BRC, (you can grumble from now until the cows comes home) and I am answering the question you know. You all asked it, once I am on my feet I answer. If you do not want hear the lyrics do not ask me nuttin.

Thwarter, the methods used to bind the precast slabs together were inadequate for the expected load of the pier. I am not going to say who carried out the extension work. In an effort to safeguard the public portions of the failing structure was demolished. So to safeguard the public we had to demolish part of the failing structure and the failing structure, the extension. The question was asked here; let me make sure that I am answering it fully. Yes, it says, “the Canouan wharf was over the years posed a major risk to daily use and public safety”, now if you build it with BRC, what you expect? I did not build it with BRC you know.

However, Mr. Speaker, they leave the problem with me, I have to do something in the interim. So I break away a part which is obviously dangerous. In order to make the wharf useable and safe for uses of that facility, the Port Authority has demolished the failed ramp section as well as supporting piles. Work to ensure berthing of vessels is ongoing with the continuous replacement of bollards and fenders, because we have to do thing meanwhile. No tender has yet been awarded to any contractor in relation to the work to be done at the Canouan wharf. Lee Young and Partners a Trinidad Based Consultant Engineers and Project Management Firm, who are part of the original design team was asked by the Port Authority to perform an assessment on the pier.

In 2009 CCA also requested to perform an assessment of the pier, based on these two assessments, Lee Young and Partners were asked to provide the following:

1. optimum layout of a new pier with alternatives and costing.
2. preparation of final design and tender documents.
3. construction services such as review of tender preparation contract documents.

So Lee Young and Partners has delivered on the alternative designs and costing, but no final designs have yet been approved by the Port Authority Board. Based on the assessment mentioned above, the possibility to improve the existing structure is limited by the condition of the existing piles. No costing has been provided as both assessments point towards the building of an alternative. Preliminary designs are under review and are estimated to cost US\$3.5 million. I have indicated before that no contract has been awarded to any firm. I am really interested in having this matter sorted out soonest and we are also in discussion with the developers down there.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question no. 10 Honourable Member for Central Kingstown.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, if I may..., I have just been advised that the representative of a foreign government is at my office and I did not know that there was an appointment there, it was given in the lunchtime, they just assumed that I would have been back in time. In as much as we are now almost 2 O'clock Mr. Speaker, and we are not going to be able to finish all of these questions, I am wondering whether we take the suspension now for the luncheon period and come back at 4 O'clock and if that is the case Mr. Speaker, I would..., because I would like to pass the three electricity questions, have them and they could be considered, Mr. Speaker, if they can be asked..., three of them, since they relate to subject matter, so I can answer to them in an omnibus fashion to provide all the relevant details.

I beg to move Mr. Speaker that this Honourable House, do stand suspended until 4:00 p.m.

**Question put and agreed to.**  
**House suspended at 1:50 p.m.**  
**Until 4:00 p.m.**  
**House resumed at 4:15 p.m.**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Pray be seated. You know the process followed really should have been No. 10 but the Prime Minister is not here. In order for us to expedite things maybe we can look at those questions that do not involve the Prime Minister and when he comes then we will deal with the questions accordingly. I recognise that we are pressed against time; therefore, I think it would be question No. 13. Honourable Prime Minister is here? Yes it seems that PM is here so we can continue as listed.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Honourable Members, I beg to move under Standing Order 12(5) that the Standing Order hours of sitting for today's proceedings be extended, so that we can have our work after 5:00 o'clock continue.

**Question put and agreed to**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** We should be moving to question No. 10 now; this question is directed to the Honourable Prime Minister from the Member for Central Kingstown.

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I do not know if I understood the Prime Minister correctly when he said he wanted to do 10, 11 and 12 and allow him to flow. Is that what you are suggesting since they are all related?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Eh!

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** I am happy to accommodate you Mr. Prime Minister.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** If you need.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yes, well, Honourable Prime Minister

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** It may cause you problems; on this occasion with the seven questions committee [laughter] actually this was what was done at the last parliament. See how things come around, eh! Mr. Speaker,

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** No! No! I am not going to let you.

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** No, I am not letting [inaudible]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** No! I am not going to let you get away with it.

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** You want to get in?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** No! I am not going to let you get away with that. I was just following the rules as they say and we are trying to ensure that the questions are not too excessive. And in our opinion, very often we thought that the questions were excessive. We felt you were asking three questions in one. It is up to the Prime Minister if he wants to answer.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, may I say this, the reason why I make the suggestion is that they all relate to the same subject matter, and for the answer which I will be giving to be intelligible I would need to do a general comment of the context so that the Honourable House can understand the answer with all the facts.

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

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Well, it is the same intelligible approach I was taking the last time, so I would not allow you to have it both ways. I will ask question No. 10 in my name 11 and 12, so, I commence with question No. 10 in my own name. And Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister is signaling that he appreciates that these questions are designed to assist in seeing whether we could have a reduction in electricity cost, or whether our approach is the right one that is the basis for these questions standing in my name for the Honourable Prime Minister.

10. *The Honourable St Clair Leacock (Central Kingstown) asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.*

*In 1973, a fuel surcharge was introduced by VINLEC as a consequence of the fuel crisis.*

- a. what was the cost of fuel to VINLEC at the time of introduction of the fuel surcharge in 1973 and what is that cost today;*
- b. what was the average monthly fuel surcharge for the years 1973, 1983, 1993, 2003 and 2011 and*
- c. what was the average monthly consumption of fuel for the same years 1973, 1983, 2003 and 2011.*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Prime Minister question No. 10.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** [Interjection] okay that is fine, Mr. Speaker, in order to answer this particular question regarding the fuel surcharge, it is important for me in providing the data to provide the context. Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that the fuel surcharge increased over the years but that does not help us except one wants to make the mischief to say, "well the fuel surcharge in 1974 was ... the

average monthly fuel surcharge in 1974 was 1.51 cents per kilowatt hour, and in March 2012 it was 52.73 cents per kilowatt hour". So that you can get a headline saying, "Murder, advantage" [interjection] No! I am going to say that because that is what [interjection] no, I am not saying that because I am making the reference in relation to "Murder, advantage", which was said at a Press Conference and which was covered in the headline of the News newspaper in relation to some modest increases in relation to the water rates. Well, I am not interested in mischief I am interested in truth [interjection]. Ah! Ah! Okay, I hope I see you when I go into heaven's gate though [laughter] I hope I see you [laughs] and that is the acid test [laughs].

Now, Mr. Speaker, this matter of fuel surcharge, if we have to understand where we are we have to get to know the context. Let us look at an average domestic consumer who consumes an average of 100 units per month in 1990, would have paid VINLEC an average of \$59.42 that domestic consumer using the same amount of electricity in 2011 would have paid VINLEC an average of \$96.70 a month. This represents an increase of \$37.28 that goes directly to the fuel company to pay for the fuel used, because in 1990 VINLEC would have received \$50.00 out of the \$59.42 paid by the customer to cover its operational cost with \$9.42 going to the fuel company supplying fuel to VINLEC.

In 2011 VINLEC would have received the same \$50.00 from the \$96.70, which it would have received in 1990, but in the second case now, in 2011 instead of \$9.42 going to pay the cost of fuel \$46.70 would have gone to pay for the cost of fuel. So, the surcharge is related to the cost of the fuel. Now in very simple terms, Mr. Speaker, the VINLEC operational cost which has changed in the period 1990 to 2011 it still receives the same unit cost from its customers to run an efficient operation. In fact, while it received the same unit cost from its domestic customers, commercial and industrial consumers are paying less.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make this bold statement here: VINLEC has lowered the cost of the basic component of the electricity cost to consumers, but this has been eroded because of the increase of fuel surcharge over which we do not have the control because of the increase of fuel prices. The fact is this, if fuel prices in 2012 were the same as they were in 1990, electricity consumers in St Vincent and the Grenadines would have been paying basically the same figure for electricity. We do not manufacture oil, we do not produce it, we have to import it and we try to import it so that we can get savings on the financing arrangements, which savings under the policy of the opposition would not be available because you have made it plain that you will un-sign the Petro Caribe Agreement on which they are savings for the country in respect of the financing arrangement. Mr. Speaker, we must realise that in 1974 when the fuel surcharge was introduced the monthly fluctuation in the cost of electricity to the customers is only as a result of the changes in the fuel surcharge rate. So, I repeat this point all the electricity companies have to address this issue of rising electricity cost and they have a mechanism, and the one which has been established here is the fuel surcharge mechanism which is not unreasonable and it is not unfair.

So, having put the context, I will give the numbers which without the context they do not have meaning. The average monthly fuel surcharge for the year specified as follows:-

1974	1.51 cents
1983	15.18 cents

	1993	8.56 cents
	2003	16.24 cents
	2011	46.73 cents
March	2012	52.73 cents

The average monthly consumption of fuel in 1974, '83 and '93 they did not have the data to provide me, so I can give you for 2003, 2011 and 2012 March.

	2003	435,350 gallons
	2011	513,898 gallons
March	2012	545,262 gallons

Mr. Speaker, I will say this, the fuel cost if you were to look at the extent of the fuel cost now that we have the gallon:

		\$
1990	fuel cost was	5.4 million
2000		14.4 million
2010		46.1 million
2011		58.7 million

and correspondingly because of those increases the fuel surcharge moved from 9.42 cents from 1990 to 16.42 cents in 2000 to 36.76 cents for kilowatt hour in 2010 and in 2011 46.7 cents. Remember this \$58.69 million for fuel. When persons tell me, “Well, you must not pay for the fuel surcharge”; where are you going to get \$58.69 million from to run the electricity company? So, I know that you say that you are interested in the fuel surcharge coming down why you are asking these questions, but without me providing the context, you do not have any understanding, you just have some numbers which are completely meaningless.

Mr. Speaker, I would say this, what have we done to help the consumer? I am dealing with question No. 10, because, Mr. Speaker, unless the matter is one to generate mischief, we have reduced the minimum charge on all domestic electricity consumers; we have eliminated the demand charge to commercial and industrial consumers; we have reduced the basic electricity rates in 2011 to commercial and industrial consumers; we have reduced the electricity rates in the hotel sector especially for the difficult period between 2008 and December 2010. The government pays VINLEC a subsidy to cover a portion of the fuel surcharge to the poor and vulnerable homeowners and we have reduced the electricity rates to industrial consumers as well as gave volume discounted electricity rates to commercial and industrial consumers.

The policy of the government is to deliver a very efficient electricity system at the cheapest possible cost that we can do it, and we have an energy policy but we are not going to talk about that today. I just gave you the context and I just gave you the framework; and I have just gotten a note here, the airlines have also introduced a fuel surcharge. Mr. Speaker, I have other context to answer on each of the others, we could have done it in the

other way you know, I am an old fox in this business you know, it is a long time I am here. You do not want to do it my way?

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** That is Senator Francis song.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** No, he is the silver fox. [Laughter]

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** You said the “my way” [laughter], the “my way” I am talking about not the “silver fox” [laughs]

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** He is the silver fox.

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** My way is ...

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

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** “My Way” is the Honourable Member’s song, do not steal his thunder.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** [Laughs] No! No! No!

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** [Laughs] do not steal his thunder.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I thought that you were singing another song.

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** No, he patented “My Way”

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** No, but I thought in the song that I understand you are saying, “Regrets I have a few ...

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** No! No!

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** [Laughter] but then again too few to mention” [laughter] [knocking on desk].

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Do not touch that you know; do not touch that. [Laughter] That is why I am the Major, do not touch that. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Speaker,

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question No. 11 I am on.

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Mr. Speaker, the same indulgence that was allowed the Prime Minister, because we are seeking for an improvement in an important matter here, energy cost and electricity cost; not just for domestic consumers but for competitiveness. And the Prime Minister assumed in question one that my interest is in seeing the fuel surcharge go down and that is precisely what I am

arguing against. The argument is that the mechanism is outdated; it is obvious that you must recover your fuel cost period in the exercise, and therefore my argument why I am going through this exercise is to prove that we are looking in the wrong place for solution to the electricity problem; and that is why I am being so meticulous in stripping it and having this discussion. So, I send the man back down to square leg and I sank the ball.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** So, we are breaking the rules of questions. [Laughter]

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Well, it is your House, Mr. Speaker. Question No 11, Mr. Speaker there is an error here and I really only saw it today, since this is what he was fed, I will stay with the commercial electricity consumers. It should have been domestic, if you have that I will take it.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I have the commercial.

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Yea, so, I will take the commercial I have to come back another time for the domestic.

11. *The Honourable St Clair Leacock (Central Kingstown) asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance:-*

- a. *how many commercial electricity consumers were in 1973, 1983, 1993, 2003 and now 2012;*
- b. *taking into consideration the fuel surcharge what was the cost to electricity to domestic consumers in 1973 and February 2012.*

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I will give the raw data. I haven't gotten the 1973 figure.

1983-1310

1993-2330

2003-3667

March 2012-4403

- b. Including in the fuel surcharge the cost of electricity to domestic consumers. The domestic block tariff 1973 to 1974 minimum charge \$1.50, first 20 units at \$0.10 next 60 units' \$0.15 remainder of units at \$0.07. 1974 average fuel surcharge rate \$1.51 per unit per kilowatt hour, 1974 bill for the consumer for using 100 units \$13.91.

I have given the context already for that; for the domestic tariff

March 2012, 0-17 units the minimum charge \$5.00; 18-50 units at 42.5 cents per unit the special rate, usage over 50 units all units at 50 cents. The March 2012 fuel surcharge as I indicated earlier is 52.73 cents per unit, the March 2012 bill for consumers using 100 units at \$1.0273 is \$102.73. In relation to (c) it is the same as 1(c) which I have just answered and again the context which I have given applies.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY**

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** A clarification, the fuel surcharge in 1973 was \$1.15 on average 1973/1974

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

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** And today it is 0.52 cents.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** And I also said to you that the cost of electricity gone up, in 1990 I gave you \$5.4 million

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Well,

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I am on my feet, and then it went up

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** 2011 at \$58.69 [interjection] precisely ... oh, sorry Mr. Speaker ...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Just a minute, Honourable Member, the question would be asked and an answer would be given, if there are supplementary questions then the supplementary. But I do not want any dialoguing between questions.

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** I agree with that.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, but you see my instinct first about the mischief? I repeated that same number twice in the first question first answer and the second one but he wanted it repeated again so he will go on a radio station and say what the fuel surcharge was in 1974 and what the fuel surcharge was in 2011-2012, without saying the increase in the price of electricity. Now, it does not make any sense using one set of numbers, you have to put the context.

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Why are you so nervous?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Nervous? I am on my third consecutive 5-year term you know.

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** But then the [inaudible]

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I am on my third consecutive 5-year term.

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** It is the third [inaudible]

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, he is getting more and more frustrated.

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Ah! Ah!

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Even the acting Superintendent of the Methodist Church had to reprimand him. His frustration is too much, his frustration is too much.

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Opposition is not easy you know.

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** You always walking into traps. The Superintendent's reprimand is no different than what you got from the [inaudible] in the Catholic Churchyard.

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

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Ah! Ah! Digest that.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question No. 12

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** 12, 12

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

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** 12.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** You, you, what [inaudible] you do not even know half. It is beyond you, it is beyond you.

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** When you are ready for me, Mr. Speaker.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** It is beyond you.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question No. 12 Honourable Member for Central Kingstown. [Striking the gavel]

12. *The Honourable St Clair Leacock (Central Kingstown) asked the Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance:*

- a. *what percentage of VINLEC'S monthly fuel consumption is for domestic users as against commercial/industrial use;*

- b. what is the current line loss figure for VINLEC; and*  
*c. does the government intend to re-examine the fuel surcharge and the unit cost of electricity for consumers with a view to reducing energy to domestic consumers.*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Prime Minister, question No. 12

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker given [pause] yes, given the fact that there is no distinction between the consumption of a unit generated by water or diesel, and that the standard efficiency kilowatt hours per gallon of our diesel generator is consistent, apportionment of fuel consumption by customer group is approximated to their unit kilowatt hour consumption. For the month of March 2010 domestic, commercial and industrial kilowatt per hour consumption represented the following percentages.

Total kilowatt consumption for March 2012: 0.255 million kilowatt hours; domestic 47.5%; commercial 44.3%; industrial 5.6%; street lighting 2.6%; VINLEC: moving annual technical line loss 7.23%. At the end of March 2012 one of the better performances in the region and internationally, I have been advised on this matter.

Mr. Speaker does the government intend to re-examine the fuel surcharge and the unit cost of the electricity for consumers with a view of reducing energy to domestic consumers? This issue is not just a simple issue of re-jigging the numbers between fuel surcharge and increase the basic charge; this is an issue of an overall energy policy directed towards reducing energy cost which is a wider debate than just doing the re-jigging in relation to the formulae. I must say at the same time that all the issues are always under review. I am obliged.

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

### **Supplementary Question**

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Honourable Prime Minister, to the extent that there is the agreement that the energy cost must be recovered what initiatives are being taken to have the operational cost reduced so that the domestic consumers may earn improvement?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, we have been doing a series of things and I have outlined a number of the measures already but I have also ... we have a new Plant now at Lowman's to improve the efficiency there. We are trying to invest more in hydro to improve the efficiency there and we have managerial efficiencies. The number which I have given to you, would indicate to you that VINLEC has become more efficient as an operation because of the ... if you look carefully at the figures that I have given you the fact that the basic that they received from 10 to 15 years ago is basically the same. What they received for the operational cost is distinct from the fuel cost and if you want to make the division, between both of those themselves indicate that VINLEC is becoming more efficient. The question of the cutting down of the extent of the line loss all of those things, you know.

I must confess that your supplementary question, you know, if a man tries to believe he is bowling a bouncer and he drops short and he gets hook for six that he is coming back with another delivery? And now he just gets it cover drive for four. I do not know why are we [interjection] yes, I over pitched.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question No. 13 Honourable Member for North Leeward.

13. *The Honourable Roland Matthews (North Leeward) asked the Honourable Minister of Sports:*

*Work on the Cumberland Playing Field has been at a standstill for several months now, will the Honourable Minister please indicate;*

- a. when will work resume on this project;*
- b. what is the total cost of this project and how much of it has been expended to date; and*
- c. when this facility will be ready for use by the general public.*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister responsible for sports.

**HONOURABLE CECIL MCKIE:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, this facility at Cumberland has been identified as a facility in the North Leeward zone with great potential to host regional competition games in both football and cricket. It has been taking a little longer than anticipated but nevertheless, in response to part (a) of the question work is scheduled to resume on the Cumberland playing field on the 18<sup>th</sup> June, 2012, and that is in another couple of days; part (b) of the question, the first part, “what is the total cost of the project”? The project was estimated at a cost of \$3.5 million. The initial scope of work included the following items: construction of field and pitches, pavilions, player’s pavilion, parking areas, river defences and access roads.

Part (2) of that question – the project has an expenditure of \$1.003 million to date, and dealt with commencement of the construction of the pitch; commencement of the construction of the field; construction of southern parameter drain and radial field drainage, construction of retaining walls; construction of parking area, construction of river defenses and remedial work to Cumberland river and construction of access roads. And part (c) of the question, the following works will be implemented this year: completion of the construction of the pitch, final grading and grassing of the field; construction of the northern parameter drain and construction of the retaining walls.

The construction of the field and pitch will be completed by December 2012 and should be available for use by the general public soon thereafter. Construction of the players pavilion will commence next year in 2013 and upon completion of the pavilion the facility will be handed over to the National Sports Council. The spectator pavilion will be constructed in a subsequent phase of the project. Much obliged.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, before I go on to question No. 14, let me ask of you a question: I think you are supposed to be leaving the country sometime this afternoon?

**HONOURABLE CECIL MCKIE:** Five.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Hello.

**HONOURABLE CECIL MCKIE:** About 5:30.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I think you have some other questions on the ...

**HONOURABLE CECIL MCKIE:** Three others.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** So, I wonder if you could ask those three questions, you know, one is from the Honourable Member for South Leeward which is question No. 18 and the other two are from, who are you asking on behalf of? Oh the Honourable Leader! He of himself will ask the other two questions. So, maybe you could have the questions asked and then if you have to go.... Question No. 18 would be the next one. Sorry about that just trying to facilitate the Minister's travel.

18. *The Honourable Nigel Stephenson (South Leeward) asked the Honourable Minister of Sports.*

*Will the Honourable Minister please give a definitive date as to when work to rehabilitate the Campden Park Playing Field will commence.*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister question No. 18; Honourable Senator, Member, sorry, for South Leeward.

**HONOURABLE CECIL MCKIE:** Mr. Speaker, the Campden Park Playing Field is currently the only established playing field that offers recreational services to sporting individuals, teams and organisations other than those required hard court in the South Leeward constituency. Sporting competitions and training programmes at the facility are mostly organised by the South Leeward Sports Association. From an earlier part of the year operates the village competitions and later around August or September the scheduled South Leeward Football League.

St Vincent and [the Grenadines] Football Federation organises competitions and training programmes for the national footballers from different age and gender groupings as is currently the case, which programme dovetails with those of the league. Consequently, the Campden Park Playing Field is in constant demand year round and any rehabilitative programme will disrupt the programme of thousands of users. The National Sports Council has been liaising with the South Leeward Sports Association with a view to closing the facility for an eight to thirteen week period to adequately implement restorative works.

The Council plans to meet next week with both stakeholders; they are the South Leeward Sports Association and the St Vincent and the Grenadines Football Federation, in order to arrive at a decision to close the facility when it is least disruptive to both entities in order to implement the restoration programme. However, the Council is tentatively earmarking the first week in August 2012 for restorative work by which time the programmes of the two associations would be tailored to facilitate the period earmarked. Whereas the National Sports Council recognises the need to provide the best possible services for the development of sports, it treads wearily and agonizes when the combined needs of the overall sporting community have to be denied over a long period of time. This is a classic case of catch 22 situation; plans are falling into place for the construction of a new pavilion with change rooms and wash rooms at the Campden Park Playing Field. The project will be implemented by the Ministry of National Mobilisation where it was first lodged. The scope of work was

estimated at \$400,000 in two equal phases, each costing \$200,000. Works are expected to begin within the next three months.

The dilapidated Campden Park Playing Field pavilion was poorly constructed during the early years of the previous administration, which failed to complete the work that it started. It had become an unhygienic eye sore over the years and the time has now come for some serious work on that facility. Much obliged.

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

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** Mr. Speaker, I am going to ask the questions for Senator Frederick.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Okay.

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** I recognise that the Minister is leaving and as such, I shall get back to you with respect to those answers that you gave pertaining to the Campden Park Playing Field.

*19. The Honourable Nigel Stephenson (South Leeward) asked this question on behalf of Senator Vynnette Frederick who was absent.*

*In light of government's agreed view that the carnival festival and the Carnival Development Corporation requires improved strategic positioning, will the Honourable Minister please indicate the following:-*

- a. What if any decisions have been taken to improve Vincy Mas 2012, and*
- b. will any consideration be given to improving the value of prizes for this year?*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister responsible for culture.

**HONOURABLE CECIL MCKIE:** Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of any agreed view that the Carnival Festival now the Carnival Development Corporation requires improved strategic positioning. And if it was I am not sure by whom it was articulated. What I can say however in this context of the question posed is that the CDC has a functioning Board of Directors that deals with the development and planning of all aspects of carnival on an ongoing basis. I have been informed by the Carnival Development Committee that it has undertaken the task of a strategic review of carnival prior to the 2011 festival, and a review of the shows were also done after the carnival activities of 2011; with the view of using the information to assist with the planning and execution of carnival 2012 and future carnivals.

Most specifically a comprehensive review of the festival was undertaken each year by the following committees: the Shows Committee, Marketing and Promotions Committee, Technical Committee, Financial Committee, Administration Committee and the component separately of Pan, Mass and Calypso and Soca as well as the Beauty Shows Committee. Each of these Committees did a critical analysis of their segments of the festival and offered recommendation for the way forward. A final report was drafted and is being used for future planning.

Also coming out of the review was the requirement for CDC to improve its income streams and financial resources to be able to execute additional development programmes, and to have the ability to award components and the performers at even higher levels. The traditional sources used to finance an activity of carnival namely gate receipts, bar, rentals and corporate sponsorship along with government contributions provide challenges most times to fully finance all activities in a reasonable time limit.

In 2012 the CDC will be piloting two new revenue streams and I mentioned them this morning that is: offering selected CDC shows on a pay per view basis to patrons, and internet streaming of selected shows for a fee to regional and international customers. The success of these strategies will go a long way in further improving the financing for the festival. Much obliged.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question No. 20. Did you answer the ...

**HONOURABLE CECIL MCKIE:** Oh sorry! The (b) part of the question.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** (b) part of the question.

**HONOURABLE CECIL MCKIE:** All right, the short answer to that question is no and let me explain. The review of prizes to components followed a process of discussions and negotiations with the various components. Also changes in prizes are a function of sustainable resource available to CDC. Based on the available resources to CDC there will be no increases rewarded in 2012, however as previously mentioned the two revenue streams piloted for this year would determine our ability to consider such in future years.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question No. 20 now.

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** Thank you, Mr. Speaker, I really did not think that the Minister had to answer the (b) part of the question because what we are seeing here is that they have plans for the future.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member you did not ask the question.

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** I am going on to question No. 20 Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Please go to 20.

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** That the Senator is not here, simple.

*20. The Honourable Nigel Stephenson (South Leeward) asked this question on behalf of Senator Vynnette Frederick who was absent.*

- a. Will the Honourable Minister please indicate whether the Vincy Mas 2011 celebrations were financially profitable for the CDC; and*
- b. what is the extent of the profit or loss.*

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Minister responsible for Culture.

**HONOURABLE CECIL MCKIE:** Mr. Speaker, the Carnival Development Corporation was established by an act of parliament as a developmental organisation. The primary objective is the development of the festival with profit being a secondary objective, having the financial capability to enable a high standard infrastructure to allow components and performers access to appropriate training to further develop their skills and training. To keep judges abreast and exposed to the most up to date information and techniques to execute their independent function as judges in an adequate fashion are all areas of development which are far more important to the CDC than making a profit. Notwithstanding the aforementioned primary objectives, the CDC also ensures that it has sufficient cash flows to enable the organisation to meet its objectives. Much obliged.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Okay, thank you very much. We now move back then to question No. 14 and that question is in the name of the Honourable Member for North Leeward.

*14. The Honourable Roland Matthews (North Leeward) asked the Honourable Minister of Agriculture Forestry, Fisheries and Rural Transformation:*

*The Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Government of St Vincent and the Grenadines and ARMAJARO requires of the Government to fulfil certain obligations that are vital for the reintroduction of cocoa on a commercial basis. Will the Minister please indicate;*

- a. how many miles of feeder road, specifically geared towards cocoa production have been completed to date;*
- b. how many acres of lands have been identified for the cultivation of cocoa; and*
- c. is there any efforts being made to allow interested farmers to access low interest loans from financial institutions so as to give them start up capital for the cocoa venture.*

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

**HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, if I may just be allowed before I go into the general answering of the question to lay the framework so that the Honourable Member can and the Honourable House can be updated as to how far we are in the development of the national cocoa project. I see I have received the nod from the Honourable Leader of the Opposition [laughter] it is a positive nod [laughter]. Mr. Speaker, those persons who are following the developments in agriculture in St Vincent and the Grenadines will realise that the rehabilitation of the Banana Industry and the national cocoa project are two of the sexiest issues being addressed by the Ministries of Agriculture presently. Mr. Speaker, the Ministry has embarked on a national cocoa project as a part of its agricultural diversification strategy and on Tuesday May 15<sup>th</sup> three consultative meetings took place. The first one took place at Colonarie at 9:00 o'clock and 11:00 o'clock we were in Dumbarton. We broke for lunch at VEEJAYS and at 2:00 o'clock we were in Wallilabou that was the very same day that the houses were handed over in Langley Park and that is the kind of haste that we are moving with in this project. Over 200 farmers attended these meetings.

Mr. Speaker, the first phase of this project has already been launched and it was launched on May 17th in New Adelphi on Brian Dasent's Estate and just for the listening public, the farmers and Honourable Members the first phase of the project will involve the rehabilitation of the existing cocoa fields. There are many farmers who have fields, presently some persons have fruit trees, fir trees and sometimes you need a person with two acres or three acres. What ARMAJARO is doing jointly with the Ministry of Agriculture is that they are going in to rehabilitate the existing fields and this process entails pruning, fertilizing and spraying. The second phase which is expected to begin very soon is the planting phase, I Mr. Speaker, would be visiting Trinidad and Tobago where I plan to hold consultations with the requisite bodies to get some of the required hybrid plant material, and I shall be visiting Trinidad and Tobago on the 13<sup>th</sup> June.

Some 40 acres are expected to be used during the course of 2012 as demonstration plots. So whilst we are doing the pruning we are working on the plant material out of Trinidad, and of course these two processes will be done simultaneously at some point [Interjection] 40 new acres for the planting. Sorry. Two nurseries have already been established Mr. Speaker, one has been established in Lauders and these are private sector initiatives ran by Aster John who informed me that he has 17,000 seedlings already set and Culdric Grant, he has 40,000 seedlings already set. So in total, we have about 57,000 seedlings, so when we bring up the rest of the plant material from Trinidad and Tobago then we will do the requisite grafting.

Mr. Speaker, specifically to the question part one, it is still the early stages in the project to deal with the issues of specifically doing feeder roads that would be targeted directly to cocoa farms; but this government is a very responsive government to the farmers and we have a continued program for the upgrading of feeder roads. Mr. Speaker, the aim of the project is to establish between 6-7000 acres of cocoa within five years and of course that is the aim. We hope that the private sector stakeholders would buy in, the farmers would buy in, different organisations would be formed and play their roles. I am also updated and advised by ARMAJARO that they have already appointed a Manager. They have also requested of the Ministry of Agriculture to lend them some expertise and we have done that. The pruning process: we have loaned the project to jeeps, there are persons from the Ministry who are working on the project, and of course the persons who are doing the pruning projects they are paid overtime. So, it is a joint initiative in the truest sense of the word.

Mr. Speaker the third point, the issue of the capitalisation of primary production is one which will be addressed after the consultations with the farmers, so right now we are still speaking to the farmers. There are some farmers who will tell you right off the bat that they want to use their own monies, grow their cocoa and let ARMAJARO buy from them. There are some other farmers who cannot capitalise the primary production; therefore I have been advised by ARMAJARO that once the consultations are completed that they may enter into contractual arrangements with certain persons who will be willing to plant cocoa. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Supplementary? Oh! Question No. 15.

**HONOURABLE ROLAND MATTHEWS:** Thank you very much, Mr. Minister, but I still have a next question for you.

15. *The Honourable Roland Matthews (North Leeward) asked the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries and Rural Transformation:*

*Will the Honourable Minister please state:*

- a. is there any effort being made by government to use the assets of WIBDECO, such as ships, storage facilities and related services to market non-banana agriculture products from St Vincent and the Grenadines in the UK; and*
- b. if yes, what is the status of this initiative.*

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

**HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, before I go into answering the question, if I may just do some housekeeping matters. It was just drawn to my attention and it is a matter that we dealt with earlier pertaining to the directing of questions to the proper Minister. If I may, the Minutes, Mr. Speaker, under the portfolios assigned to me “Industry” is missing, so just for future reference “Industry” is missing.

Mr. Speaker, there is a national marketing plan and this is currently being updated and it deals with current commodity trading trends. Firstly, Mr. Speaker, the question is dealing with the name WIBDECO but the name WIBDECO has been changed over the last two years to WINFRESH, so I just want to make that as a correction. Mr. Speaker, WINFRESH plays a very critical role in the marketing of both bananas and non-banana commodities and this also ties into the national diversification strategy, one that is not only advocated by St Vincent and the Grenadines but forms a part of the OECS diversification strategy because what is done by WINFRESH in St Vincent and the Grenadines the similar trends are also taking place in Dominica, in St Lucia and in Grenada. So, there is a regional platform upon which these islands are approaching the issue of diversification.

WINFRESH plays a critical role in marketing both bananas and non-banana commodities; the question specifically speaks to non-banana. The status of the initiative:

1. Primary produce are being sent to the UK. These commodities are ginger, sweet potatoes, coconuts, plantains, eddoes and dasheen.

And I know that the farmers are listening and we are still having some problems in terms of sizes required by the UK market and all these things are being massaged, and it is upon that point that I have set up a meeting ... I organised a meeting today to meet with the Board of VINCY FRESH to address some issues to deal with non-banana commodities. But interestingly though, Mr. Speaker, there is a serious value-added component to WINFRESH in St Vincent and the Grenadines and that is done through VINCY FRESH which is located at Lauders where they make condiments, jellies, pepper sauces and different things. On the horizon also is VINCY CRISP which will be another initiative, another company which will be set up to add value to some of the primary products that WINFRESH would be trading.

VINCY FRESH, Mr. Speaker, will be exporting directly to the UK several of these value added commodities but currently they are working on consistency and quality issues. Mr. Speaker, the ships which are referred to in the question, these ships are contracted by WINFRESH, storage facilities and related services are all integrated into the marketing and distribution of all banana and non-banana commodities. So, there is always room for improvement and we are trying to see if we can extent the array of commodities that we export to the UK and I must note that we are in the very early stages of our successes as to the role that WINFRESH is playing in the diversification programme in St Vincent and the Grenadines. I am obliged, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thank you very much. Okay, question No. 16 Honorable Member for South Leeward.

16. *The Honourable Nigel Stephenson (south Leeward) asked the Honourable Minister of Transport and Works:*

*Would the Honourable Minister please give a status report pertaining to the construction of the Vermont/Francois Bridge.*

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

**HONOURABLE SENATOR JULIAN FRANCIS:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, the Vermont Bridge asphalt bridge the contract sum is \$1.387 million and to date monies advanced to the contractor \$277,000. Contract works commencement date was 16<sup>th</sup> November, 2011 however, a fair amount of time has been lost. Time that has elapsed as at the end of April just about twenty four weeks, almost 80% of the contract period and there will have to be an extension to the contract date.

The contractor is 100% mobilized; the site office is set up, the hoarding around the site is about 50%, no earthworks have commenced as yet. The fabrication of the precast beams which is a fundamental to the contract, 35% is completed; but the fabrication this is one other reason that held up the works, the fabrication of the precast beam was put on hold the second week in March up to the 22<sup>nd</sup> May last week due to non-compliance of the reinforcement specification: that is the steel, the specification on the steel was not complied with and there was a to and fro between the Contractor and the Chief Engineer. Work recommenced on the 23<sup>rd</sup> May.

All steel for the precast beams the abutment walls, the bridge foundation and for decking has already been purchased and they are kept at the sea operation compound in Campden Park, which is the Contractor on the job. That is the status of the Vermont/Francois Bridge.

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

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** Thank you very much

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Question No. 17.

## SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTION

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** Seventeen. Mr. Minister, well having listened to you and I am going on to the last question, but I just want to make sure that the delay we have had is not because there was BRC used, right?

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** [Inaudible]

**HONOURABLE NIGEL STEPHENSON:** Good.

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

*Recently a pick-up truck ran over the Penniston Bridge resulting in the death of the driver mainly because of the dilapidated state of the bridge.*

- a. Will the Honourable Minister please state whether the Government has any plans to repair that bridge; and*
- b. if so, when will actual work begin.*

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

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, every time there is an accident somewhere there is something wrong with the location, you know that. The Honourable Member for South Leeward said that recently a pick-up ran over the Penniston Bridge, it is really the Hope Bridge of Penniston resulting in the death of the driver mainly because of the dilapidated state of the bridge. But we know that was not the main reason why the pick-up went over, because the gentleman, Mr. Drummond Samuel ... and the accident occurred in 2009 not recently, 2009 [interjection] No! No! I live there you do not have to draw my attention to it I drive on it every day not like you. You drive on it once a year. But the main condition of the bridge is not the cause of the accident, Mr. Speaker, that is what I am trying to establish. The gentleman suffered a blackout when he was traversing around there and the vehicle went over: that has been established. So, let us not add what is not there to it [interjections].

Mr. Speaker, this is a remarkable statement, if you drive down Casson Hill, Mr. Speaker, you will find that a vehicle will never go over where the guard rails are already broken they always choose to go over where the guard rails are good, check it. You will never find another vehicle going over the same place that one broke the guard rails already. So, it is not really the guard rails, you understand what I am saying? When you have guard rails they hit the guard rails and go over and a perfect example, Mr. Speaker, is the Mt. Young Bridge, as a country man, the most accidents I have seen on a bridge when the rails were in place is that Mt. Young Bridge where we had the big floods. But since the floods ... [interjection] it would not have gone over [laughter] and that is what is happening at Mt. Young. The Bridge at Mt. Young has absolutely no rails and from the time of the last storm that the rails have been knocked out by the storm there has not been a single accident with a vehicle going over Mt. Young Bridge.

Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge ... [laughs] Mr. Speaker, it is a phenomenon in this country, it really is a phenomenon and the Honourable Member for West Kingstown has already observed that and is in agreement with me. But Mr. Speaker, I do acknowledge that there are no rails on that bridge and basically the Vermont River the Buccament River which comes through Vermont first is a monster when in flood, and regardless of what you put on that bridge when it comes down it is going to take the rails off. But we will repair it, we will put back rails and maybe we will use pipes this time rather than the concrete because it takes the concrete out as much as it would take the pipe out. There are some potholes in the bridge, there is a particular rut in the bridge that needs to be repair and that will be repaired shortly.

There was an assessment of bridge done, Mr. Speaker, in 2007 and a report was made on the status of all bridges throughout the state and it was assessed that this bridge could carry up to 17 tons which is not a ... in its present state it is not bad. We hardly have 15/20-ton trucks going over that. The abutment walls for the bridge need some protection and a scope of work has already been prepared for that and within a very short time we will be repairing the surface of the bridge and we could be putting in the rails even around that time as well. I do not like to give specific dates because every time you get a question from the opposition they ask to know, they want to know the date of commencement. I do not give date of commencement we will give a ballpark date, and we will put the guard rails which are basically a safety more for pedestrians in my view. For pedestrians rather than vehicles, because if in the dark of night you want to traverse there and the river is in flood it is good to have the rails to hold on to, to be able to cross the bridge. If not you get wash away unless you go right up through the old road and come up and it is difficult to cross over from over Queensbury into the Penniston/Vermont area.

Yes, and you summarised the answer on the Vermont/Francois Bridge with BRC and hope it is not going to be a BRC Bridge, we only use BRC on flat foundation not in any suspended floor and any bridge you build you do not use BRC as the foundation. This is why in the status report I said to you that the specification on the steel was not met by the Contractor you understand that, and that the Chief Engineer insisted. If the Engineer in the Canouan Jetty had insisted we would have had a perfect Jetty there [knocking on desk]. Thank you.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** That brings us to the end of question time.

## **ORDERS OF THE DAY**

### **2. Finance Bill, 2012**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, may I indicate for the benefit of the Honourable House why we have skipped over the first one, "Co-operative Societies Bill". I should indicate to this Honourable House that despite the tremendous amount of time we put aside with the stakeholders especially the Credit Union, they have been having a second look at one and two things, and they have submitted the Honourable Attorney General has advised me last night when I got in that there are a few matters, which they would like us to consider again. And of course, my instinct was well we have spent all this time already and there were all these opportunities; but once you get past a certain feeling that there has been so

much time, you know, you take the broader view that another month would not harm anybody. And in that case, Mr. Speaker, in relation to item (1) if you may permit me, it is for us to have a Motion for this to be remitted to the Select Committee for the consideration of a few other submissions.

Accordingly, I so move for the remission to the Select Committee, Mr. Speaker, and the Honourable Members would be circulated with what these other suggested changes are. I so move.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** This Motion does not need a debate.

#### **Question put and agreed to**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I am obliged, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members I beg to move a Bill for an Act to amend the laws contained in the provisional collection of taxes Order 20(12). The object and reason is self explanatory in the title. I so move the first reading.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** I second.

#### **Question put and agreed `**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move under Standing Order 48(2) that this Bill be taken through all its stages at today's sitting.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** I second.

#### **Question put and agreed to**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to amend the laws contained in the Provisional Collection of Taxes, Order of 2012 be read a second time.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** I second.

#### **Question put and agreed to**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Debate on the Bill.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, this is a straightforward bit of legislation these matters had been debated during the budget debate. We had brought the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order so that we can have those revenue measures in that Provisional Collection of Taxes Order, and it is now a situation where we are actually putting it in the Finance Bill, in the Finance Act. I am obliged.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Any further debate? Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has indicated we had some discussion on this item rising out of the Budget presentation and most of the rates relating to alcohol beverages and some other basic items are increased; and there are some items which are now moved from zero to exempt status. I think we should note that there is a provision in the law that could result in some increased cost to business for removing items from zero rate to an exempt rate when exempted items exceeds 10% of the operation to the business returns. So, it does have that implication to cost and for pricing, but this is something we had already approved.

I have looked at the old rates in relation to items like aerated beverages and different alcoholic drinks and most of them have increased about 5% over in this new piece of legislation. So that should be noted and that also applies for the excise tax on motor vehicles, in most cases it is up by another 5%. I just wanted to make those ... but this is something that we have dealt with rising out of the Budget. Much obliged.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Debate?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Leader of the Opposition. What he said is quite accurate in respect of what we had discussed in the Estimates, in the Budget Debate sorry, and which has been in the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House resolve itself into a committee of the whole House to consider this Bill clause by clause.

**House resolves itself into a Committee  
Of the whole House  
House resumed**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Member, I have the honour to report that a Bill for an Act to amend the laws contained in the Provisional Collection of Taxes Order 20(12) has passed the committee stage without amendment. Honourable Prime Minister

**DR. THE HONOUABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that the Bill for an Act to amend the laws contained in the Provisional Collection Taxes Order 20(12), the Finance Act 2012 be read a third time by title and pass.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** I second.

**Question put and agreed to**

**Finance Act, 2012**

**3. Stamp Amendment Bill, 2012**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to amend the Stamp Act Chapter 440, the Laws of St Vincent and the Grenadines, be read a first time.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** I second.

**Question put and agreed to**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move under Standing Order 48(2) that this Bill be taken through all its stages at today's sitting.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** I second.

**Question put and agreed to**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to amend the Stamp Act Chapter 440 of the Laws of St Vincent and the Grenadines be read a second time.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** I second.

**Question put and agreed to**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, this is a very straightforward Act, Bill, it is a more administrative matter for guidance to clarify item 440 by repealing it and inserting a new one. The rates have not been changed but there are some lawyers I have been advised who have a lot of queries as to how it should be read. I mean, take for instance item (b) in the law as it stands:

**“For every \$1,000 or fractional part thereof of the sum secured by a mortgage of a value exceeding \$1 million, but not exceeding \$5 million is \$7.50”.**

But (a) says:

**“For every \$1,000 or fractional part thereof the sum secured by a mortgage of a value not exceeding \$1 million is \$10.00”.**

But the way it is read in (b) if you have a sum which exceeds \$1million, which is \$1,000,001.00 the way it is read properly speaking would be that you pay \$7.50 cents instead of \$10.00. But the way in which it is now drafted is that for instance (b) for mortgages a value exceeding \$1,000

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** \$1 million.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** \$1 million sorry, but not exceeding \$5 million \$10,000 which is what the (a) would be plus for every \$1,000 or a fractional part thereof of the sum secured that exceeds \$1 million but does not exceed \$5,000 \$7.50. So, the way it is currently written somebody who wants to subvert the intention of parliament can say that \$1,000,001.00, for each \$1,000 you pay \$7.50 and could actually pay less, and therefore could rob the revenue.

So, this is really the way we have put it now is to clarify beyond any doubt. Not that the collector of taxes would go along with them but you know to avoid all the confusion we just make it plain and straightforward as to what parliament means. And that is basically it, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** That is it?

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

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Further debate; any further debate on the Bill? Any further debate on the Bill?

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, you are talking of mortgages of substantial sums of money, and the clarification in relation to the \$10,000 as the portion you would have arrived at for mortgages that is not exceeding \$1 million is now clearer in relation to what the existing law is. Similarly, with respect to the \$40,000 under (c) and the \$65,000 under (d); so it is not really an increase that is what you would have had to pay on the bottom [inaudible] I have no difficulty with this.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** No further debate on the Bill?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Leader of the Opposition in the point which we have been ... it makes it easy for our public servants in doing their work. I beg to move, Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, that the House resolve itself in a committee of the whole House to consider this Bill clause by clause.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** I second.

**House resolves itself into a Committee  
Of the whole House  
House resumed**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, I have the honour to report that a Bill for an Act to amend the Stamp Act Chapter 440 has passed the committee stage without amendment.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to amend the Stamp Act Chapter 440 of the laws of St Vincent and the Grenadines be read a third time by title and passed.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** I second it.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**Stamp Amendment Act, 2012**

**4. Sharon Dennie Retirement  
Benefits Declaration Bill, 2012**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move a Bill for an Act to provide for the payment of Retirement Benefits for Sharon Dennie a Senior Executive Officer.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** I second.

**Question put and agreed to**

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move under Standing Order 48(2) that this Bill be taken through all its stages at today's sitting and passed.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** I second.

**Question put and agreed to**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move a Bill for an Act to provide for the payment of Retirement Benefits for Sharon Dennie a former Senior Executive Officer be read a second time.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** I second.

**Question put and agreed to**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Debate on the Bill.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, there are some quirks on some of our retirement laws. For instance, Honourable Members who are acquainted with these laws would know that if you were in the public service but you were not in a pensionable service in the public service and you get into the pensionable service a decision of the Cabinet as I understand it, I have been advised and it has always been this case; should be made for the person to have their years which were not pensionable years count as part of their pensionable service. And Honourable Members who may be aware of this, may say, "Well, why these two Bills, couldn't Cabinet just do this"? Because as you noticed the difference in this Bill and in the second one, this is to take account of the service of Sharon Dennie as a teacher from 21<sup>st</sup> February, 1977 to the 31<sup>st</sup> January,

1983. But she had subsequently come into the public service, so in order ... because of the Pension Act for the Teachers; in order to get it transferred into the public service we have to do a naming Act for these purposes. So that when the documents would be prepared, if we do not do this and it goes to the Director of Audit and the Accountant General to be signed before it comes to the Prime Minister, they just would not sign it, because they would say they have no authority. So this provides the authority, this is what this is about and indeed the next one, so that the same explanation would follow.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Further debate, Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, I have no difficulty with including in the retirement benefit package persons who have served in the public service in a manner identified. But my mind, Mr. Speaker, at this time runs back to somebody like Mr. Johnsons who ran in the last elections, a teacher who had given full service, thirty three years service; participated in elections in the interest of coming into the highest office in the land institution and that is the parliament although he has served all this time, he has now lost all his benefits, the thirty three and a third years which he has already served.

I want to bring this to the attention yet again to the government of St Vincent and the Grenadines because here we are trying to make it beneficial to persons who have in fact served over the years; but given the present arrangements without coming to parliament we could not provide them with the benefits that they should get. I just want to bring that matter, Mr. Speaker, to the attention once more, Mr. Speaker. This is not aspirational this has to do with the reality of people's condition and I have no objection. I have been involved in this exercise myself as a Minister of Finance to try and supplement or to ensure that people's retirement benefits are fully covered after having given service and I raise that matter once again. Much obliged, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Further debate?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for his comments and I want to say however, the case of Miss Sharon Dennie and that of Mr. Johnson to whom the Honourable Leader of the Opposition refers are two entirely different matters in law. In the case of Mr. Kenroy Johnson he resigned from the public service, he resigned before he reached retirement age and the matter of the Teacher's Agreement had made it plain within itself that it cannot be subversive of the constitution. And even though it did not say that; the law of the land is simply this: an agreement cannot go outside of the law.

He resigned because in order to run for office if you are a civil servant you have to resign because the Representation of the People's Act and the Constitution of St. Vincent and the Grenadines says that you have to resign because when you go to the returning officer, on the Declaration which you have to swear to it says, you have to say whether you are a public officer or not. If you say you are a public officer the returning officer will give you back your form and not take you as a candidate because on the face of it you will be ineligible under the Constitution and the Representation of the People's Act.

Mr. Johnson chose to resign to seek to run for a parliamentary seat that is his choice. Mr. Speaker, what should have been done in the circumstances is if he was reemployed by the Public Service Commission. I have made it absolutely clear and I will repeat it again, I do not reemploy or employ people, the Public Service Commission would do that. A job, there is an advertisement and the Ministry of Education the officials there they make a recommendation to the Public Service Commission and they appoint somebody, so be it, I am not interfering in that process. I am dealing here with the law of the land, so that to equate the case of Mr. Johnson and Miss Sharon Dennie is quite wrong and it is inappropriate. The fact of the matter is that Mr. Johnson resigned. There are a number of people who resigned their jobs and do not get any benefit for their years. Senator Charles here, he resigned and I explained to him whether he could afford to resign and he said, well he wants to run for elections and he will take his chance, and if not he would do something else.

And there are several persons here who resigned, the Minister for Community Development, the Honourable Member for South Central Windward, the Honourable Minister for Housing, Member for East Kingstown, and I want to say this, in the Opposition, East St George, sorry, I apologise. The Honourable Minister of Education when she ran for office, she won, she was in the Opposition but she had only a couple of months to go to take her early retirement. She got into the fray and she lost all her years as a teacher you know, of course as the Honourable Senator Francis has said Mr. Speaker that Mr. Johnson could have asked for early retirement but the point about it is this his candidacy was changed, he became a last minute candidate and that the process you would not have been able to complete the process within the few days or a week, you would have needed a little more time to complete the process. This is a matter where, a [interjection] person made a choice.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** [Striking gavel]

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** So, Mr. Speaker, it is unfair and wrong to equate that case or to show any symmetry or similarity with that case and that of Sharon Dennie, so I want to make that point clear. This is an issue which has been canvassed a great deal [interjection]. No I am not dancing on the head of a pin, I am dancing on an issue of substance and I am walking on it, I am marching on it and I am being on firm ground with it, whatever set of formulation you wish to use. And that is what the law of the land says.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House resolve itself into a committee of the whole House to consider this Bill clause by clause.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** I second.

**House resolves itself into a committee  
House resumed**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, I have the honour to report that a Bill for an Act to provide for the payment of retirement benefits to Sharon Dennie a former Senior Executive Officer has passed the committee stage without amendment.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to provide for the payment of retirement benefits to Odway Thomas a former...

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Third reading.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Oh sorry, sorry, Sharon Dennie, be read a third time by title and passed.

**Question put and agreed to**

**Sharon Dennie Retirement Benefits Declaration Act, 2012**

**5. Odway Thomas Retirement Benefits Declaration Bill, 2012**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to provide for the payment of Retirement Benefits of Odway Thomas a former Executive Officer be read a first time.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** I second

**Question put and agreed to**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move under Standing Order 48(2) that this Bill be taken through all its stages of today's sitting and passed.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** I second.

**Question put and agreed to**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to provide for the payment of Retirement Benefits to Odway Thomas a former Executive Officer be read a second time.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** I second.

**Question put and agreed to**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Debate on the Bill, any debate on the Bill?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, the information is contained in clause 2(a) a student teacher 5<sup>th</sup> January, 1976 to 14<sup>th</sup> February, 1988, to have included for the pension purposes.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition has raised the issue concerning Mr. Johnson and no doubt could be raised for other persons who have resigned. The question relates ... there is a matter, Mr. Speaker, which cries out for real attention to be corrected which is this, persons who have worked in school, particularly in the case of secondary school where they have been paid by a Church for instance never been

appointed by the Public Service Commission but have served for long periods of time and they have no pension because there is no pension arrangements made internally with the management the Church. There are names which come to mind, Lennox John, there is a Mrs Joy Cato who worked at Bishop's College for many, many years. You have persons who have come into the Public Service but there are gaps, they hadn't worked with the government, so, you cannot deal with it in the way in which we have dealt with these matters here but which would require some work to be done. Like Cools Vanloo, he worked for many years, came into the Public Service but those years are missing because they were not appointed by the Public Service Commission, he does fall into it, Mr. John falls into it, [interjection]. Yes but he worked [interjection] No! No! No! I understand that he worked on contract with the Grammar School that is what I understand but he worked for years. [Interjection] No! No! No! I am not going to debate any allegations of fact with my Honourable friend but I am speaking from information which has come to me. So, I mean I tried to get the truth and I seek truth from facts. And Mr. Speaker that is an area and I have been trying to get the Public Service to look at this within the framework of the existing law and for us to see how many cases are there and the cost of it and everything like that because they cry out.

That is a different case all together from people who decide that they are going to resign, different thing all together; different thing all together you know. I heard a comment made on the other side about "mercy" now, this is the first time I have heard the issue of "mercy" being used but at least we are making some progress there, because clearly the legal ground has been conceded that there are no legal footings, none whatsoever and I think if you think you are on a legal footing go, you know. [Interjections] I am not seeking for a pound of flesh, you don't ... Mr. Speaker, there are persons who by analogy

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, by analogy they pick up something from some literature book without understanding the nature and context of the Merchant of Venice and Shylock and the question of Portia's speech, you know, before this Daniel who had come to judgement. I mean the point about it is this, it is not because it is a Daniel who had come to judgement, it means that every Daniel understands these things, you know. Mr. Speaker, I am always ... because I have lived more years than I have remaining to live I would speak openly and freely because I am going to my God with a clear, clear conscience, and the older I get the clearer it becomes, because I am going with the best water the highest source.

I beg you, Mr. Speaker, that this Bill be considered in the same manner in which the other one was considered.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier I really have no difficulty with any effort made to bring years of service by anybody who has served the public into a Bill like this to ensure that their pension benefits are enhanced. I have no difficulty whatsoever with that. When I raised the issue of Mr. Johnson, I was not raising it in the context exactly of Miss Sharon Dennie, I raised it in the context that there was an agreement signed between the government and the Teacher's Union [interjections]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** [Striking the gavel] Honourable Members, please a Member shall maintain silence while another Member is speaking and shall not interrupt except in accordance with these Standing Orders. In similar vein 37:1:

**“Debate upon any Motion, Bill or amendment shall be relevant to such Motion, Bill or amendment”.**

good [striking the gavel].

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** I just raised it in the context of an agreement between the Teachers Union and the Government signed by both parties which provided for teachers to enter electoral politics and get back their jobs if they lost at some period of time. They were then told when they tried to get it that way that you cannot get it; that it was aspirational. I do not know why it was signed in that case to the extent that it was not in accordance with the constitution why was it signed? The intention was and at that time there was a lot of hue and cry, a lot of boasting, Mr. Speaker, “Look at what we have done for the teachers of this country”! When it comes now to implementation it suddenly becomes aspirational.

Mr. Speaker, I make the same comment that I made before in respect of the others because if the agreement had been followed we would not be discussing this matter at this present time. I maintain that Mr. Johnson did thirty three and a third year service, if the Union Agreement had been implemented as agreed, there would be no problem and I stand by that. I was not equating him to Sharon Dennie or Misses Sharon Dennie or whatever her name, the point is that a way was found to deal with the matter and in the case of Mr. Johnson that way was that there was an existing agreement which now turns out to be aspirational. I give support to Mr. Odway [what is his name]?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Thomas.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Thomas getting his pension, and I want to prepare the aspirational person for East Kingstown that Mr. Johnson was not paid any money by the New Democratic Party.

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

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Mr. Speaker, ever so often in this parliament one has to stand and recognise first of all how sad an occasion it is, this evening is one of those occasions, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, this morning we heard the Honourable Prime Minister reflecting on the OBITs and the effect that it had upon him for those who had gone to the great beyond, and how he was touched. If Kenroy Johnson passed today; he will be here next week under OBIT singing a different song for the same Honourable, for the same gentleman Mr. Kenroy Johnson.

I know Aubrey Thomas; I am glad that we are making right what was wrong by giving him his full benefit but there are many things, Mr. Speaker, and initiatives that this House can take and has taken to do those corrections. We had not so long ago provisions for Mr. Dennie, for example we made a special provision for him, it was Flick Haynes I think it was we did the same thing for him, Mr. Speaker, honourable intentions. Mr.

Speaker, our own constitution makes no provision absolutely no provision at least as I understand it for a Deputy Prime Minister but the nation has one, we pay for a Deputy Prime Minister, I recognise it, maybe somebody can point it out to me, where it is that the Constitution says that there is a provision for a Deputy Prime Minister, but we do recognise and pay for it.

I also find it difficult to understand and it is the first time that I am going to address him as a past President of the Teacher's Association Union that Senator Charles could sit inside of this House and not stand in defence of the teachers of this nation. That he cannot stand for the injustice that Kenroy Johnson and the other teachers have suffered Bash Thomas and Elvis Daniel. And we can leapfrog over those issues that are on our doorsteps and go to Lennox John deserving as he may be and Joy Cato as she may be but people who have done ... ensure got some kinds of pension benefit; some kinds of. This is a person with thirty three years and gets nothing and there is only one thing that guides and directs the absence of a human heart and mercy is the political consideration, everything is for the political altar. This is a sad day for us the Prime Minister can do better he knows better and he can do better, I mean I do not want to be very personal about it.

I was fired in 1990, fired unjustly by this administration [interjection], sorry in the year 2000 not 1990 [laughter] correction [laughs], in 2001, I am sorry, in 2001; I was looking back on my starting date. Well, let me get back to the serious nature, I am here now approaching twelve years, Mr. Speaker, twelve years, twelve of the best years of my life not pensionable, not pensionable. Senator Francis escapes because he holds a ministerial portfolio so he is outside of that.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** That is incorrect, maybe that is all right that is incorrect. Maybe this is something probably we can be .....

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** I think because he is a Minister.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I am here nineteen years and I have no pension to get [laughs]

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** Well it is not right, Mr. Speaker, it is not right.

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

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** That people who serve at the highest level of the society ... I do not want to reflect upon us this evening but I am simply saying, Mr. Speaker, that it is within us within the House here to exercise those discretions and those mercies [interjection] and I think

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

**MAJOR THE HONOURABLE ST. CLAIR LEACOCK:** that thirty three years of service to this nation a Principal of high standing and repute, a Christian man like in Kenroy Johnson should not be treated in the way that we are treating him here, Elvis Daniel should not be treated this way. And in the same way that we are making amends for Miss Sharon Dennie and Mr. Odway Thomas deserving as it is and others whose names

have been brought here before we should in fact be giving consideration to the Kenroy Johnsons. Mr. Speaker, let us reflect and think deeply on these things. Much obliged.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Further debate on the Bill Honourable Senator Linton Lewis.

**HONOURABLE LINTON LEWIS:** Mr. Speaker, I commend these sorts of Bills when they come to the House for the recognition that they are giving to persons who have given yeoman service to St Vincent and the Grenadines and I have no problem with that at all. I have noted the 1976 to 1988 twelve years as a student teacher. I have been a teacher myself for ten years so I can understand the work and the contribution that gentleman Odway Thomas would have given. Mr. Speaker, I wish to reflect on a few words that were spoken by the Leader of the Opposition and also the Representative for Central Kingstown. The three teachers actually contested the general elections for the New Democratic Party, when we speak about resignation we speak about resigning for the purpose of doing higher service for the people of St Vincent and the Grenadines. They did not just resign but they resigned to do public service for the people of St Vincent and the Grenadines; [knocking on the desk] that is different thing than just resigning and I find it a bit harsh that there appears not to be any criteria as to how we go about rewarding persons who are not pensionable ordinarily. And if we do not have any criteria then we have to try and do that which is fair and that which is just, and if we appear not to be doing that which is fair or just to someone who supports the opposition party then in truth and in fact it shows and it demonstrates discrimination on the part of the administration.

So, Mr. Speaker, while we support these Bills we have to be very mindful that we are all Vincentians and we are all citizens of St Vincent and the Grenadines and I always like to refer to the essay on “Citizenship” of T.H Marshall when he says: that citizenship does not only refer to political and legal right, it also refers to social rights as well, a right to housing, a right to income, a right to education and a right to health, and that all of us citizens of St Vincent and the Grenadines those rights should be reflected in the manner in which we are treated. I want to implore this Honourable House that we should stop thinking about the resignation in the form of just a resignation to go home and relax but think about the resignation within the context of doing service of St Vincent at a higher level. These are people who were teaching our children, shaping the moral and social consciences of the people of St Vincent and the Grenadines. To the young ones children are our immortality when we are dead and gone they are the ones who will be living on long after us, and those who are charged with the responsibility of shaping the social and moral consciences of our children as did Odway Thomas, we should recognize them for their service that they have given.

And I dare say that our teacher Mr. Johnson in particular gave over thirty years of service as a school teacher resigned his job and interestingly, Mr. Speaker, to run against someone who refers to himself as a Titan virtually unbeatable. So, it therefore says, Mr. Speaker, that it was not just winning that Mr. Johnson was thinking about he was thinking about service to the people of St Vincent and the Grenadines [interjections] [knocking on the desk] and as we say it we have to take this very seriously, Mr. Speaker. Because you see, the most powerful men on earth are not those who exercise power and dominion, Mr. Speaker, but those who serve. And someone who puts himself forward for higher service in our country to try and come to parliament, Mr. Speaker, you know Bagehot the writer of the English Constitution says that there are several functions of parliament, one of them is a teaching function [interjection] and one also the information function. So, when

people try to get into the House of Parliament many come here with their respective skills to do a number of things and our three teachers I have no doubt in my mind would have been able to provide us service had they been given the opportunity.

Mr. Speaker, as we reflect on those persons who we are recognising and rewarding at this time, let us also reflect on fairness and fair equality of opportunity, let us also reflect on those teachers, and let us also some time in due course recognise the service that they also have given to the people of St Vincent and the Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, I support this Bill and I support the Bills of this nature in St Vincent and the Grenadines once we are recognising the service that people have done for our country and for our people. Thank you so very much.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Any further debate on the Bill? No further debate on the ... oh sorry.

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Mr. Speaker, you refused to acknowledge all day long [laughter], I do not know what I have ... you seemed to have come refreshed from the meeting that you have been to and just refused to allow me to say anything in this parliament [laughs]. You want to take all the fun away, Mr. Speaker. If you have been sitting here for fourteen hours, Mr. Speaker, you might as well have some fun doing it.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to give support to this Bill on the retirement benefits for Mr. Odway Thomas and naturally I had to get enjoined in the discussion that has emanated from the other side. Mr. Speaker, I have found that the opposition in many ways present in their debates politics and not law and today downstairs was a perfect example of that; their whole case, there are some appeals downstairs before the High Court, Court of Appeal and I am not trained in the matter but I sat here yesterday and I listened to them and I went downstairs today for the verdict and as I thought yesterday it seems that I have a little thing for law that the case was presented on the matter of politics and not the law. And correctly so the judgement came and the opposition lost all the appeals that they brought before the Appeal Court downstairs, all of it. And the lawyers for the government and the Chief Magistrate won their matters. And I listened to the arguments here Mr. Speaker that Kenroy Johnson wanted to provide public service for St Vincent and the Grenadines that is why he entered the race. Is it free? Mr. Speaker was it free?

Mr. Speaker Kenroy Johnson reached retirement age January of this year two years after the elections, two years after the election. Now, here is a gentleman who is a teacher for thirty three years earning maybe \$4,000 and he at the last minute after Dinky and Margaret, now if he wanted to give public service offered himself as a candidate for the NDP early up in the game. All of us knew that the elections were going to be held in December 2010, it could not go beyond that. You wait until Dinky come and Dinky get thrown out, Margaret came Margaret get thrown out and he himself said that he was offered money to run for the NDP, he said so [interjection] I heard him said so, yes I could say so in the House of Parliament because I heard him said so. And it was reported that he got some money from the NDP to run [interjection] well, you tell the public that and tell Johnson that [striking of gavel] but yet we are bringing the argument to this parliament.

Mr. Speaker here is a gentleman thirty three years advanced in age, two years away from retirement, you have gotten rid of two candidates he could only have been offered something to enter that stage to go and resign. Because he could have opted as the Prime Minister said earlier on for early retirement at age fifty and enter

politics, he would have gotten a pension, a reduced pension; my father did it at fifty. Many other public servants have done it at fifty. There is an option in the public service to ask for early retirement at age fifty. So, he is working for \$4,000 a month, he is approaching his retirement age and what is he saying? “Well, they say the Ministers of government get \$10,000 a month, I am earning as a teacher \$4,000 a month, well, let me try and beat Ralph Gonsalves get elected and naturally if I come in last minute after Dinky and Margaret I am a bright teacher, I will be given a Ministry”. So, it was a calculated risk on the part of Mr. Johnson and he lost, and he should have known that from the beginning because as the Honourable Senator says, Senator Lewis he is coming up against a Titan, a man who has won by 80% of the votes in his constituency in the last three elections. [Interjection] 82% [laughter], and here is a gentleman making this decision at age 53 knowing he has two more years to retire expect to beat Ralph Gonsalves in North Central Windward?

Well, they won the Referendum 13-2 and everybody was so up in ... they were elated, it is a matter of just going to the polls and the people would vote the NDP back into government and everybody who run would have won and all of us would have been Ministers getting \$10,000. So, there was a calculation regards to monetary amounts. Well, it is seven thousand something, I see on my pay slip plus an allowance of \$1,500 and an allowance for something else. I do not even read it properly. Sometimes for months I take the slip and throw it in the drawer. The Accountant General is taking back \$1,500 a month every month, I did not find out until twelve months later because they say they over paid me for a period. I do not even look at it I throw it in the drawer. I put the date on it and I throw it in the drawer so, I could say it is March 11<sup>th</sup> or April 11<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Speaker, so to come in this House in a debate for a matter as Sharon Dennie and Odway Thomas to raise that and before the night is finished all Members of the Opposition bench would speak on it to carry forward the argument of Kenroy Johnson but I do not see the link which is matter of again putting politics before what is proper and the opposition will continue to lose in that manner. You know the politics, you understand the politics but you do not use it, you do not push it in front all the time that is why you continue to lose all the time even in the court of law and the Magistrate Court. Mr. Speaker, the way the Judge rule downstairs, Mr. Speaker, Tom, Dick and Harry could have picked it up when you heard the presentation from the lawyers yesterday for the opposition; similarly, today’s arguments that are being presented on the bench here this evening.

The Honourable Minister of Education resigned her job to run she won you know but she was in opposition she did not get any pension. Clayton Burgin the Minister of Health now

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable,

**HONOURABLE JULIAN FRANCIS:** Honourable, sorry, resigned his job to run when you won we did not win government, [interjection] you did not win, the second year, but he is not getting any pension for his years either. I heard the Honourable Member for Central Kingstown getting up and taking an attack on Senator Elvis Charles, which is what motivated me to speak this evening, how he ought to be ashamed of himself. Elvis Charles himself took the gamble, Senator Charles and lost; the Honourable Member for Central Kingstown beat him by three hundred and something votes, a good licking but he is going to stay in the race and he is going to run again, he says that he knows that if he does not win he does not get back his job. [Turning to Senator Charles] You weren’t a teacher, Senator a teacher like Kenroy Johnson not as advanced in age and experience

like Kenroy Johnson, but to come into this parliament and to say that Senator Charles ought to be ashamed of himself for not standing up for the teachers, Mr. Speaker, I think it is a low blow by the Member for Central Kingstown and it is because the politics is being put in the front again, because this is the man who is contesting him again in the next election in Central Kingstown, so he wants to make him look small in front in the sight of people in St Vincent to make a statement like that in the House of Parliament and I think he should recall it but that is his choice.

Mr. Speaker, there are many others who have taken the decision like the other three teachers [interjection] you resigned from government too? [Interjection] you resigned after twenty two years? You are not getting any pension; you hope you win two terms so you get a pension and gratuity [laughter] you hope you win two terms that is the gamble of the politics. So the new Honourable Senator Lewis I understand his presentation, but to come and say that Kenroy Johnson did this in a matter of public service, Mr. Speaker, absurd! Totally absurd! And then it is not the first time that the Honourable Member for Central Kingstown has hit, tried to hit below the belt with regards to my position, I did not have anything to resign from, I took the decision that I am getting into politics, I worked hard and I am here. If you see the state of this you would know how long I have been here, it break up, Senators have come and gone on the other side, I am still here [interjection] thank you [laughter] because I realised the position I put myself in and I continue to do the work for my Party.

I am the General Secretary and I was the Campaign Manager for the three elections and we got victory so I claim victory as the Campaign Manager that is one of the main reasons I am in this parliament you know and the difference between that Party and this Party. When we won the election in 2001 the first two Senators were Senator Snagg, Senator Julian Francis and Senator Juliet George and Andrea Young. Honourable Senator Snagg was the Chairman of our Party and I was the General Secretary of our Party. Those are the two first people we appointed as Senators in this parliament here. It is a pity that you have to come so long after the others in your Party who do not even hold a position anymore. You are numero uno in your Party. Mr. Speaker, the matter of politics had been raised on these two [interjection] yes I am also saying, Mr. Speaker, but I am also referring to the Honourable Member, I do not think there is anything wrong. Through the chair, Mr. Speaker, I have said to the Chairman the Honourable Member, who is also chairman that, Mr. Speaker, that in my Party I am appointed here because I am General Secretary and Campaign Manager and Senator Snagg then was the Chairman of the Party and he was appointed as Senator.

And the Honourable Senator look I mean he is sitting at the end, I would have thought that with the Chairman of the Party coming in that he would have moved up one seat but it is the protocol in the House that the youngest [interjection] I am wondering why the other Senator not here today that is something for us to wonder about. If I were the other Senator I surely would have been here to congratulate the new appointment of the Senator but the point that the Honourable Member for Central Kingstown continuously make, and again politics drive him to make these statements that my position as a Senator is different because I have been Minister since 2001 it makes no difference Honourable Member and Mr. Speaker. The law does not provide for a pension for me, I do not get a gratuity and a pension either you know. No I do not, but I am going to be serving this parliament for fifteen years, fifteen years I am going to be serving this parliament by the end of this term [knocking on the desk] naturally, I believe that my political leader the Honourable Prime Minister might pull me out at the last year [interjection]. Well, I am not talking the cousin part; if it is cousin part we are talking he

will make sure I get a pension [laughter] [laughs] and gratuity but I am not talking cousin inside here. I am talking that the Honourable Member for Central Kingstown, Mr. Speaker, has on more than one occasion raised this matter erroneously in this House that my position with regards to the Senatorial appointment is ... he gives the impression that I am pensionable and that I get something for it. I want to say that is not so and I want the people out there to know that that is not so because I believe that if the people know that they are going to make noise that I get something for the years I serve inside here. Mr. Speaker, I support these two Bills and I want to state categorically that the positions of Odway Thomas and Sharon Dennie there situations are totally different to that of Kenroy Johnson. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

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

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, ordinarily Mr. Speaker, I would not be commenting on this Bill but I sat here and I had to reflect and let me begin, Mr. Speaker, by saying that I am totally in support of this particular Bill. I have to reflect on why we as individuals chose to become involved in politics and Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Senator is accusing my colleague the Honourable Major Leacock of being involved in politics. Mr. Speaker, when people win elections and become involved in government there is a phenomenon that I have paid attention to for quite a long time and it relates to the transformation that seems to occur. I have often compared the sentiments prior to, during and after one becomes a Minister of government. I had reason today to refer to the pound of flesh and the quality of mercy not by accident, Mr. Speaker, because I know as relates to this particular Bill I have seen a number of instances where people who ordinarily would not qualify their names have been brought before this parliament. I recall a gentleman named Mr. Branch who served sometime in the Water and Sewage Authority who ordinarily would not qualify, yes, and everyone knows, Mr. Speaker, about the political connection of this gentleman.

Now, we have in our educational system stricture when it comes to the teaching of math and science, this is unquestioned and we are not the only country in the OECS, in fact in the world Americans themselves are challenged now to get their students up to a level with math. Mr. Speaker, it behoves us as a people therefore to employ people with proven competencies in the areas of science and mathematics in the national interest regardless of the political shenanigans associated with the requirement to retire. And whatever transpired in the Teacher's Union we as a people have got to rise above the narrow partisan interest and do what is right for all of us as a people. Nobody, nobody should have to make out a case for the reemployment of Elvis Daniel, Mr. Johnson and Mr. Bash Thomas. Nobody should have to make a case for that and when I speak about a pound of flesh I deliberately use it, Mr. Speaker, because I am hearing the arguments which draw close parallel to lending the money under those circumstances in an attempt to trick knowing full well that it would not be paid. I am saying that if you were involved as the Prime Minister may have been and I chose my words very deliberately, involved in the process or the Teacher's Union and the Agreements ... and Mr. Speaker, you know this is a government when it came to power, pouted its chest, blew its horn about changing the laws to encourage and to permit public officers to become involved in active politics eh! This is the government that brought it, yet, Mr. Speaker, the only reason that I could see why Elvis Daniel and company cannot find employment is because they got themselves enmeshed in politics that differs from that of the government.

Mr. Speaker, today one set of people are in government, tomorrow and that tomorrow could be anytime another set of people will be in government, I put forward in a most profound way the case for dealing with these three teachers: put aside the politics, put aside legal and other discussions that can take from now to eternity and do what is right and just and honourable, if we truly want to call ourselves Honourable Members of this House.

I say, Mr. Speaker, if ever there was a case for justice, if ever there was a case for mercy, if ever there was a case for acting in a human manner ... Mr. Daniel has a family to mind so does Mr. Johnson, Mr. Daniel life is wrapped up in teaching, the government is the primary, major and number one employer of people in the teaching profession. Mr. Daniel is a mathematics teacher par excellence, the record speaks for themselves. Mr. Speaker all I say be honourable, be just, be fair and work in the interest and do as we have done on this side to support the Bill before us reemploy the teachers who are re-employable and give pension to those who are pensionable. Thank you, Mr. Speaker [applause].

**HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL:** Mr. Speaker, I stand to support the benefits to Odway Thomas in this Bill that is before us, I believe that once any individual would have served this country that once he reaches retirement age he should no doubt be given that kind of benefit and it is on that basis that I support this Bill. But Mr. Speaker, I am indeed appalled at what I am hearing from the opposition bench. I am appalled for the sentiments I am hearing for I believe there is no one else in this House who would have had live example as to the discrimination that would have been meted out by a public servant in this country [knocking on the desk]. And I say, Mr. Speaker, when the shoe is on the wrong foot it really squeezes.

Mr. Speaker, I started out my work life as a teacher, I taught for seven years and then I joined the Ministry of Agriculture and I worked for fifteen years and I resigned, Mr. Speaker, in 1989 to contest the general election then. Mr. Speaker, I lost the elections.

I applied or I reapplied as an Extension Officer to go back into the Ministry of Agriculture and I was denied that opportunity. Further, Mr. Speaker, in 1991 having seen an advertisement in the Vincentian Newspaper where Senior Extension Officers were required at the St Vincent Banana Growers Association I applied and I was accepted by the Board and I got a job and I started to work with the St Vincent Banana Growers Association. The then Minister of Agriculture in 1991 went to a Board Meeting and asked the Board to fire me and I hear on the other side that the government: this administration is discriminating [interjections]. What was happening in 1991 Mr. Speaker, was that government then discriminating? I hear [Interjection] I glad you know is pay back time. [Interjection] I hear that one who is talking about rights, is the right to work, it is the right to feed your family; Montgomery Daniel at that time did he not have rights to feed my family [interjections] ah! I recall the new Senator of course; I recall you were there, I recall you were there.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Supposing it was a déjà vu

**HONOURABLE MONTGOMERY DANIEL:** Well, of course [laughter] but Mr. Speaker, I resigned just like Mr. Johnson resigned in 2010 to offer higher service, I resigned as well but I never was given the opportunity to offer any further service in this country. So, I had to bear my grinds and I bear it over the period until I was elected by the people of North Windward and then I became the peoples' representative and a Minister of government in 2001. [Knocking on the desk] Mr. Speaker, I resigned my job and I reapplied and I was never

given the opportunity that is what I am saying. Mr. Speaker, Mr. Johnson and I we were teachers together, we went to the Georgetown Teachers Training Centre, we went through the grades and we became student teachers. Mr. Speaker, am I to be honourable at the mistakes of Mr. Johnson who have been very irresponsible after working for thirty three years and just throw it away? The callousness of this matter, Mr. Speaker, is what I cannot understand, I just want a mere six months to be happy in my life and I just take it and throw it away, no, Mr. Speaker.

And so Mr. Speaker, I am really looking at the logic of this Bill before us as against that of Mr. Johnson they are two completely different things. Mr. Speaker, I want to say it Mr. Speaker, further that having lost the elections in 1989, I came back in 1998 and I lost the elections in 1998 by a mere fifty eight votes, the leader of my Party then called me the next morning after the night of the elections, he said, “Montgomery there are three names that I am considering to be a Senator in the House of Parliament and I am giving you the first preference”. [Applause] I said to my leader then, I said, “I understand the way you are responding but I am saying to you Sir; I prefer to win the elections in North Windward and sit as the representative of the people of North Windward”. And that is what I have done and demonstrated in this House [knocking on the desk], I went and I worked and won the elections and I am here from since 2001, I am here 2005, I am here 2010 and if I am called again by the people I will be here in 2015 or whenever elections are called.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I said when it comes to what I heard as sentiments on the other side there is no one inside here who would have had that experience in terms of the discrimination that was offered to me during my working life and what my leader would have done for me even when I was down. I think this is what is important at this point and time Mr. Speaker and I give full support to this Bill that is brought before this Honourable House. I thank you very much. [Knocking on the desk]

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** On this Bill Minister no further debate.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank all Honourable Members for their contributions in this debate but in winding up I think it is necessary to clarify some misstatements made by some Honourable Members on the other side to sort out some wooly thinking. I want to begin with what I considered the most disappointing maiden speech that I have ever listened to in this House since I have been here for eighteen years the maiden address delivered by the Honourable Senator Lewis. The worst thing, there was an attempt to cloak illogic and ordinariness in language which may fool or misguide persons who are not reflective sufficiently at this hour when he spoke. A central thrust of his presentation was that the action by the government was discriminatory; the action by the government was discriminatory. Mr. Speaker, he is a trained lawyer I must take it to mean that he used the word for “discriminatory” in its precise legal meaning. This is not a layman who is just throwing around a word. I turn to the Constitution of St Vincent and the Grenadines section 13 which addresses the issue of protection from discrimination 13(3) reads:

**“In this section, the expression “discriminatory” means affording different treatment to different persons attributable wholly or mainly to their respective descriptions by sex, race, place of origin, political opinions, colour or creed whereby persons of one such description are subjected to disabilities or restrictions to which persons of another such descriptions**

**are not made subject or are accorded privileges or advantages, which are not accorded to persons of another such description”.**

In short he is saying that we discriminated against Mr. Johnson, the government discriminated against him on political grounds; on the grounds of his political opinions, and it was done in such a way that privileges or advantages were accorded to other persons of other political opinions which means persons on this side. Would anybody please tell me rather than rigmarole talk whether we gave a pension to Senator Charles, whether we gave one for the service, to the Honourable Representative for South Windward? Mr. Speaker, if you just permit me to call them by representative as distinct from Ministry? Or indeed though it was before we came to government, whether we have provided by a Bill in this House pension for the service of the Honourable Member for East St George for the years when he was a teacher or the years service for the Honourable Member for Marriaqua who just had a few more months? It would have been discriminatory if we had come here and given pensions to all these persons for their service as public servants and teachers and not do the same for Mr. Johnson, Mr. Bash Thomas and Mr. Elvis Daniel.

So let us get this nonsense out of the way of discriminatory behavior that is the sort of a woolly thinking which really is not becoming of someone who wants to let us believe that he has come to lift the debate, let us understand that. Secondly, Mr. Speaker, it is his argument, it is the argument presented that

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

**HONOURABLE LINTON LEWIS:** Mr. Speaker, on a point of order under Standing Order 35(b) if I may clarify something?

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** 35(b)?

**HONOURABLE LINTON LEWIS:** Yes. Mr. Speaker, I clearly indicated that where there are no criteria

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker that is not a point of order he has to state his point of order, he says he wants to clarify something.

**HONOURABLE LINTON LEWIS:** No, I indicate from 35(b) Mr. Speaker, I am going

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** 35(b) let me see what it has to say.

**“To elucidate some matters raised by that Member in the course of debate, provided that the Member speaking is willing to give way”.**

Okay, yes.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, therefore it is not a point of order.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** No! No!

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** If he wants to ask me to give way I will give way that is why I said it is not a point of order; to seek a elucidation is not a point of order, I have to give way.

**HONOURABLE LINTON LEWIS:** I requested for it under 35(b).

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** But it is not a point of order.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Well, (a) would be the point of order.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSLAVES:** (a) would be the point of order.

**HONOURABLE LINTON LEWIS:** No! No! We are not discussing that.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** No! No! It is important because you are a lawyer.

**HONOURABLE LINTON LEWIS:** We said 35(b)

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yes.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** But you cannot raise a point of order under 35(b)

**HONOURABLE LINTON LEWIS:** Mr. Speaker, I never said that the government discriminated. I said where there are no criteria for recognising people and giving them pension that we should be very careful that we are just and fair and it gives the impression as if the government is discriminating.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, he has put himself in even further trouble. The issue of justice and fairness is dependent on the categorization of discrimination because obviously if we had discriminated we would be unjust and unfair to Mr. Johnson. For example, you know it is different side of the same coin, if you discriminate against somebody it means you have been unfair to that person that you have not delivered justice to that person. They are not abstract concepts separate and distinct. It is like, Mr. Speaker, it is like he said famously in another context on radio in relation to the Anesia Baptiste case that Anesia is completely wrong that the Honourable Leader of the Opposition did not make a policy, he made a prohibition. So a prohibition cannot be a policy? Ah mean, distinctions he seeks to make a difference, in this case there is no discrimination. And I was coming, Mr. Speaker, to the issue which he said, he said that we have not afforded the individuals concerned an equality of opportunity. I am at a loss, these are just words thrown around where is the absence of an equality of opportunity? All of them had an equality opportunity to run and fight elections and all of them got beaten. You do not have to win to show that you get an opportunity. The Honourable Member got an opportunity to run equal opportunity to run on three occasions and was defeated on three occasions. So, I search now for the equality of opportunity elsewhere, where is it? Where is the equality of opportunity they have been denied of which they have not been afforded that they have not been given teaching job. Well, they had a teaching job and they resigned and nobody here is the appointed authority.

When the Leader of Opposition wrote me a letter about this matter about to have them appointed as teachers, I told him, "I am not responding to your letter because you have sent the letter to the wrong person, send the

letter to the Public Service Commission not me, I am not the appointing authority”. Not the appointing authority at all. So, Mr. Speaker, the gravamen of the contribution of my friend the Honourable Senator Lewis really nothing there holds water he wants to get up before the day is out to take his guard to use a cricket analogy [laughs] and ah mean no you should have taken your guard on a different wicket on a different day you know where you are prepared for something, not allow persons on the other side who ... on your side who do not really have your interest at heart to embarrass you like this.

So, I Mr. Speaker again, again Mr. Speaker I hear the Honourable Member for a West Kingstown with great respect with an holier than thou presentation, holier than thou presentation, by again throwing around emotive formulations without understanding context or substance, he says that we are getting our pound of flesh, where are we getting out pound of flesh? And he quoted Shylock, Mr. Speaker, Shylock the Jewish merchant had a contract and he said if you do not pay me back my money I want a pound a flesh and that is where Portia says, “Well you can get the pound of flesh”. And then is when he shouted and he did not understand, he thought it was complimentary to him. Shylock said “A Daniel, a Daniel comes to judgement”. And Portia said, “Yes, take the pound of flesh but do not shed one dot of Christian blood”. That was the Daniel who came to judgement. But where are we, we have not done any bargain with Mr. Johnson or any of them. Where the pound of flesh comes in? Words are just taken out of the air. Really we have to do better than that; we have to have some intellectual rigour and proper sensibilities on these matters.

You know, the thing about it is this, Mr. Speaker, I have gone through this already. I said at the time

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** A contract in it.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** It is not a contract.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** [Inaudible] you all knowing very well it would not work out.

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** The funny things about this, the Honourable Member for West Kingstown

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

**DR. THE HONOURBLE RALPH GONSALVES:** would appear when he speaks about these things loosely; but when he was [interjections] Mr. Speaker

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, please.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** when his contract had come to an end and he was getting a new one on the 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2001, he made certain that he organised his pension and everything and get it organised properly on the very day of election. [Knocking on the desk]

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** State your point of order.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Prime Minister is telling untruth about me.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Okay.

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** I had no contract prior to the 28<sup>th</sup> March.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Okay.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Well that is the point I am making, you signed

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Mr. Speaker, I had no contract prior to the 28<sup>th</sup> March, 2001.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, on the 28th March he signed making sure that he has a new contract with a salary and a pension for the years in which he had been there. And I defended him, I said there is a legal cost contract, I said let him get his pound of flesh, he has a legal one, let him get it that is where pound of flesh comes in.

Mr. Speaker, when the negotiations took place with the Teachers Union, I pointed out that this particular provision can only be aspirational and you know everybody agreed on that because we were beginning to talk about constitutional reform and we were all satisfied that everybody was on the same page that this thing was going to be made. We are going to change the Constitution so that they will get there pension, they will be able to go off, we will have everything done properly when the resign and come back. In fact, they did not have to resign they were going to go on leave. But those same persons voted and campaigned against their own interest in the new Constitution [knocking on the desk] and I hear this business about qualified mathematicians of course, Mr. Daniel is a qualified mathematicians and that we need mathematicians so much to lift the educational system, well if that were the case what was he going to do if he had won? He was going back to teach? You know I really do not understand these kinds of arguments.

Mr. Speaker, frankly speaking what we have heard from the opposition today is bellyaching without a foundation. Mr. Johnson I have been advised, said that if he did not win the seat and he knows he could not win it that NDP was going to win and he was going to be a diplomat, an ambassador and they were looking for places for the children to go and stay and all kind of arrangements. Talking about counting your chickens before they hatch; talk about that.

Now, the final issue, therefore, and the Honourable Member for West Kingstown is internally contradictory. He can only be asking for mercy in a context where justice having being delivered it must be tempered by mercy that is the same formulation in Shakespeare play you know, justice having been delivered it must be tempered by mercy and that is a proposition in all legal system. The judge finds you guilty, the justice is being delivered and you beg for mercy to ease the pain, but once you have gotten into the realm of mercy you have conceded that you do not have any legal or any moral argument but out of some sense of humanitarianism external to those facts to deliver mercy; but I am also advised that the door of mercy is not always opened. It is in the

Bible. Now, if mercy is considered for these three persons we have to go so that we do not discriminate in the application of mercy we have to give the Member for Marriaquia, the Member for East St George, the Member for North Windward, the Member for South Central Windward, the Honourable Senator Charles and other persons, because then if it is not applied it would be discriminatory [Knocking on the desk]

That is it, I am sorry that I have at this hour to be dealing with elementary things in logic and law and concepts and so on, and sometimes I sit here and I do not bother with it but because of so much heat generated on the other side I thought it was necessary and desirable for some light to shine. [Knocking on the desk] Elementary Mr. Watson; Mr. Speaker, I would say this, there is a lot of sanctimonious and there is a lot of holier than thou talk, the good Lord in heaven would know the hearts and minds of men and women and those who come with more sanctimony and holier than thou attitude ah! Ah! There are lots things that St. Paul has addressed on this subject. So, I have seen too many things and know many things to know that when you see holier than thou attitude run from it like how jumbie run from holy water. You can throw smoke in people's eyes but not these eyes.

I beg to move that this Honourable House resolve itself into a committee of the whole House to consider this Bill clause by clause.

**House resolves itself into a Committee  
Of the whole House  
House resumed**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Members I have the honour to report that a Bill for an Act to provide for the payment of retirement benefits to Odway Thomas a former Executive Officer has passed the committee stage without amendment.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to provide for payment of retirement benefits to Odway Thomas a former Executive Officer be read a third time by title and passed.

**Question put and agreed to**

**Odway Thomas Retirement Benefits Declaration Act, 2012**

**6. Rent Recovery Amendment Bill, 2012**

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMING:** May I crave your indulgence please. As we come to this particular Bill, I have raised this matter on a number of occasion in this Honourable House, I have been a Senator for five years, I have been a parliamentarian for a year and some. It is very difficult for me to function as a parliamentarian without having a copy of the set of laws of this land, I never had it as a Senator and I never had it as a Representative. When I see amendments of a particular Act I have no recourse to see in what the Act is so the amendment makes no sense to me. I have conferred with the Clerk of the House on a number of occasions and I am told that there are several logistical reasons why but it is a very impractical matter. It is standard

requirements for members of parliament to have at their access ... and Mr. Speaker to make it more difficult I only received these documents from the office of the Leader of the Opposition yesterday at a meeting. Where am I going to find the laws to do the research necessary? This is a matter that needs very urgent attention and I crave your attention.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Okay. Are we suggesting that no Member of the Opposition has one copy? Oh!

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, there are two issues here, (1) the time when documents are sent out, I do not know what is the situation happening at the Clerk and I do not know when they are picked up from the office of the Leader of the Opposition by the Honourable Member. Those are matters which they can sort out.

Mr. Speaker it is not true that in every House that everybody is given, in the United Kingdom for instance there is a library where you can get it from and we send one to the Leader of the Opposition. The Leader of the Opposition has a copy; it is a matter where the issue could be possibly discussed where a person can maybe have an access electronically [interjection]. Ah! No! No! No! They have them in the office of the Permanent Secretary. [Interjection] No, I do not think in all the Ministries that they have. [Interjection]

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** We have [Inaudible] at this time.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I do not think they have one, but that is a matter which we can always discuss and find a possible solution.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** Find a possible solution to that matter because it is very important that we do, and we had talked about the electronic reproduction of these things maybe we can also look at that.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** It is very expensive.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** I recognise that but I suppose that it is a matter we have to address. The question of when the papers go out, I just heard the Leader of the Opposition mention that it is not a fault of the Clerk; it also maybe depends on when persons actually go and pick up their things and so on. Because I know the Clerk she makes every good attempt to ensure that these documents go out, very often when I ask for the office attendant, "Oh she is out delivering"; and then it takes a long time to deliver these things. So, we have to kind of coordinate the way we do these things so that we would not have these kinds of situations developing. Honourable Prime Minister.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to amend the Rent Recovery Act, Chapter 133 of the Laws of St Vincent and the Grenadines be read a first time.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** I second.

**Question put and agreed to**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move under Standing Order 48(2) that this Bill be taken through all its stages of today's sitting.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** I second.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to amend the Rent Recovery Act, Cap 133 of the laws of St Vincent and the Grenadines be read a second time.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** I second.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Debate on the Bill any?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, a request has been made by the Chief Magistrate in a letter of the 10<sup>th</sup> August, 2011 to the Honourable Attorney General which said,

**“I shall be grateful if section 4(2) of the Rent Recovery Act could be amended from \$24.00 to \$18,000”. The original grounds cited for the amendment of the earlier RPA**

that is the Recovery of Possession Act.

**will equally apply here”.**

It is a question of the extent of the jurisdiction when this ... When this law was passed originally this Act first came into being in 1926 amended by an Act in 1947 and \$24.00 is really nothing, more than that you have to go to the High Court so you can see the problems for everybody who is involved in rent recovery. So, if you put the jurisdiction of \$18,000, you know, it is at least a reasonable figure. At least that is what those who practice before the courts thinks could be a reasonable figure and we agree with that. It is simple and straightforward as that, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** All right, further debate? Honourable Senator Lewis.

**HONOURABLE SENATOR LINTON LEWIS:** Mr. Speaker, I support the amendment. Mr. Speaker, this Act commenced in 1890

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** As early as that.

**HONOURABLE SENATOR LINTON LEWIS:** As early as 1890 and as you know the law must reflect our politics, our economics and our social and also our political perspective. Mr. Speaker, it is a waste of the Courts time at the High Court to have a matter going for rent recovery of just over \$24.00 and it is also to my mind not in keeping with the changing circumstances over the years to have a magistrate Court now with a jurisdiction of over 15,000 hours to be dealing with a matter that is \$24.00. But there is something that I wish to draw this

House attention to Mr. Speaker, and that is section 12(2) of the Rent Recovery Act which says ... I supposed Prime Minister you have a copy of it Mr. Prime Minister, you have a copy of it? Oh!

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Section 12(2) is that what you said?

**HONOURABLE LINTON LEWIS:** Yes, it says:

**“The expenses of keeping and feeding any livestock shall not exceed items specified in the second schedule”.**

If we look at the second schedule, Mr. Speaker, you would notice that you have \$0.48, \$0.84 and \$0.24 for ... so, I am wondering if ... yes that definitely needs changing because it cost far more than that to look after animals you know. [Interjection] If we are going to pay attention to this, it therefore means that, Mr. Speaker, there must have been interest in the Act in the recent times for the Magistrate to write to have section 4 amended. This Act is very important, Mr. Speaker, and it is good and timely that we actually put through its amendment because it eases greatly the way in which persons who are owed rent can be repaid in a very quick period of time without having to go to the High Court without having to file claims.

Mr. Speaker, we do know the problems that landlords and landladies have with rent at this time. Sometimes people get into peoples' home they rent their homes and they do not pay the rent and they carry up the electricity bill and the water rate and they leave the landlords and the landladies with a lot of money. And then they are forced to go to court, and then they are forced to go to the High Court and that would incur legal costs and also the time of the Court. And if you are going to court for just over \$24.00 for the High Court, a \$100 for High Court it does not make any sense. So, it really eases up tenants' and it actually helps in ensuring that justice is swift and sure; therefore, Mr. Speaker, I surely would support the amendment to section 4(2) but I also like to suggest to this Honourable House that we look again at the entire Rent Recovery Act with the view to making some more substantial amendments. Thank you.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Further debate? No; Honourable Prime Minister.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** I want to thank the Honourable Member, indeed had this been his maiden speech I would have said it is a successful maiden speech. [Knocking on the desk] [Laughs]

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Honourable House resolve itself into a committee of the whole House to consider the Bill clause by clause.

**House resolves itself into a Committee  
Of the whole House  
House resumed**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, I have the honour to report that a Bill for an Act to amend the Rent Recovery Act Cap. 133 passed the Committee stage without amendment.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to amend the Rent Recovery Act Cap. 133 be read a third time by title and passed.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** I second.

**Question put and agreed to**

**Rent Recovery Amendment Act, 2012**

**7. Forest Resource Conservation Date of Commencement and Validation Bill, 2012**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to bring into force retrospectively the Forest Resource Conservation Act Chapter 60 and to validate all Acts done there under.

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Oh sorry.

**HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR:** Thank you very much. Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the introduction and the first reading of a Bill for an Act to bring into force retrospectively the Forest Reserve Conservation Act Chapter 60 and to validate Acts done there under.

**HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN:** I second.

**Question put and agreed to**

**HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move under Standard Orders 48(2) that this Bill be taken through all its reading.

**HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN:** I second.

**Question put and agreed to**

**HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to bring into force retrospectively the Forest Reserve Conservation Act Chapter 60 and to validate Acts done hereunder.

**HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN:** I second.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, the question is that a Bill for an Act to bring into force retrospectively the Forest Resource Conservation Act Chapter 60, and to validate Acts done there under be read a second time.

**Question put and agreed to.**

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Any debate on this?

**HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR:** Mr. Speaker, this is basically something which is procedural the object of this Bill is to give retrospective commencement to the Forest Reserve Conservation Act and to validate anything done under that Act.

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

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** Mr. Speaker, one has to ask whether, I mean this Act from 1992; one has to ask whether there is any compelling reason for the requirement to go back that far, and what are the implications if any. Amazing because this is one Act that I remember when it was discussed and some of the implications for it, and I cannot believe that Act after all this time this has not been regularized. One has to ask what went into the delay and whether there were any significant impediments to the government and or private sector as it relates to ... that has already been done that needs to be recovered? Because in principle this side of the House has no objection to the Bill.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Any further debate? Honourable Minister.

**HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR:** Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, I take into consideration what was said by the Honourable Member, definitely these are some procedural matters which we have to work on it. The House is going to be more efficient and operate in a more efficacious manner and we all have an important role to play.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House resolve itself into a committee of the whole House to consider the Bill clause by clause.

**House resolves itself into a Committee  
Of the whole House  
House resumed**

**HONOURABLE DANIEL CUMMINGS:** You know I raised a matter in relation to this Bill and I expected that the Honourable Minister would have given an answer to it. I did not hear any response at all, he just went straight on. And it is an important matter that I raised: “whether there are any issues that would urge the government to act swiftly on this whether in public or private sector retrospectively”, and I did not hear any response to that important question.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Just a minute, let us hear.

**HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR:** Mr. Speaker, I have consulted with the Attorney General and there is no such issue.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Okay, fine. All right he did raise the question.

Honourable Members I have the honour to report that a Bill for an Act to bring into force retrospectively the Forest Resource Conservation Act Chapter 60 and to validate Acts done there under has passed the Committee stage without amendment, third reading.

**HONOURABLE SABOTO CAESAR:** Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Bill be read a third time by title and passed.

**HONOURABLE CLAYTON BURGIN:** I second.

### **Question put and agreed to**

#### **Forest Resource Conservation (Date of Commencement and Validation) Act, 2012**

#### **8. Airport Service Charge Bill, 2012**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, I beg to move that a Bill for an Act to impose an airport service charge on passengers departing from air from St Vincent and the Grenadines to make provision for the collection of the charge and for connected purposes. The object, purpose and reason for this Bill are stated in the long title, Mr. Speaker.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** I second.

### **Question put and agreed to.**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, we should have this Bill go to Select Committee to see if there is any matters any one who involved in the Ministry would like to have ironed out. This is really to use a different mechanism rather than we collecting the money at the airport you can collect it on the ticket, and it would be passed over the way it is done to a number of countries. The Members on the government side on the Select Committee:

- The Honourable Minister of Health.
- The Honourable Minister of Agriculture.
- The Honourable Minister of Transport and Works.
- The Honourable Senator Elvis Charles.
- The Honourable Senator David Browne.
- The Honourable Attorney General and the
- Prime Minister.

There are six from our side; the Attorney General of course is a public servant.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** The Honourable Representatives from the:

- Northern Grenadines

- The Honourable Daniel Cummings, Representative for West Kingstown
- The Honourable new Senator Linton Lewis and
- Honourable St. Clair Leacock.

## **RESOLUTION**

### **1. Value Added Tax Amendment Regulations, 2012**

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members, we have to amend the regulations but we have noticed that we had already substantively amended the law in the Finance Act, which was just passed so this is just the other end of the process.

**WHEREAS** under section 58 of the Value Added Tax Act, Chapter 445, the Minister may make regulations for any matter that in the Act requires or allows to be prescribed by regulations or for any matter that is necessary or convenient to be prescribed in order to better carry out or give effect to the purposes of the Act;

**AND WHEREAS** under section 58(3) of the said Act regulations made under the Act is subject to an affirmative resolution of the House of Assembly;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the House of Assembly approve the draft Value Added Tax Amendment Regulations 2012: which have been circulated in the package. I so move.

**HONOURABLE GIRLYN MIGUEL:** I second.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Honourable Members, the Resolution having been moved and seconded any debate?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Mr. Speaker, we have had debate in the Budget and we have had the debate a short while ago and the point was made that the most important change is where you have some items which had been zero-rated and now exempted, and they involved a very minor change accordingly. You know when you zero-rated no taxes are to be charged, no vat is to be charged and you get the import credit but when you exempt no import credit is coming back and there is therefore a slight increase in the tax involved. It is a question which I am told assists the Comptroller of Inland Revenue the VAT office in their collections.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Any further discussions.

**HONOURABLE ARNHIM EUSTACE:** No debate really required, Mr. Speaker, except to note that these small increases are sometimes more than 5%.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** All right, it is for me now to read just the Resolution. I will just read it and then operate this section.

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Honourable House approve the draft Value Tax Amendment Regulations 2012.

**Question put and agreed to**

## **ADJOURNMENT**

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

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** We have done quite well today.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Yea! I am really surprised.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** It would give us a little more time therefore to add another few things. I was thinking of a period in the second half of June but I have been advised by those associated with Carnival

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Bad for Carnival [laughs]

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** that [laughs] I have been advised, Mr. Speaker that it would be sometime not necessarily immediately after, like the 17<sup>th</sup> seemed to be a reasonable date.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Of July?

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Of July.

**HONOURABLE MR. SPEAKER:** Okay.

**DR. THE HONOURABLE RALPH GONSALVES:** Accordingly, I beg to move that this Honourable House do stand adjourned until July 17th.

**Question put and agreed to**

**House adjourned at 7:45**

**Until 17<sup>th</sup> July, 2012**

**At 10:00 p.m.**