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GRENADA

PARLIAMENTARY DEBATES

(HANSARD)

Fourth Session of the Tenth Parliament

OFFICIAL REPORT

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday 15th January, 2021

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House of Representatives Meeting
Held at the Houses of Parliament, Mt. Wheldale, St. George's
On Friday, 15th January, 2021.

Attendance

PRESENT

Honourable Michael Pierre, MP, JP, MBE	-	Mr. Speaker (In the Chair)
Dr. the Rt. Honourable Keith Mitchell, PC, MP, JP (St. George North-West)	-	Prime Minister and Minister for National Security, Public Administration, Youth Development, Home Affairs, Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Management
Honourable Gregory Bowen, MP (St. George South-East)	-	Minister for Finance, Economic Development, Physical Development and Energy
Honourable Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen, MP (St. Mark)	-	Minister for Tourism, Civil Aviation, Climate Resilience and the Environment
Honourable Alvin Da Breo, MP (St. John)	-	Minister for Trade, Industry and Consumer Affairs
Honourable Peter David, MP (Town of St. George)	-	Minister for Labour, Agriculture, Forestry and Land
Honourable Yolande Bain-Horsford, MP (St. Andrew South-West)	-	Minister for Sports, Culture and the Arts, Fisheries and Co-operatives
Honourable Oliver Joseph, MP (St. David)	-	Minister for Foreign Affairs, International Business and CARICOM Affairs
Honourable Kate Lewis, MP (St. Andrew North-East)	-	Minister within the Ministry of National Security, Public Administration, Youth Development, Home Affairs, Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Management wrf Youth Development
Honourable Pamela Moses (St. Patrick East)	-	Minister within the Ministry of National Security, Public Administration, Youth Development, Home Affairs, Information and Communications Technology and Disaster Management wrf Needy Assistance, Uniform Allowance, Special Projects and ICT

Attendance

Honourable Delma Thomas, MP (St. Andrew North-West)	- Minister in the Ministry of Health and Social Security wrf Hospital Services and Community Health Services, and Minister for Social Development, Housing and Community Empowerment
Honourable Anthony Boatswain, MP (St. Patrick West)	- Deputy Speaker
Honourable Tobias Clement, MP (St. George North-East)	- Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition

ABSENT

Honourable Kindra Maturine-Stewart, MP (Carriacou and Petite Martinique)	- Minister for Carriacou and Petite Martinique Affairs, Local Government and Legal Affairs
Honourable Emmalin Pierre, MP (St. Andrew South-East)	- Minister for Education, Human Resource Development, Information and Religious Affairs
Honourable Nickolas Steele, MP (St. George South)	- Minister for Health and Social Security

Prayers
Announcements

The Sitting of the House of Representatives began at 9:00 a.m.

Mr. Speaker: Good morning, Honourable Members. Let us pray.

(House Prayer was said)

Mr. Speaker: Please join with me, as we say together, the Lord's Prayer.

(The Lord's Prayer was said)

Mr. Speaker: Pray be seated.

(Sound of the Gavel)

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, this Honourable House is now in Session.

Clerk: Item 3 - Oath of Allegiance or Affirmation of a New Member.
Item 4 - Confirmation of Minutes.
Item 5 - Messages from the Governor-General.
Item 6 - Announcements by Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Members, I have been asked by my family to express our gratitude for the many expressions of condolences and comfort on the passing of our Mom. You only realise how important it is to hear the voice of someone wishing you well, when you know, or recognise the emptiness of losing a loved one. So, we want to thank you and I've been asked to express these thanks to all. A friend once said to me, **"you might be powerful enough to command an army of a million, but you can't command a day."**

Let me also take this opportunity to express my best wishes to you for this year, 2021. The fact that you have made it thus far, is through the Grace of God, and we place our country into the hands of God. We would work diligently to ensure that we do all that we can by the Grace of God and go after Him. He said: ***"I go before you always, even to the end of time."*** So, ever conscious of God, we aspire to build our country. Thank you.

Clerk Assistant: Item 7 - Presentation of Petitions.
Item 8 - Presentation of Papers and Reports from Select Committees.
Item 9 - Unopposed Private Business.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I rise again, let me express condolences to your family as I did before. And, to wish all Members here present today, God's speed and God's blessings for the New Year.

Mr. Speaker, I rise again with a few concerns that have been echoed, time and time, again in this Chamber. But, Mr. Speaker, the happenings of…

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition. I am not sure where we are here, because the last I heard was …..

Hon. Tobias Clement: Unopposed Private Business. Unopposed Private Business.

Mr. Speaker: Oh, that is a private business that you…

Hon. Tobias Clement: No, Mr. Speaker. Unopposed Private Business…

Mr. Speaker: Yeah, I understand. But, I think it would better be taken under Personal Explanations.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Oh, Personal Explanations. Okay. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: So, we will hear you there.

Hon. Tobias Clement: All right.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Proceed.

Clerk Assistant: Item 10 - Questions
Item 11 - Urgent Questions under the Provision of Standing Order No. (20) (i) Notice of Questions
Item 12 - Statements by Ministers.

Mr. Speaker: Okay, then. Let's proceed. We seem to have no Statements.

Clerk Assistant: Item 13 - Personal Explanations.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you. Yes, Mr. Speaker. As I continue, Mr. Speaker, again, I must make the point, in terms of the Standing Orders of the House. The Papers for the Sitting of Parliament today, Mr. Speaker, the Order Paper was sent on Wednesday, along with the Resolution, and you know, the Standing Orders of the House are very clear, in terms of the time that is given.

Mr. Speaker, after reading the Resolution, I asked the Clerk about the adjoining documents to the Resolution, and on Tuesday, no additional documents came. But, as

Personal Explanations

I continued to read it and I read it over, I realised there are Schedules one, two and three, and to me, that is where the meat of the matter is in the Resolution. And it was only after insisting yesterday around 4:00 o'clock in the afternoon, asking for the Schedule that should be attached to the Resolution, that is when I was told, yes, there is a document.

So, Mr. Speaker, that Schedule was sent to me yesterday afternoon. I mean, the Schedule, as it was, as I perused a little bit through it, in the negotiation, it seems Lawyers that were… and last night to get counsel on some of the language of the Schedule, that was difficult. Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, also, under Questions, I do believe that I submitted Questions to the Clerk of Parliament sometime on the 6th of January, and I was expecting the questions to be on the Order Paper today, but as it is, I guess with the difficulties, I do understand that. But, the questions were pertaining to the Sitting of Parliament today, urgent questions and questions that would be surrounding the Resolution.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker after the Budget Debate of last year, I was called, when I made the reference to the Marketing and National Importing Board, as to why the Public Accounts Committee did not look into the chopping of the Marketing Board. And, at the time, I said, well, I was not the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, but Senator De Allie was the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee. But, then it was told to me explicitly now that Senator De Allie should not have been on the Public Accounts Committee, since he is sitting as the Chair of the Board for the Marketing and National Importing Board. He is the Chairman of the Board, Mr. Speaker. And, what it was also told to me, that if you are sitting on any Board as a Member of Parliament, you cannot be a Member of the Public Accounts Committee.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, it was also highlighted to me that, in terms of the Select Committee, the Opposition must have representation, on if not all, but most of the Committees, because after all, it is the people's business, it's not one side again. And so, I would hope that we can address this in the future. Maybe, I might meet with both you and Leader of Government's Business, as to address some of these issues. I think today, yes, I am the Chair of the Public Accounts Committee, but Senator De Allie also

sits on the Public Accounts Committee. And if it is so, Mr. Speaker, with our WestMinster style Democracy, that you are on a particular Board, and in the Chamber of the House, you cannot be on a Select Committee. So, I do believe this is a concern that should be taken and should be addressed quickly. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Leader of the Opposition. The issues raised concerning the Committees, this would be addressed. We already had discussion on this. So, this would be addressed by our next Sitting. We do have some hiccups that caused the questions not to be on the Order Paper, but because of the Resolutions that we have before us, I am sure that many of the questions asked may be answered. We would still have the questions at the next Sitting of the House. Okay. The Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, I see here that the next item on the Paper here is Motions, and this here has to do with the Resolution.

Mr. Speaker: So, we have not reached there yet.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Okay.

Clerk Assistant: Item 14 - Motions

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me take this opportunity to wish you and the staff the best for 2021, my colleagues, my Ministry and the general public, all Grenadians, Mr. Speaker. We did say last year, that it will be a difficult year, but we expect with cooperation, that we will get there. So, a very productive and fruitful 2021 to all of us, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, as the staff, the Clerk and others have no voice in "This Place," it behoves me, Mr. Speaker, for me to just address one issue raised by the Leader of the Opposition, with respect to not getting the documents on time, Mr. Speaker. It was not putting it only to him, but to all of us and it was a genuine error. So, I don't know if as Leader of Government's Business, although I had no part of it, did not know anything about it, that I do want to take responsibility, on their behalf. It was a simple error. The email came. It was sent out, the attachment was not in that email, but the attachment was there. So, yes, we'll take the blame, so don't hit them. They have no voice here. And, after discussing with me, I really understood what had happened and it has happened to many of us. You'll send an email without its attachment, and you see, Mr. Speaker, that is why all the Companies, who deal with emails, whenever you send an email, they prompt you. Sometimes you don't have it, but they say: "Did you forget an attachment," because they understand how easy it is. So, I am simply telling the Leader of the Opposition, because none of us got it, and he did not get it. And, you see, none of us, we're all in the same boat, Mr. Speaker. But, we understand their position and I am stating this, because they have no voice in "This Place." So, we could talk about them and I'd rather we not talk about them and just, you know, accept genuinely, that a mistake did take place and it was not, Mr. Speaker, wilfully done.

Mr. Speaker, I now move to the Motion before me.

(Leader of the Opposition rose)

Mr. Speaker: Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, if I may, I do...

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Mr. Speaker, is it on a Point-of-Order?

Hon. Tobias Clement: On a Point-of-Order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Is it on a Point-or-order?

Hon. Tobias Clement: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

(Inaudible comments by Mr. Speaker)

Hon. Tobias Clement: I do believe that since…

(Inaudible comments by Mr. Speaker)

Hon. Tobias Clement: …that this Resolution should be deferred, Mr. Speaker, because I have not had time to study it.

(Inaudible comments by Mr. Speaker)

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, the Point-of-Order in this Resolution is that the document was not sent on time. The document was not sent on time, therefore, I am asking for a deferral of the Resolution.

Mr. Speaker: Just before the Leader of Government's Business rises, we have a Standing Order that says whenever a Point-of-Order is indicated, please use your Standing Order and tell me from where you are making that Point-of Order, so that I may follow you and be able to guide you properly. Okay. Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I beg to move the Motion standing in my name, which reads:

WHEREAS on the 19th day of March, 2020, the International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes (ICSID) Arbitration Tribunal in Case No. ARB/17/13 between Grenada Private Power Limited and WRB Enterprises, Incorporated, as

Motions

Claimants and the Government of Grenada, as Respondent, rendered an Award including the following:

1. A declaration that a Repurchase Event occurred within the meaning of the Share Purchase Agreement dated 14th September, 1994, namely, the 2016 Legislative termination of the eighty (80) year monopoly and the substitution of a shorter and a narrower period of exclusivity, which made the shares in the Grenada Electricity Services Limited (GRENLEC) a fundamentally different investment than in 1994;
2. A declaration that Compensation for the repurchase of the Claimants' shares in the GRENLEC is to be calculated in accordance with the Second Schedule of the Share Purchase Agreement;
3. The Government of Grenada is to pay the Claimants Second Schedule Compensation assessed at USD $58,427,962.00;
4. The Government of Grenada is to reimburse the Claimants for advances to ICSID in the sum of USD $239,972.37;
5. The Government of Grenada is to pay the Claimants' Attorneys' fees and disbursements in the sum of USD $6,333,142.51;
6. The Government of Grenada is to pay pre-award and post-award interests on the amount listed in paragraph 3 of the balance outstanding from time to time at the rate fixed from time to time for Grenada 91-day Treasury Bills compounded, annually, from 3rd May, 2017, until fully paid;

AND WHEREAS on the 3rd day of December, 2020 the Award was registered, as a judgment in the Supreme Court of Grenada and West Indies Associated States enforceable within the State of Grenada;

AND WHEREAS on the 21st day of December, 2020 the Government of Grenada and the Grenada Private Power Limited and WRB Enterprises Inc. (the WRB Partners) entered into a Settlement Agreement such that:

1. The sum of Sixty-three million dollars United States currency will be paid by the Government of Grenada to the WRB parties, in full and final settlement of the Award with the sum of Sixty Million United States Currency being payable

on the 29th day of December, 2020 and the sum of Three Million dollars United States Currency being payable on or before the 21st day of December, 2022; and

2. The WRB Parties will transfer the entirety of their shareholding in GRENLEC, a Public Trading Company, that is, 11,703,970 shares, being approximately 61.5998% of the total issued shares of GRENLEC via the Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange, to the Government of Grenada in full and final settlement of the Award;

AND WHEREAS on the 29th day of December, 2020 in accordance with the terms of the Settlement Agreement, the Government of Grenada:

1. Paid the sum of Sixty Million dollars United States Currency (US $60,000,000.00) to the Grenada Private Power Limited and the WRB Enterprises, Inc., through the Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange; and
2. Delivered a Promissory Note for Three Million dollars United States Currency (US $3,000,000.00) to be paid on or before the 21st day of December, 2022;

AND ACKNOWLEDGING that the Public Finance Management Act No. 17 of 2015 does not create a Legislative obligation for prior approval of the House of Representatives in the case of a payment of judgment debts by a mandatory transfer of shares in a publicly-traded Company to the Government of Grenada in the manner mandated by the Award and that it is proper to provide the House of Representatives with the documents forming the Settlement to be affirmed in furtherance of good governance;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the House of Representatives hereby affirms:

1. The Settlement Agreement between the Government of Grenada and the Grenada Private Power Limited and the WRB Enterprises, Inc., dated December 21st, 2020 as set out in Schedule I to this Resolution;
2. The Promissory Note of the Government of Grenada dated December 21, 2020 as set out in Schedule II to this Resolution;

3. The Waiver and Release between the Government of Grenada and the Grenada Private Power Limited and the WRB Enterprises, Inc., dated December 21, 2020, as set out in Schedule III to this Resolution.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, how did we get to where we are today, Mr. Speaker? Some say that we should stop blaming each other and move the process forward. But, Mr. Speaker, I want to make two points abundantly clear before we go forward. The Government did not initiate action to get back the shares. WRB took the matter, they referred to as a Claimant to ICSID and based on the ruling, Mr. Speaker, we had to accept the shares back into the hands of Grenadians.

Two, Mr. Speaker, the Government did not negotiate or sign the Agreement in 1994. The Agreement was signed by the then Prime Minister in 1994 and the document is there to show it, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker why was GRENLEC looked at in 1994? Mr. Speaker, GRENLEC was an Organisation that had only 48% coverage, that is for the people in Grenada only 48% coverage was there in 1985.

Mr. Speaker, a team of patriotic Grenadians undertook to work selflessly, to expand, Mr. Speaker, and it went from forty-eight (48), Mr. Speaker, to over 95%, over 95%. **(Applause)** What do Organisations do, Mr. Speaker, to get customers? They advertise and so forth. But, in the Power Companies time, we had to bring the lines and the poles, Mr. Speaker. And, I could remember workers with poles on their shoulders, no road, tracks, bringing these poles up to homes, Mr. Speaker. And, that is what spurred, Mr. Speaker, the economic growth of this country. It started there in the 20th Century.

Thereafter, significant interest was shown. There were few countries in the Caribbean, Mr. Speaker, where we were approaching 95, 96, 97% coverage. And,

therefore, we saw the inflow. The income was doubled, tripled. Shops went up all over the place, Mr. Speaker. Fridges sold out in St. George, St. Andrew, St. Mark, you name it, Mr. Speaker. And, so we started what you will call the transformation of GRENLEC. So, people were interested, no harm, Mr. Speaker. So, shares were sold in 1994. Before that, nobody was interested, you know, Mr. Speaker, when we had the Share Purchase Agreement entered into by the then Government of the day.

As Cable and Wireless did, long ago, in an effort to insulate themselves from the Law, so they said, sign an Agreement. When you sign this Agreement, all Laws that have been passed, will bypass this Agreement and say, it's not for Cable and Wireless, because we have an Agreement in place, Mr. Speaker. In 2000, we, this Administration, removed those legal impediments and we had a liberalised economy for the Telecommunication Sector, Mr. Speaker, which brought significant benefits to the people, and we will hear a lot of what it did again, Mr. Speaker. But, Cable and Wireless remained while DIGICEL came and others came and participated. It was a tough fight, as well, but certainly, not as what went on, Mr. Speaker, with Grenada Electricity Services Limited. Why did the Provider not remain in Grenada and accept others as a Telecommunications Company then, Mr. Speaker? We would have to answer that question.

But, the Share Purchase Agreement, Mr. Speaker, who will sign those conditions in a Share Purchase Agreement? First, the Award did not go to the highest bidder. WRB was not the highest bidder, when they tendered, Mr. Speaker. And when they got it for fifteen million EC dollars (EC$15 m), the Government had to plough back four million dollars ($4 m) from that fifteen million dollars ($15 m), plus, they had to put two million dollars ($2 m) for the workers' claims, the workers, you know, their compensation that was there. But, the value of the Company would have taken that there was a loan to the Company. But yet, we went back and say, we will put the two million dollars ($2 m) there, Mr. Speaker.

Then, we had to clean up the environment around the Queen's Park Power Station. All of those things, Mr. Speaker, we see. There are those who say, well, you

put back four, and the other side, put back four, but that does not solve the problem, Mr. Speaker, of why will we sign such an Agreement.

Then we wanted to amend the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission Act, removing powers from them. Imagine the State owned it, and you had a Utility Commission that will set the prices, and then you remove that from them and they privatised it, Mr. Speaker. The World Bank indicated then, that any privatisation of GRENLEC should be accompanied by a strong Regulatory System, but we removed them from it and we go forward. What were our intentions, Mr. Speaker? Perhaps, we'll get to find out. Then we amended the Electricity Supply Act and these Acts were amended by the persons, by WRB and GPP and handed to our Parliament and they say pass this. When the World Bank and the IMF speaking to us, Mr. Speaker, for our own good, to lift us up, they may draft, but we meet and we decide here. The Ministries will meet and decide what we will accept and what we will not accept. I could tell you so, Mr. Speaker, because I lead many of the negotiations. And my mantra up to today, we will do what is right, not what you tell us to do. And, I've said that at Headquarters of the IMF, at the Headquarters of the World Bank, and I am repeating it here today. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, when we were passing those Bills, they were listening to me, they'll come to me in the middle of the night, with correspondences, saying, this should be changed and that should be changed. And I will say, no way. If it is merited, I will say, yes. I will persuade my colleague to move along that side, Mr. Speaker.

There was an eighty (80) years monopoly given, Mr. Speaker, eight, zero years. So, imagine this thing continuing for another eighty (80) years, Mr. Speaker. And, included in that, Mr. Speaker, are repurchase events, twenty (20) of them, war. If a war breaks out, you pay them and they go, they don't stay around, at the same formula rate. Natural disaster, you pay them, they go. The currency devaluation, I can't exchange again, the EC cannot be traded, but you pay them, and pay them in US dollars too, although you can't find US dollars, that's why you're leaving. So, I don't know where you would have to go and maybe rate, the ECCD.

Any change in Law, regulatory of price of electricity, imposition of any duties/taxes. In other words, finance just have to leave the Company there and couldn't

even impose five cents (5 ¢) on anything that they imported, Mr. Speaker. If you did that, we'd be in the same boat, as we are in today. Calculation of repurchase price according to their second schedule of the ESA; you did not say fair value, or put a 5% on fair value. This works out to be, Mr. Speaker, 2.5 times the Fair Market Value. In 1994 when they sold and when the Fair Market Value was calculated, it was just about the same figure. But, one year after, as was shown and proven at the Tribunal hearings, Mr. Speaker, the value was $50.5 m, one year after, if you use the formula; dangerous, Mr. Speaker. But, who imposed the Purchase Event Method and pricing on the people of Grenada and why?

Mr. Speaker, in the witness statement of G. Robert Blanchard before the Tribunal, and when your statements go, you must swear to it, it is truth and nothing but the truth. Listen what section (d), item 16, page (6) says. So, persons would go to find it very easily. We indicated earlier that the methodology was extortionate, because in our minds' eye, it was wicked WRB that pushed this on the Government and this changed the nature of the case, because from then on, the concept that the Government was ill-advised and did not know much about what they did, went out through the door. Listen to the statement. I think only those, if they came with us that could have contradicted it.

Robert Blanchard: ***"The Government characterises our repurchase demand made under the Share Purchase Agreement, as extortionate."*** That is true. I personally indicated so. **"*To demonstrate the inaccuracy of this characterisation, I recount below how the Government itself, insisted on including the repurchase mechanism and how WRB accepted the Government preferred Repurchase Valuation Method."*** So, I couldn't then say, the wicked WRB anymore. It was the Government of the day, who imposed this on us, Mr. Speaker, and you could see the Tribunal mind changed, because everyone was saying all these things that they did, shares, dividends, special dividends, that seemed to be way out of the norm. But when they heard about this and the Government of the day did it and "pushed and forced" WRB to accept it, then, Mr. Speaker, their thinking changed. But why, Mr. Speaker, why would any Government impose this on its people? Well, only two (2) days ago,

Wednesday, we met with the Grenada Trades Union Council, as they wanted to understand what had happened, and they reminded us, a Government team, a Government delegation, that they demonstrated, under the then President, Claris Charles, in solidarity, when the NNP was in Opposition against the sale of shares.

The Grenadians, Mr. Speaker, they called for its return to Grenada, Mr. Speaker. But, why would the NDC take that? Because they were putting something in place that no Keith Mitchell Administration, or any Administration for that matter, will be able to do anything about the deal that they had entered into. So obligations to WRB to make the requisite investment into the company, that, Mr. Speaker, was pushed. We know now that they didn't do it. The last investment in engine was in 2006, and that came out very clearly, Mr. Speaker, both presently, and at the Tribunal.

But, what is worse, Mr. Speaker, you put in fifteen million EC dollars ($15 m), and you caused over seventy-five million US dollars (US$75 m), to be extracted from the Company in dividends and fees, of which 61% went to WRB and its affiliates. That is over forty-six million US dollars (US$46 m) went out to them. And they put in only fifty million EC dollars (EC$50 m), that's five plus million US, and you extracted for yourself, forty-six million US dollars (US$46 m). The rest, or the only sure places that you can go, is maybe the small bids that have come into the Government, NIS, the workers and some other Grenadians, because we do not know that all the shares were held by Grenadians. So, that is what happened during the intervening period, Mr. Speaker. They asked for sixty-seven million dollars ($67 m) as the value, using the Second Schedule, plus interest compounded, the 91-days Treasury Bill interest, and their figure showed something like twenty million dollars ($20 m), on top of the sixty-seven, you know. They wanted interest, as well, Mr. Speaker.

The only way and the only provision was for wilful malfeasance. And WRB indicated that they took their matter to ICSID, first, and whether or not they were found guilty of wilful malfeasance, let the Government go back and come back with a case. Mr. Speaker, they indicated that all the undertakings they gave, in order to win the bid that these were only word of mouth talk. They said if the Government wanted them to do the things they said they did, then the Government would have put it in the Share

Purchase Agreement. So, during the bidding process, they said, we will do this, we will do that, we will do that, and you scored points for them. But, because we did not put it in the Share Purchase Agreement, then they had no obligation to do anything; that is how they see things, Mr. Speaker, and that is how they were. No wonder the Trade Union Council indicated that we should put things in place that these sorts of sales would never happen again, legislative and otherwise.

So, Mr. Speaker, we move to the Settlement Agreement. We negotiated, and I want to commend and thank the Minister for Foreign Affairs for being there with me while we negotiated. It was difficult and hard. We were negotiating against the backdrop of a Court decision, a Court registered decision, now registered in Grenada, and so the Courts in Grenada could move on you, Mr. Speaker. So, I want to thank him for the way we moved and the success that we had. But it was pointed out and we must make the point, why we were that quiet, Mr. Speaker, about the negotiation and elsewhere.

The parties entered into a Negotiation Framework Agreement on the 29th April, 2020, and what was being said was, if we kept talking about each other, we will get nowhere, and just about the same time, we were talking to them to put three million dollars ($3 m) into the rebate for consumers, Government put ten, they put three, and they did not want to do it in an acrimonious environment. But, more so, they did not want this to go out at all,

Mr. Speaker, listen to Clause 5, page 2 of the Agreement. ***"For the duration of negotiations between the parties pursuant to this Framework, the parties shall refrain from issuing any public statement regarding the Award, the dispute that led to same. This framework…"*** that is the Agreement Framework, ***"or any negotiations between them pursuant hereto, the party shall refrain from disclosing to the public, the contents of their communications and exchanges, pursuant to this Framework, provided, however, that nothing herein shall prevent either party from engaging in private discussions with interested third parties."*** And, there were a few interested third parties, and even that engagement should be confidential that you're talking.

Some people came to us and said that they wanted the shares, and we will say, you know it is a confidential something, go and talk to WRB, maybe you can come to an agreement; and that is what this was put in for, to allow people to go to talk to WRB and to allow persons to come to speak with us about purchasing the shares, Mr. Speaker, so we had this Confidentiality Agreement.

And, I heard people saying, Mr. Speaker, when the Press asked me and I told them that we were not at liberty to talk about it; we had a Confidentiality Agreement in place. And, I heard one, Mr. Speaker, said: ***"Oh, he lie. I never heard GRENLEC say this."*** But, that alone should ring a bell, that GRENLEC was not talking. It appears that their contact in GRENLEC and WRB may have dissipated. And, Mr. Speaker, I watched the communication that came from Robert G. Blanchard to the Board members, as he advised them of certain things and reminded them that they were under strict confidentiality rules, and they should not mention anything elsewhere, that is noted and written in a document to them.

When our Attorney-General was going to participate in the Court case for registering it here, our external Lawyers made it abundantly clear, yes, you are in a Court and you will only offer information if the Judge mandated you so to do. But their side and our side knew about this Agreement, so none of them pushed it beyond the limit. The Judge may have been informed and so he asked for nothing much with respect to information.

So when the public heard, first from WRB without hearing from us, it was because they went ahead with the Confidentiality Agreement. Why did they do that, Mr. Speaker? The transaction should have closed on the 29th. Because we owe them three million dollars ($3 m), all the warranty that they gave to us, warranty such that there would be no lien on the shares, and we found that there were some shares with lien on it, Mr. Speaker. Suppose as we were speaking here the 61% shares that we bought, there is a big lien for fifty million dollars ($50.00) in it. We indicated, we will not agree unless you take the responsibility and give us the warranty that, if this is the case, it is your responsibility. **(Applause)**

So, somewhere, on the 27th/28th, the shares, which must go through the Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange, they're the ones who would do the transfer. The monies would go them and they will make the transfer. So, we know now that before the 29th, because we started the process on or about the 23rd going back and we should say nothing on it. So, somewhere, around the 27th or so the monies hit their account at the same time. But, we had no way of knowing that. The Securities Exchange would have transferred the shares to us. Unless they tell us so, then we wouldn't know.

And, keeping in mind this Confidentiality Agreement, we waited. The local Lawyers in Grenada were holding the warranty document, so if we breached the Agreement, that's room for them to hold it for a period, at least. I believe we may prevail in the Court that they have to give it to us. But, we did not make any mention, on the 29th thereafter, we know the deal is closed, and we could come out and tell the Grenadian people exactly what has happened. And that is why, Mr. Speaker, the people and the public did not hear from us before hearing from WRB.

In fact, we drafted a joint statement and WRB, the same day, said***: "No, we are not going with the joint statement, we are going to make our release"***; and they made it in Miami, because their part was cleared, but Grenada's part was not cleared, until we got the document from the Lawyers and until the Securities Exchange told us the shares were in our name, Mr. Speaker.

Lots of people, even the Grenada Trades Union Council focused on this, why we did not make any Agreement, Mr. Speaker. And so, we know that sixty million dollars ($60 m) were paid, and we want to tell the world that the payment was legitimate. **(Applause)** There were those who came to say that we should come here, hold a meeting of the Standing Orders Committee, etcetera, etcetera. Well, we did that already, because the authority was there, Mr. Speaker, for us to so do. The authority was there, because this was already passed in the House of Representatives, in the Parliament, for that matter, Mr. Speaker.

Section 42 (1) (a) and (b) of the Public Finance Management Act, 2015, provides that ***"where monies are required to be paid to the Government by an order of the court or by an arbitration award, the Minister may on the advice of the Attorney-***

General, the Accountant General and the Director of Audit, settle the claim, and may, in writing, direct the Accountant General to pay the amount in settlement of the claim out of the Consolidated Fund." **(Applause)**

Parliament has already said so. GRENLEC is a Trading Company, I just told you that, how we had to do it. They can't give us the shares, you know. It's only the Securities Exchange, or the Stock Exchange that could give it to us.

The Public Finance Management Act, Mr. Speaker, judgment debt; it does not create a Legislative Framework for Judgment Debt. There are three (3) co-equal arms. If the Judiciary says something and then you want to come and fight against it, then you are fighting against another co-equal arm. So, once there is a debt, what the Parliament would say, is how you will pay it. In other words, if they don't have any money, they would not vote a set of monies in.

But, 2020 being a year of the Coronavirus, there were lots of things that we did not do. So, we voted a sum of money and because the section in the Act gives us room to move, Capital to Capital, yes, and we can move Recurrent to Capital, once the Vote is there, we don't have to come back to Parliament, we moved Recurrent Expenditure to Capital. In other words, when we formulated this, the IMF and the World Bank, they envisaged and we say it is right, that is why we are here today making so much progress.

Before, you could have taken from Capital and put there. So, you take all the money that will build your growth and you put it down in Recurrent and you see you go to nothing. You cannot do that now. If you want to do that, you have to come back to Parliament. Now, you can go the other way. The Minister can do that. The Warrants; well, it was called 'Special Warrants' before, it is no longer called 'Special Warrants.' But, you can move. Once Parliament has approved a Vote, you can move it there. So, we did not use a lot of the Vote, because of COVID, so we moved Capital around.

And I want to say, Mr. Speaker, the Capital that we moved around were Grants, and there is the possibility of our local, internal monies that we collect, the local taxes, you could move it up there too. So that is what we did, and we did not have to come back to Parliament, so we did.

I have reminded many of us, Mr. Speaker, when we go to Finance Committee Meetings, and every Member here could say this, if we want to do a new Capital Project, we will say from where we are taking the money to put it. The Minister for Finance has the authority to do that. But only to explain where it is coming from and maybe, we did not have enough places to take it from and we need an additional, an additional amount, it is that additional amount that comes back to Parliament, not what was already approved. So, some of us may see the document before us, saying: ***"We quoted savings from here to there."*** That means, already approved by the Parliament, from here to there, from here to there. But the new project is four million dollars ($4 m), and we can only quote savings for three million dollars ($3 m), one million dollars ($1 m) alone. Look at our documents, only one million dollars ($1 m) comes back here in the Supplementary Agreement. We never looked at our documents. We must so do. We never come back to ask for what is already approved and what Parliament says, the Minister can move. So, Mr. Speaker, we thought it very prudent to let the public know and to ask the Parliament to affirm what has been done, because Parliament has already said so in the Public Finance Management Act. So, the public must now hear Parliament saying: ***"Yes, this is okay. We have affirmed it."***

And there were some Lawyers, you know, Mr. Speaker, there were some Lawyers, who indicated that they had knowledge. But, there were few Lawyers who sat in the Public Accounts Committee. Right now, I think we have two (2). But, I don't know about any others that we had, on our side, who sat. Maybe our Attorney-General sat as a Member of the Standing Committee on Finance, Mr. Speaker. And we do have a Legal Affairs Department and nearly the entire staff of the Ministry of Finance, many of them was there with me, when we negotiated this suite of Bills, when we were doing the Homegrown Structural Adjustment Programme, and we know the intent for so doing. One, we do not want to see things going Recurrent, and two, we must start and work to expand for jobs and so forth, Capital work, the Public Sector Investment Programme (PSIP), Mr. Speaker.

Now, let us look at the present status of GRENLEC, the Plant. Some people don't like when I say "load shedding" is there. We now have to purchase an engine.

The engine broke while WRB was there. They went ahead to negotiate, Mr. Speaker, an engine, no problem with that. But, it was the reason behind it. They did not want load shedding to occur in a massive state, while they were around. After bringing down the Company, not investing, 2006 was the last time they invested an engine, and they took fifty-seven million dollars ($57 m) in dividends, without investing more in engines, Mr. Speaker. In 2016/'17, they did that, knowing fully well, the condition of the engines in there.

Again, it was mentioned that the Company is well-managed, but from the standpoint of our local people, and I could see that, because if the Policymakers and the Board will not give them the resources to work with, and they held the engines up to that part, then we cannot disagree to say that it is well-managed, but slash the level at which it is well-managed by our local people and local people include Caribbean people, as well, those who work there. So they were fighting without a lot of support, to see things work well, Mr. Speaker.

So, what is happening now? The engine broke. The piston came through the crankcase. Why? Water was leaking into the cylinder block. You may have this, you may have water leakages, many times when you are repairing the engine, but you have to repair it. Stop the engine and do what is necessary. But if you stop the engine, you go into load shedding, so you cannot stop it, because that would be the ugliest thing for WRB, for load shedding again, to come in abundance. And remember, when we talk about load shedding, when GRENLEC calls the big manufacturers and tell them to turn on their generators and come off the GRENLEC line, that is load shedding, Mr. Speaker, because if they don't do that, then the load would overcome the supply, and that was one way.

Another way is to 'Brownout'. You are not getting your fifty (50) cycles. You might get forty-eight (48), you might get forty-seven (47), so you find things crawling a little slow around your house, but you have the lights, you have this, you don't know. So, all of this was practiced, Mr. Speaker, in years gone by and we knew where it was going, where it was leading, Mr. Speaker.

What are our plans for going forward? And do you know now that they are looking at purchasing a new engine? That engine is a twenty cylinder and to put it on a block that held an eighteen cylinder, so the block is shorter. You have to join it by concrete, and we know concrete doesn't join. The technology might be there to do something. But if we are going to do that, Mr. Speaker, we want guarantee from the supplier or the manufacturer, that if anything happens, you will do this and you will do that. I understand that, that is not forthcoming, so a decision must be made.

But, in order to survive, without the load shedding, we had to rent six (6) eight hundred and seventy-five (875) kilowatts small engines, and we paid five million dollars ($5 m) for the rent alone. You rent it and then you must put your diesel engine to generate your electricity for six (6) months. If we cannot get that replacement Plant in six (6) months, we have to go for another six (6) months, at another five million dollars ($5 m). This is what is facing the Company, because of the lack of investment, lack of investment. And then, WRB would tell the Tribunal if we wanted them to do some of these things that they won the bid on, we should have put it in the… when I say, ***"we,"*** the then Government should have put it in the Share Purchase Agreement, Mr. Speaker.

So plans going forward, in conjunction with the World Bank and IRENA, we have to decide on replacing the engine, and IRENA has really asked us to report on what is happening. Now, we have the room for renewable, so will we replace this engine with a renewable Plant, or with a fossil fuel engine? We have to make a decision. I personally not against any of them, because if you have to wait for a renewable Plant for fifteen (15) months, and this new engine could come in; and the only reason the engine would come in, normally, if you are ordering an engine from scratch, it would come in there in fifteen, twenty months and so forth. But fortunately, somebody purchased the twenty (20) cylinder engine, they paid down their 10% as when you are buying land, and they did not take it. So the manufacturer took the 10% and kept the engine, so there is an engine there already made. So, we have to look at all those things, in moving forward, to ensure that we do not face the massive load shedding, Mr. Speaker.

We will carry out an urgent audit and we are working with the World Bank on that to see what exactly is in there. We are looking at top management contracts, and there are different ways of doing it. You go in a management company or you bring one man with the knowledge about renewables and he engages his consultants to ensure that the company moves forward and also, as how we diversify the shares, Mr. Speaker. And that's where we are, Mr. Speaker. And in general, I ask for this Honourable House to affirm the Resolution, as proposed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Leader of Government's Business. Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. David.

Hon. Oliver Joseph: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Let me express sympathy to you and your family on the passing of your beloved mother and to wish you and the staff and all Members a very productive and safe year.

Because of the times we are in, I think, the key thing I want to wish everyone is good health, because we have seen the number of deaths caused by COVID-19 and we in Grenada, we have to keep safe, and for this year, observe all the protocols, so that we can remain safe.

Mr. Speaker, Minister Bowen explained the background to where we are and where we're going forward. What I would do in my presentation is to focus on the questions that the public is asking. So, throughout the length and breadth of Grenada, they are getting confusing messages and mixed signals and therefore, it is important to set the record straight and to provide the facts, because we have to distinguish between facts and opinions.

So, the fact is number one, that the Share Purchase Agreement was signed by the National Democratic Congress in 1994. Mr. Speaker, would you believe and if I did not hear it myself, I would not believe, you know, that certain elements are saying that the Agreement was signed by NNP? Some elements are saying that. They are so ashamed now, now that the Agreement is made public; they are ashamed of what they signed **(applause)** so they are saying when NNP was in Opposition. Well, if NNP

signed it in 1994, then the fifteen million US dollars should have gone to NNP. But it didn't go to NNP, because if I signed an Agreement for a sale, then the money must come to me. So, that's the first thing I want to get out very clear. Fact number one, the deal was signed by NDC for a monopoly period of eighty (80) years. That's the second point that they are hiding. Eighty (80) years, you cannot do anything, because any action that you take contrary to the Agreement, they can take the matter to Court and you are forced to repurchase and that is what brought us here today, you know.

Mr. Phinsley St. Louis in a recent programme, he was the Minister for Public Utilities, and I am quoting what he said here now. He said that he ***"advised the team"***, that was negotiating, ***"to put in a clause that says, the Agreement will be renewed every ten (10) years, instead of just giving eighty (80) years blank."*** He said that. The tape is there. I can make it available. He said, but they did not listen to him. But, had they put in a ten-year review period, that would have made it easier for any Government coming in to change it. But no, eighty (80) years upfront; eighty (80) years. You are a sovereign Government, you have an important sector as the Electricity Sector and you cannot regulate it, because if you pass Legislation to regulate it, then you have to repurchase it, and you have to repurchase it, not at fair market value, but under the formula that was placed in Schedule 2, a formula in Schedule 2 you must use in order to repurchase it.

So after one year of paying fifteen million US dollars (US$15 m), or 50% on the shares, the next year it was worth $50.5 m, because of the foolishness that was placed there. So the public must know that and the NDC Government must accept that it is the Share Purchase Agreement. We are not talking about whether or not it should be privatised or not. It is the Agreement that you signed that has us where we are today, that we took a decision in 2016 to regulate the Electricity Sector, in keeping with modern trends, with assistance from the World Bank and WRB Claim, that we had triggered a repurchase, which took us to the International Court for Settlement of Disputes, and they ruled that, yes, you must repurchase, not at the market value, but at the Schedule 2 price. So, that is number one.

Number two, some people are saying that it is not true to say that a private company owns GRENLEC, because the Government has shares and other Grenadians have shares. Mr. Speaker, WRB owns 50% of the shares in the company, and their affiliate Company that is made up of their Directors and Management, own another 11.6%. So, together, the private company owns 61.6% shares. Well, if you have 61.6%, you own the company, so it is a private company. WRB is a private company that was running GRENLEC. So, why are they trying to confuse the masses? If you have 61.6%, when you pay dividends, you get 61.6% of the dividends. So when they borrowed money, borrowed money, you know, dividends are paid on profits in all regular business in the world, you know. You pay dividends based on your profits. WRB went and borrowed money to pay dividends and collected fifty-seven million dollars ($57 m) for themselves. Now that it is a State asset and run by the Government, all these profits would stay in Grenada **(applause)** because Grenadians… and that is the key here, that's the next point, that's the third factor I want to come to.

Making it sound as though we repurchased it, because Dr. Mitchell and Bowen want to own the company. But how Dr. Mitchell and Bowen could own the Company? Is it them that paid for it? The company is now a State asset and whichever Government comes in will have control over the State asset and will decide how they will manage the company. So it comes now to the State and that is something that some of my friends, I recall during the period, '79 to '83 were saying, that the State must control the commanding heights of the economy and electricity and water must stay as State assets. **(Applause)** Today, some of them are singing a different tune, because they say NNP has it. It's the State that has it. So, let me make that very clear. It is a State asset.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, I am responding to everything that I heard from the public, point by point, so that when we leave here today, the public has all the facts, all the facts. That is the importance of this Session, you know, to provide all the facts. I am not expressing any opinion here. I am stating what the facts are and the ordinary man could understand where we are today with this prime asset, this strategic asset. In

some countries, they consider it a National Security asset, you know, in some countries, **(applause)** National Security, that's how they see it.

So, what has happened? So WRB took us to the Court of Arbitration and they won and for 50% of the shares, they were awarded $58.4 million plus interest and other charges to their Lawyers amounting to seventy-two million dollars ($72 m) for the 50% shares.

We then entered into negotiations. We said, well, they have the settlement, it is binding and we have to pay. We have to pay. There is a binding ruling, you know, the ruling is binding, so we have to pay. But we entered into negotiations, and Minister Bowen and myself from March to December were engaged in this, March to December. The ruling came out in March, back and forth, back and forth, to see if we could get some reduction in the price. WRB then said, well we have an 11.6% shares that we are holding in an affiliate Company, we will like you to take it, as well. We said, well, you can sell this 11.6% to anybody, you know, on the open market. But the price they were asking, no one on the open market would buy it, no investor would buy it. So, they said, okay, we will give it to you, at a certain price. When they stated that they wanted eight million dollars ($8 m) for it, we said, no, we are not paying you the price under Schedule 2, because remember Schedule 2, the award was only for 50%, you know, when they used the Schedule 2 calculation. So we said no, we are going to use fair market value, now, for the 11.6%, and we got a substantial reduction. **(Applause)** So, Mr. Speaker, it is eighty million dollars ($80 m) in all, and we have not added interest.

Finally, we settled that sixty-three million dollars ($63 m), you know, from eighty million dollars ($80 m) and interest was not included, because they had interest there that you have to pay interest at the 90-days Treasury Bills. Whatever the interest rate in Government's Treasury Bills for ninety (90) days, that is the interest rate that will apply. And we negotiated and got them to come down to sixty-three million dollars ($63 m). We paid, upfront, sixty million US dollars (US$60 m) and signed a Promissory Note for three million dollars ($3 m) to be paid in two (2) years' time.

I heard one caller saying that I said sixty-three and Minister Bowen said sixty. We are saying the same thing. It is sixty-three, but we paid sixty, upfront, sixty million

dollars ($60 m) we paid, before the 29th of December, so we are owing three million still in a Promissory Note, for two (2) years, to pay the three million. These are the facts and that is where we are.

Even when we were negotiating the Promissory Note, Mr. Bowen and I, when it came to the interest rate, had to bargain and bargain over the interest rate. They suggested one interest rate, we countered it with another one, and then I said, okay, the interest rate would only apply if you default. So, during the two-year period, no interest rate, but if, at the end of the two (2) years you did not pay, then interest would kick in. We had to negotiate with that. They wanted the interest to start, you know, running for the two (2) years, all this time, having Grenada's interest at heart.

So, let me repeat the facts. Sixty-three million dollars ($63 m) was the settlement. We paid sixty million dollars ($60 m), upfront, and we would pay three million dollars ($3 m) in two (2) years' time.

The other point is, with regards to price setting. You know, WRB has the company and they are the ones setting the price. There is no Public Utilities Regulatory Commission to set price, you know, that was gotten rid of. Now, we have that in place. So now, the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission will regulate the price. So when you have independent power producers, these are people who want to generate electricity, right now, they have to sell their excess to GRENLEC and then buy it back, you know, or GRENLEC is selling it back to the public at a different rate, with no control, you know, no control, because there is no Public Utilities Regulatory Commission to regulate it. So if I produce excess and they give me five cents (5¢), they could sell it for forty cents (40¢), no control. So what we sought to do was regulate the market and now, independent power producers can enter the market and the prices would be regulated.

So, Mr. Speaker, the question is now, would we see independent power producers? A lot of people want to go into solar, a lot of people want to go into solar, you know. But previously, you had to apply for a licence from GRENLEC. So now, I say to the farmers in St. David's, who approached me to do a Solar Farm, when they heard that the Government has now repossessed and repurchased the company, they said, so can we go ahead now and start? I say to the farmers and to the people in La

Tante and in Apres Tout and in Belle Isle, you can do that now, because it is in the hands of the Government. **(Applause)** And, the people in Requin and Westerhall, who are waiting for electricity and the poles, you will get your electricity now on your poles.

You know what happened, previously, Mr. Speaker? When they applied to GRENLEC, you know what GRENLEC told them? You have to go your Parliamentary Representative, they have to sign. Ask the Members of Parliament, to sign the application. When they come to me and I sign it and they sent it in, they said they didn't receive anything from the Parliamentary Representative. They wanted to make the Parliamentary Representative look bad, so that was a deliberate policy, you know. No electricity, no new lights on poles and everything like that. So, we were running a Government, with a private company that could have done anything they wanted, and we sought to regulate that and here we are today.

You know, one thing I would say though, Mr. Speaker, the few voices you are hearing does not reflect the voice of the ordinary man in Grenada. **(Applause)** It does not, because all over Grenada, people are so happy that we are now in charge of the Electricity Company. And as Minister Bowen stated, the Government has no interest in running GRENLEC, no interest.

A Management Company would be hired to run it and shares would be sold to the public, shares. **(Applause)** People from all over, the diaspora and locals keep asking me, what is the price of the shares, already. **(Inaudible comments)** Look, I hear other Members saying the same thing. They are asking what the price is, because they want to purchase, they want to buy shares in GRENLEC. It is the most profitable company, so they want to invest in it. I am amazed at the amount of calls I get every day about the price. How much for the shares? How soon you will sell the shares? They are excited. The rest of the population is real excited about this. And I too, I'm excited to be part of a Government that has repurchased GRENLEC. **(Applause)** When history is written, let it show that I was part of the Government. Let it show that, because I think that is one of the best decisions that we have made.

And you know, Mr. Speaker, it seems that every time that the country faces a crisis, NNP is in Government at the time, to deal with it. We had hurricane Ivan, which

mashed up the whole country, NNP had to rebuild it back. We have COVID-19 come, COVID-19, 50% of Government's revenue decreased and this NNP Government could pay salaries and wages and pension on time, every month. **(Applause)** I believe it is the hands of God that is working. That is the only way I could explain it, the hands of God, and Mr. Speaker, you're a religious man. I am sure, certainly, you would share my view. It is the hands of God working on the Land. That is all I could say, when I see how this Government has responded to all these crises. COVID, imagine 50% of revenue down, and you still paid and maintained all your Social Programmes, met all your wage bills and paid debts and everything. It must be God's hands working with us, Mr. Speaker.

So, let me move on to the other point. As I say, I am responding in my entire presentation at the questions that have been asked and the misinformation, deliberately set out to mislead the public; deliberate. If you see things on Facebook and all over the media, deliberately trying to mislead people, that, that is the worst thing the Government could do.

So, they asked the question about where the money came from, and they're quoting Act, Mr. Speaker. So, let me read it. Let me quote the Public Finance Management Act, because I asked them to show me where in the Public Finance Management Act that says that if you have to pay an Order by the Court, you have to come and get Parliament's approval.

So, I want to quote Act No. 17 of 2015, the Public Finance Management Act, because they're saying the Act, they're not saying which Act, you know. They're saying how the Act says we can't do that, but which Act? Let them read the Public Finance Management Act and the Fiscal Responsibility Law and let them point out which section that we violated.

So, we said that the money came from savings in the 2020 Budget. Hear their response, but how it wasn't in the 2021 Budget? We did not see any expenditure the 2021 Budget for you to clear it. The expenditure took place in 2020, so how would you see it in the 2021 Budget? The 2021 Budget starts on the 1st of January, 2021. ***(Laughter)*** The expenditure took place before the 29th of December, **(applause)** but

they said they didn't see it in the new Budget, and how in the 2020 Budget, they didn't see money there, as a Line Item to repurchase GRENLEC, so how we could use money there?

Well, Mr. Speaker, on the Capital Side of the Budget, we took money for Capital Expenditure to purchase a major capital asset. What is wrong with that? **(Applause)** But which Law did we violate? They must say specifically, which Law and that is the question I am telling the people in my constituency to ask them, you know. I said when they ask them that, tell them to state the Law. And I wanted it today, so I could come to Parliament and say, well we violated this Law. But, up to the time of coming to Parliament, I received no information of which Law. But my friend, the Opposition Leader, may speak to the Law we violated, since he says that he's filing a Motion in the Court. Well if you're going in the Court, it has to be based on Law. So I am very anxious to hear my friend. I have tried to call him to find out which Law, but I am anxious to hear him today of which Law that we violated, so he can take the matter to Court to prove that it was not done lawfully. So I say to the Grenadian public, that the payment of GRENLEC followed all the legislation that we have put in place, all, everyone. **(Applause)** So let them deal with that.

And the other question they keep saying is that we paid almost eighteen dollars ($18) for the shares. They want to see how much we're going to sell it for and who is going to buy it at that right price and we would have to sell it for less **(chuckling)** and we're going to lose money. How do you determine the share price? So you hire an Accounting Firm and they look at the assets and the liabilities of companies and then they determine the share price. They prepare a prospectus and they put it out to the public at a particular share price and the public will determine whether or not they will pay that amount for it. It's a process it has to follow and that will be done. The prospectus will be developed and made public, so everyone interested in buying the shares at the price that the company recommends, the Accounting Firm, will be offered to the public. And I've said already, a lot of people have been already asking for the price of the shares and showing interest in buying the shares.

So, we spoke about the rates, and I said it is not true when we say that we have one of the highest electricity rates in the CARICOM Region. It's not true. Well, they said it is not true, but they're not quoting rate from other countries. But, I quote rate and say look, because they can't be talking about Dominica, they can't be talking about Trinidad, none of these countries. I just simply looked at the rate per kilowatt hour in Trinidad and I see it is seven (7) times cheaper than Grenada's own. That is all you do, per kilowatt hour, because that's how they measure it, so just check the price per kilowatt hour, check the price per kilowatt hour, the price in Dominica and you will see. So, if you're saying that is not true, then bring a list of the CARICOM countries that have much higher prices than Grenada. You see, they do not counter with facts. And that is the thing, they're going out there to the public with no facts at all, but saying, it's not true and all we're doing is lying to the people. They say all me and Bowen doing is lying to the people. When we go on Press Conferences, we're only lying. Today, I am outlining all the facts, and they must counter after today and say what the lies that I said in Parliament today were.

So, I come to the independent Power Producers. So, what is that now under the Regulation, under the Act? So, if you want to set up on your house, you want to produce electricity, if you want to enter the market, you must apply, get a license, be allowed to produce your own electricity. If you want to sell back to the Grid, that will be allowed at a certain price.

GRENLEC will still be generating fossil fuel, but we have a target to meet. In order to get funding for climate change, there are certain targets that you must meet. So we set targets, so by 2025 we are supposed to be at a certain place in renewable energies. I heard Minister Bowen said now we are at 1.5% and we're supposed to be at 25%. So, we need to move aggressively to ensure that we meet this target, because when you meet the target, you get a lot of funding. A lot of funding is available, you know, to assist Member States to move to renewable energy. So now that the Government has the opportunity to license independent Power Producers could help generate renewable energy to help us to meet our targets and the Green Climate Fund

and all these other places, we will get a lot of funding from there, in order to help us with our energy costs and that is one of the benefits.

But, the major benefit before my time is expired, to the people of Grenada, to the business people, to the Manufacturing Sector; you know we have a very small Manufacturing Sector? If the cost of electricity is one of the highest input costs in manufacturing, then the output will be more expensive; as simple as that. So why would a manufacturer come here to produce when the cost of electricity is seven (7) times higher than in Trinidad, and when the cost of electricity as an input is one of the highest costs in manufacturing? He will go where it is cheaper. So, in order to get investment in the Manufacturing Sector, we need to lower the price of electricity.

The Hotel Sector, I am sure the Minister for Tourism will talk about that, if the guests, when you go in the room you're seeing notice that if you're leaving the room, please turn off the AC; please turn off the AC. Only in Grenada you're seeing that, you know, because the cost of electricity is so high, if you leave the AC running they can't pay their bill at the end of the month, some of them in the Hotel Sector cannot. So the high cost of electricity is preventing our growth, growth in the economy, economic growth, it is stifling economic growth. **(Applause)** And therefore, we must deal with that. So what to do? Wait eighty (80) years? Eighty (80) years we must wait, twenty-six (26) years gone? I am almost sixty (60), Mr. Speaker, that time I am dead already, sixty (60) years again to go. I am already sixty (60), so I can't live sixty (60) more. I have lived half of my life already; I know that, nobody in the family has lived for one hundred and twenty (120) years. **(Laughter)** So wait, well, my great grandchildren, would have to come and inherit it, because you give them eighty (80) years. You can't do any change, no growth, eighty (80) years, because they did not take Mr. Phinsley St. Louis' advice for a Review Clause, every ten (10) years, so we had to wait.

So I am happy that we took this step and we are where we are today. And I am confident that the Grenadian population is satisfied that we have done the right thing, and they can look forward to a reduction in rates and that we have a more efficient and well-regulated sector. We cannot have a whole sector just run by a monopoly. We have one Plant in Grenada.

So, Mr. Speaker, to all the people in my constituency of St. David who tuned in now; they all said that they will be tuning in to get the facts and they promised to put out a leaflet, because they told me, I must put out in simple language, put out a pamphlet, so they could give it out, or they could post it up, because they're hearing too many confusing things, so give them the facts today. I said listen, every MP will address certain aspects of it. So I am not going more into the agreement itself. We have other speakers that will do that.

I am saying to public that you have chosen a team that you have confidence in to run this country. We are making decisions on your behalf and for the interests of the people of Grenada, not for personal interest, no personal interest, the interest of the Grenadian people.

And we are here as a Government, first and foremost, to ensure that we improve the standard of living of our people. That's the main focus of the Government, you know, to improve the standard of living and the quality of life. And what has been our emphasis; on education. Mr. Speaker, education that took me out of poverty, you know. I had to educate myself out of poverty. When you're poor, the only thing to take you out of poverty is education, because if you have no education, even though you win the Lotto, all the money will go, you're not having anything still. You could win ten million dollars ($10m) in Lotto, you would still end up being broke, because you're not accustomed to having ten thousand dollars ($10,000.00). If you have ten million dollars ($10 m) one day, you don't know what to do, **(laughter)** education, and that is why we're spending so much money on education.

And, we have the Bathroom and Toilet Project, that's the one we're getting the greatest review on. As I said, five million dollars ($5 m) was budgeted, as a simple example, of where the money came from, five million ($5 m) under Capital Projects. Because of COVID we couldn't even start the Bathroom and Toilet Project; quite in July. Some people started in August, so we couldn't have time spend the money.

There were so many projects that we wanted to start, because of COVID, couldn't even start and some started in the last quarter. The last quarter, Special Projects that we did the most, lockdown. We couldn't get cement, we couldn't get

gravel, we couldn't get sand, we couldn't do a lot of projects and the Minister for Finance kept explaining that's where the savings came from. So they said, well, if you have money saved, you could pay us our 4%, pay the 4%, you're comparing recurrent expenditure now to a major capital investment. So, if we get sixty million ($60 m) to buy an asset, don't use all, give us our 4% increase, $13.2 million. When we use money for recurrent expenditure, there is no return on investment there. You just keep recurring, paying, paying the money every month, it's not a one off, you know. It's not a one-off; that is why it's called recurrent, you know, Mr. Speaker, every month you have to meet it, you have to keep paying it. But, I hear all over the place and that is what they are going around selling, that if you could find money. There were no savings on the recurrent side. If there were sayings on the recurrent side, then you could use the savings, it's on the capital. And you cannot move the savings on the capital side to meet Recurrent Expenditure.

Mr. Speaker, the reason why Grenada is doing so well and getting funding from IDA, is because of our prudent fiscal management, you know, that is why. **(Applause)** There are certain CARICOM countries that cannot access IDA resources, you know, at .75%, they cannot access it. But we, because over the years of prudent fiscal management, we're able to survive and able to meet our bills, even in the face of a 50% reduction. So this Government must be given credit **(time bell rings)** for its fiscal management.

I know I have used up my time. I wouldn't ask for extension, because other Members have to speak and I don't want them say that, well, I've said everything, so they have nothing to say. I want to hear them speak on it. So, I say, Mr. Speaker, the public, I am sure, after this Parliament Sitting, would be better enlightened. They will have the facts and all they could do, Mr. Speaker, I always say, the most you can do is present all the facts and let rational people come to their own conclusion. I end on this note. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. David. According to our Standing Orders and the rules for debate, we have thirty (30)

minutes for the presenter and fifteen (15) minutes for the Members with a discretionary five minutes. Let me say this, because of the importance of this Motion, I have decided to move the fifteen (15) minutes to twenty (20) minutes and five (5) minutes discretion. So, I will give you twenty-five (25) minutes to speak on it. But, I think I saw the Parliamentary Representative for St. Patrick West.

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Thank you, thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was about to request that additional time but, I think you anticipated quite well, that in no way I can do justice to this presentation in fifteen (15) minutes.

Mr. Speaker, let me, like the Member before me, express my condolences to you and your family, on the passing of your Mom, and to wish you strength, courage to endure in these difficult times.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start off by making an observation, which the Leader of the Opposition made in the beginning, but then the Member for St. George South-East and Minister for Finance give an explanation, in terms of the timeliness of the receipt of documents, because it was only yesterday evening around 4:30, I received documentation of the Resolution, and it meant that I had to stay up almost all night to study the document. And as I indicated before, Mr. Speaker, I am not very good at reading from electronic devices. I think the Member made the point, when he said I am kind of blind. I am not really blind, but it's a bit difficult to read from electronic devices. So I will be happy if documents can be given in paper form, or if it is sent electronically, it must be sent early, so I can have it printed to read from. So, I really want to make this request, because it's really not helpful getting the document late, especially when it is sent electronically.

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support the Motion, as presented by the Minister for Finance and to give affirmation to that Resolution as he presented. Mr. Speaker, the question was asked, why are we here? And, the Minister for Finance gave an explanation. And I just want to elaborate a little more as to the reasons why we are here today debating this Motion.

Mr. Speaker, the sale of GRENLEC,1994, in my opinion, Mr. Speaker, this will go down in history, as probably one of the most disadvantageous and outrageous deals that any Government could have made. **(Applause)** And, Mr. Speaker, I am speaking not because of what I hear people say or what I have read, but because I was part of that negotiating team. I was the representative of the Ministry of Finance, I was appointed by the then Prime Minister and Minister for Finance to be the representative of the Ministry of Finance on that Committee.

In addition, I can recall our current Ambassador to Cuba, Claris Charles, being a Member of that Committee, as well. But needless to say, Mr. Speaker, we did not last long, because our views did not coincide nor sync with the views of others on that Committee and we were thrown off that Committee, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the point was made as to the actual sale price, fifteen million EC dollars (EC$15 m). Let us say it was six million dollars ($6 m) for 50% of the shares, Mr. Speaker, and it was based on an evaluation, an assessment of the state of the company at the time and the formula used was the Fair Market Value, as was said, by the Minister. However, when it came to the Repurchase Agreement, they did not use that formula. They used an entirely different formula, the present value of discounted earnings, future earnings over the life of the licence, eighty (80) years. And anyone, Mr. Speaker, any schoolchild will tell you that if you use that formula for an enterprise operating in a monopolistic environment, your value will be much higher, far higher, than the value you get from the Fair Market Assessment. **(Applause)**

And, this is quite obvious, Mr. Speaker, because the value of the assets is just one determining factor in the final determination of the earning potential. And therefore, it is inconceivable that one element in an equation could be greater than the total. So, it meant, Mr. Speaker, that using that formula, even after one (1) month or two (2) months, as said by the Minister, once you use that formula, automatically, the price you will have to pay will be three or four times what you pay initially, using the Fair Market Value. So, from the beginning, Mr. Speaker, that was a bad deal. **(Applause)**

And when we raised that, Mr. Speaker, there are those who gave objection. I do not know, at the time the leader of the Negotiating Team was not a Grenadian, I think

he was a Barbadian, Mr. Cox, and he really was not receptive to the views, the alternative views, for reasons I do not know, and I do not want to assume or to make any aspersions, as to why this kind of approach was taken by the Negotiating Team.

Secondly, Mr. Speaker, the company was given a license for eight (8) years, a monopoly. This is an American Company, Mr. Speaker. WRB is an American Company and we know as a fact that based on the 1890 Antitrust Act in the United States of America, what they got in Grenada, they could not get it in United States of America. **(Applause)** This is prohibited by Law. This type of arrangement is illegal in the United States, but they came to Grenada and they got that arrangement. They couldn't get it in their home country.

But, Mr. Speaker, what is even more distressing, here you have a National Strategic Asset, key to your economic and national security being placed in the hands of a family company. So it meant that, Mr. Speaker, someone could be sitting in an office, sitting in their home in Miami and determines the destiny of our country. That could not be right, Mr. Speaker, that could not be right. And that is why, Mr. Speaker, I fully support the efforts of this Government to… I wouldn't say that Government initiated it, but they were forced to, based on the company invoking the Repurchase Agreement. But, I fully support, Mr. Speaker, the fact that the assets are now back in Grenadian hands, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, I am hearing a lot of questions being asked, as to where the money came from and how it was spent. The Minister for Finance, the Prime Minister, I think the Minister for Foreign Affairs gave valid explanation, as to the source of funds and how it was used, but yet, some people are not satisfied.

You know, you're getting the impression that the Minister for Finance is the Accounting Officer in the Ministry. He is not the Chief Accounting Officer and therefore, funds cannot come to a Minister and he will do as he wants with it. It can't happen, Mr. Speaker. So, to be critical of the explanation given by the Ministers is to say that you have no confidence in the Officers in the Ministry of Finance **(applause)** because if the Minister says one thing and it's not true, the officers will say: "Listen, the Minister is telling untruth."

It is also critical of the Legal Adviser, because to undertake such a transaction, you must get legal advice. **(Applause)** So, you are saying you do not accept the legal advice given by the distinguished Attorney-General on these matters? You know, it is just disheartening that I am hearing this kind of issues being raised, where the money came from, who you get it from, how you spent it? It has been given, and you have to take it. If you do not accept it, go to the appropriate authorities. Talk to the Accountant General, or talk to the Attorney-General and they will tell you that the transaction is a valid transaction.

Up to this date, Mr. Speaker, I haven't heard any foreign Lending Agency complaining that they have given Grenada money to do 'x' and they have done 'y' with it, because that hadn't happened. It did not happen, that's why nobody will complain, because if it had happened, obviously, it would have triggered discussions. I gave you money to do this project, you did not do the project and you used it for something else, as a loan. But, if you were using grant funds, Mr. Speaker, you have that flexibility with grant funds to do the thing that was done here, to pay for the shares. So, Mr. Speaker, I think we should lay that to rest.

My philosophy, Mr. Speaker, on this whole thing is not to dwell too much, on the past, because we know the past, but to look to the future. Now that the shares are back in the hands of Government, we have to determine what the benefits are that will accrue to the average Grenadian from such a move. And here I want to identify, I think, the Member for St. David identified some of those benefits.

The Prime Minister has made it clear that it is not the intention of Government to hold on to the shares, but to make those shares available to the average Grenadian. So far, Mr. Speaker, I've received a number of calls from civil servants, retirees, asking how they can get some shares in the company. This is what we have to encourage. They want to invest, Mr. Speaker, and it will give us the opportunity as Grenadians to own those shares and to avoid the millions and millions of dollars that are flown out of this country, in terms of dividends to foreign shareholders. Those monies will remain here in our country, Mr. Speaker, to help develop our country, if they are owned by Grenadians, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

The company did something, some say it was legal, I say it was immoral, when they borrowed, is it forty-seven million ($47 m) or fifty-seven million dollars ($57 m) to pay special dividends, Mr. Speaker, at a time when they knew two (2) things were happening. The Plant and equipment were in need of upgrading, they knew that, and they also knew that the Repurchase Agreement was triggered, but yet, look at what they did, you borrowed fifty-seven million ($57 m) to pay Special Dividends, 61% of which was straight out of the country, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Can you say this is a company that was concerned about the welfare of our Grenadian people? In five (5) years, less than five (5) years, Mr. Speaker, WRB recovered its initial investment, in less than five (5) years, check the records. **(Applause)** So, it meant that for the past twenty (20) years, all they were getting were profits, profits, 61% out of the country. But, yet some of us are saying, no, we should leave it in their hands. You know, I am questioning the patriotism of some of our people.

Mr. Speaker, even if we have to make some sacrifices, it is still far better for Grenadians to be owning those shares, Mr. Speaker, because what has been happening, you will not get that happening again, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, who would benefit? And, I want to give some practical examples now. A couple weeks ago, I visited, I don't like to use the word 'old', but a senior citizen, in my constituency, someone in her eighties (80s). And she was sitting in front of her door on the step, and she had some papers in her hand, and I went up to her, that's facts I am giving here. So, I said: "What, are you reading there, your boyfriend wrote you, or what?" You know, making joke. She said: "Papa, oh, my bills I am looking at we." I said: "Let me see the bill," and she showed me the electricity bill. She is living in a little house, two hundred and forty-one dollars ($241.00), Mr. Speaker, two hundred and forty-one dollars ($241.00). I asked: "How are you surviving?" She said: "I have to depend on my two hundred dollars ($200.00) pension at the end of the month." Can you imagine someone having to survive on two hundred dollars ($200.00) with an electricity bill, far in excess of her income? This can't be right. I met another young man operating a Welding Shop. He said he had to close down his business, because he cannot pay his electricity bill. So, that's another case there.

The question we must ask, how many of these senior citizens we have, Mr. Speaker, in that predicament? How many young person's wanting to go into business, or operating small businesses and cannot continue, because of the price of electricity, Mr. Speaker.

I visited a home again, one afternoon, it was almost 5:00/6:00, with a number of children doing their work, and the mother said: "Listen, all you better hurry up, hurry up, you know, because I cannot afford to keep the lights on." Education, Mr. Speaker, electricity is no longer a privilege for the few, it is a right for the many, Mr. Speaker, and it should be affordable. **(Applause)** Can you imagine our children not being able to study, because the parents can't afford to pay their bills, to keep them studying up to 8:00/9:00 o'clock?

Mr. Speaker, for years, I have been begging GRENLEC to give me a streetlight in an area where a young lady lost her life. She lost her life because of the darkness, the thing happened there. For years, up to today, Mr. Speaker, they have not. Oh, it's a run around, go to the Minister. I wrote to the Minister, I copied it to them, they send and tell me: "Well, I don't have to copy to them, just leave it with the Minister." **(Laughter)** Nothing, Mr. Speaker.

Another young man lost his life in a very dark area in Mt. Craven. We begged for lights, nothing from the company, because it is not in their interest, Mr. Speaker. Their interest is profit maximisation and providing streetlights and thing is not assisting in maximising their profit. That's what they're concerned about, maximising profit.

Mr. Speaker, the point was made, if this country is to move forward, we must address the price of electricity. **(Applause)** Whether it's for manufacturing, whether it's for tourism, Mr. Speaker, we must address this. And therefore, I believe that, in going forward, we have to look at this, Mr. Speaker, the price of electricity.

But even more importantly, Mr. Speaker, we are saying that we now should be in a position to control our destiny, in terms of having an Essential Service in the hands of our people, and not, Mr. Speaker, in the hands of a family company way out in Miami, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, so as a result of the intention of Government to lower electricity rates, the question has been asked: "Well, how will you do it?" Mr. Speaker, Government has always expressed its intention that we should move, gradually, away from high fossil fuel into renewables, because in the long run, it will cost us less. So, that is the policy, Mr. Speaker, that is the philosophy of this Government, that there will be a gradual shift, a gradual move, and, as the Member said, the penetration rate is just about 2%, when it should be about 20%. And you know what that is doing to us? Because we are so far behind, Mr. Speaker, it is difficult for Grenada to access grant funds from environmentally friendly Organisations, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** So, once we move into that direction, it means that more development funds will be flowing into our country.

I am hearing some apologies from WRB saying, WRB is interested. Mr. Speaker, WRB was not interested in that. They were not interested in moving in that direction, neither were they interested in have other actors in the Industry, because that will interfere with their monopolistic arrangement. And once that monopoly is broken, Mr. Speaker, they know that the profit level will fall, hence the reason why, once that Act was passed, they considered it no longer in their interest to remain, because if they were so interested, Mr. Speaker, in moving into the direction of renewables, because this was the intent of the Act, they should have welcomed it. Why didn't they welcome it? So, let no apologists tell you that WRB was interested in moving in that direction, because that was the intent. And because of the action taken, they invoked their Repurchase Clause in the Agreement.

So, Mr. Speaker, I know time is short, I just want to, because I do not want us to believe that everything is nice and dandy, you know, in moving forward, because I am speaking very objectively. And maybe some of the things I say, my own colleagues may not agree with me. But that's it, you know, I am speaking from a position of economic knowledge, and how I see things spawning out. And I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that in moving forward, there will be challenges, there will be challenges. I am hearing some people say: "Oh, yes, now, you know, the company is in Government's hands, I expect my electricity bill to fall by 50%."

Mr. Speaker, let us not feed such unrealistic expectations. Yes, Mr. Speaker, there must be, because that is the ultimate objective. There must be a gradual reduction in rate, but the process must be carefully managed, Mr. Speaker, because right now, Government has a dual role to play. With WRB, they were concerned only about profit maximisation. Government has a responsibility to ensure that the company survives and is profitable. But, at the same time, on the other hand, there must be welfare consideration. So, there must be a balancing act, with profit maximisation and welfare maximisation and get the middle role. WRB was only one side, profit maximisation; they cared nothing about welfare maximisation.

So, while we are concerned about bringing rates lower for the enjoyment of our people, for the development of our country, we must be mindful that we have a company that must survive and must remain profitable, Mr. Speaker, because remember we have shareholders and they will be looking for return on their investment, so that, Mr. Speaker, is a challenge that we must look at.

Another challenge, Mr. Speaker, and again, as I say we may not all agree. We have to manage this process of liberalisation very carefully, very carefully. Yes, liberalisation, apart from moving into the non-renewables, I am talking about the new actors that will enter in the market. And I see two categories of actors, one, because we now have a liberal market, there might be existing consumers, or potential consumers who might say: "Listen, hey, I want to set up my own panel, I want to generate my own electricity, and whatever excess I will sell to the company." If that is not managed carefully, Mr. Speaker, GRENLEC would lose a significant number of its customers.

On the other hand, Mr. Speaker, you have those who might be interested only in investing to generate electricity for direct sale to the company, that we should encourage, immediately, more of those. But, the other one, Mr. Speaker, it has to be gradual, very gradual, and I hope my colleagues understand what I am saying, because GRENLEC still has a market, in spite of what happened, you have all these equipment, Plants to maintain.

You do not want to have a company that is operating with excess capacity. Once you do that, it means that the prices cannot fall. You may have to increase your price in

order to stay in business, and that is not what we want. So I am saying, let us manage that process very carefully and not to have an open sesame, where everybody could come and abandon the GRENLEC connection now and set up their own system, and say I generate and the excess I would sell. Yes, you could encourage it, but let us encourage other producers to come and produce, directly, as a business and sell to the company. That to me, Mr. Speaker, makes a lot of sense.

The other point I want to raise, Mr. Speaker,…

(Sound of Gavel)

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Time is up?

(Laughter)

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Mr. Speaker, I have heard the Prime Minister made mention of getting a Management Company with the expertise. This is good, but, again, here, we have to be very careful because some of these companies, if they're coming from abroad, they could be very expensive. They could be very expensive. I believe we have the expertise, locally, I sincerely believe that. A company that has been in existence for all these years, I believe we have the expertise. So, again, let us be careful that we just don't go wholesale and say I am bringing a foreign company, they will charge you millions of dollars to manage something that your own people could manage. Let us be careful in going in that direction, Mr. Speaker.

And, a final point I want to make, Mr. Speaker, I think I have it down.

(Time Bell Rings)

Hon. Anthony Boatswain: Shareholders and their dividends. Some again, might be expecting super dividends, and they may say: "Well, yes, I'll get significant returns." Eventually, that will happen. But remember what the Minister said, you have

to invest. Some of the equipment there are out-dated, depreciated, beyond their normal lifespan and you have to make significant investment; and if you have to do that, you have to forgo certain benefits in the short run. So, I am making the point, Mr. Speaker, let's temper our expectations, both in terms of price decrease and in terms of dividends. We are moving into new waters and we have to go carefully.

And my final, final point, Mr. Speaker, with your permission, let us put in place the proper structure, legal and otherwise, to ensure that there will be no political interference in the operation of the company, whether by this Government, or the one to come. In the past, certain institutions were used as cash cows; let us not make this a cash cow, Mr. Speaker. Let us operate a company that will benefit our people, that will provide adequate returns to those who choose to invest, Mr. Speaker, and I think if we do that, we would be on the right track. I thank you very much. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Parliamentary Representative for St. Patrick's West. Honourable Parliamentary Representative for the Town of St. George.

Hon. Peter David: Thank you, Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Proceed.

Hon. Peter David: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to address the issue presented in the Resolution, in terms of the future of energy generation in Grenada and the importance to the development of the country.

I think in all of the discussions, and of course, Mr. Speaker, there is not much more I can add on the issues of the background. I think the Minister for Finance did an excellent job, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and my dear friend, the Representative for St. Patrick's West, did some very critical issues that have to be discussed on the way forward. But I think we must start from the position of the importance.

And when I speak, Mr. Speaker, I speak to all of us, in Grenada, the importance of energy to development, because, as the Foreign Minister indicated, that is what this

is about. It's about the development of Grenada, and in discussions between ourselves, with the communities, the Opposition, everybody must bear in mind and never lose sight of that fact.

All Small Island Developing States face challenges. They face challenges in terms of energy generation and the price of energy, in tourism, in manufacturing, in education, energy cuts across all of the sectors of our economy and therefore, the price of energy has a serious impact on the development objectives of all Small Island Developing States, and I daresay, all States. And this is not a partisan issue. This is a development issue that confronts all of us. The debate is healthy. The community must debate, our people must debate, but at the end of the day, we must all concede that it is an essential fact that we must find ways to reduce our energy prices to allow for more rapid development.

My dear friend, the Foreign Minister indicated and it's something that I've said, many times, that energy is a National Security issue. It is a National Security issue in that, if we do not have the production of energy and the distribution of energy, throughout our economy, and if the Government does not play a role in that, it could lead to disastrous consequences for our development and our economy.

In fact, we always talk about Energy Security, just as we speak of Food Security and other forms of National Security. And, the big question is, how do we ensure that our people, our communities, our tourism developers, our farmers, how do we ensure that they have access to affordable energy, and in doing so, the Government, and it is my submission; and while we may debate the extent which this is done, the Government must play a part in ensuring that there's access to cheaper energy, access to affordable energy, throughout our country, and that is what is being done here, Mr. Speaker, and I absolutely support the initiative to have the State play a role in energy in Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, in what has been done with GRENLEC, the State is saying, the Government is saying: "We have to intervene to ensure that affordable prices are given to our people."

Now, the question is, how does the State fulfil its obligation? There is an obligation on the part of the State, to ensure that this Essential Service is provided to all of the people. And while I concede, and I do concede that Governments are not the best actors, in terms of running Energy Enterprises, in fact all Enterprises, the question is how does the Government participate? I agree and the Government agrees that we must not allow circumstances to arise where energy is not accessible, and that is what was found in the Agreement and that is what was found and caused the actions on the part of the Government, in this regard.

As I said earlier, this is a National Security issue. I am not here advocating that the State should control GRENLEC, not at all. I am simply saying that the State has a role. It is not the policy of this Government, as outlined by the Minister for Finance, as outlined by the Prime Minister on several occasions that the Government wants to run an Enterprise. It is not the purpose of the Government to take GRENLEC, so that it becomes a State Facility. I am simply saying that the Government has an obligation to intervene, to ensure that energy is provided and accessible.

Mr. Speaker, we have other examples of this. NAWASA ensures that water is provided at affordable prices; we have the Maurice Bishop International Airport; we have the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission, to ensure that Public Utilities are run in a particular way, and this, Mr. Speaker, is where the Government comes in on the issue of energy.

We may disagree on the extent of Government's participation. For example, Mr. Speaker, in the United States, one of the things that the Trump Administration did was to absolutely deregulate everything, and that led to disastrous consequences in the U.S. In fact, they are now moving back in the other direction to have a bit more regulation. There must be regulation of Essential Services. To say that you allow an absolute laissez-faire, where you allow people to do what they want, is not best for the country. So we have the PURC, and the PURC is going to ensure that whatever happens with GRENLEC is regulated in the interest of our country, and that is the bottom-line, Mr. Speaker; that this Government, in acting the way it's acting and I do not want to go back

into all that was said earlier, is acting in a way to protect developmental objectives of the country.

Water, electricity, healthcare and education, must be provided, and in doing all of that, energy runs through all of that, and that is why the State had to intervene. GRENLEC, Mr. Speaker, is such a case.

And, as Minister for Agriculture, I want to say this, and the Member from St. David indicated that. I have had discussions with several businesspersons, who want to get into Agro Industries. In fact, only yesterday afternoon a lady called me about the facility in La Sagesse. One of the major impediments to Agro Industrial development in this country is electricity costs. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, unless we get a handle on energy costs, we will go nowhere with Agro Industrial production. We have to ensure, through these actions, Minister for Finance that we are able to keep prices in such a way that Agro Industrial development can be enhanced. Energy cost is a major impediment to that.

In addition to that, food prices; energy, again, plays an important part in food prices, be it the use of pumps on the farms, the use of electricity at the Abattoir. Throughout the Agricultural Sector, energy plays an important role. Therefore, as the Minister for Agriculture, I want to welcome the attempts by Government to ensure that we can manage energy prices.

Mr. Speaker, as Labour Minister, and I'll be brief as I indicated, because there are many other speakers who want to address the issues. First of all, let me say that it is my view that the workers at GRENLEC welcome the move by the Government, for several reasons. Firstly, the workers at GRENLEC will now be able, themselves, to purchase more shares in the company through the actions of the Government, and they welcome that. **(Applause)**

Secondly, as said by the Member for St. Patrick, profits will remain in Grenada, thus allowing us to expand on several more projects, and the workers welcome that. The Agreements reached between the workers and the Company will be respected by the Government and that too, is to the benefit of the workers.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, I submit, as Labour Minister, when I negotiate with GRENLEC, at this time, I am not negotiating with persons; well, not me, but the Labour Commissioner, and where I had to intervene, persons who are aware of all the circumstances now. In the hands of Grenadians through share purchases and the Government's role, the workers, I submit, that the environment and the conditions for discussions to enhance the workers benefits are much more favourable and I am sure that the workers welcome that, and I've been told by the workers that they welcome that. So, as Labour Minister, also, Mr. Speaker, I submit that this move is a good move for the country.

The matter of Energy Security, Mr. Speaker, is not a partisan matter. Our development depends on getting a handle on energy. Mr. Speaker, several years ago, thank God for Petro Caribe that our economies were able to survive when the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela gave us cheaper supplies of energy. Were it not for that, our economy would have been in much more serious problems. Let us focus now on how we can make this work for us, and by us, I mean Grenada, not as partisan warriors, but as a Nation.

Small Island Developing States, Mr. Speaker, have many development challenges, our small size, our small population, our limited natural resources, our high Debt to GDP ratios; these are challenges, in addition to the challenge of high energy prices. If we can solve the problem of high energy prices, if we can reduce energy prices and make it more accessible to our people, I do believe that future generations will look back at this and say that the Government has done a significant job in terms of development of Grenada. I thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Parliamentary Representative for the Town of St. George. Parliamentary Representative for St. John.

Hon. Alvin Da Breo: Thank you, thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I also want to take the opportunity to express my condolences to you and your family, over your loss.

Mr. Speaker, we are here because we are all aware of the importance of affordable energy in our country's development and how it influences the cost of living. But, I would focus today, Mr. Speaker, on the Agreement, because there are many people in my constituency, who are asking me, if this was a good thing that happened for the country. So, I would also focus a little bit on the terms of the Agreement, because I remember in the early 90s, I was negotiating with the same Government regarding Grenada Cablevision. So, I know what it was that we got, as a local company, in comparison to what was given to a foreign company.

So, Mr. Speaker, I read the Agreement and I must say I felt sick, because I couldn't see how the people, who were looking after the Nation's benefit, sell us out so badly, and that's what it was. It was a sell-out. And, what is hurtful, Mr. Speaker, is that they were a sovereign Government. But they didn't even have confidence in their own Laws, and a lot of the Laws, they set it aside, just for a sale. So, it was either they were incompetent negotiators, or I would think maybe they were desperate, because I can't see you being elected to such high office and being incompetent.

(Comments & **laughter)**

Hon. Alvin Da Breo: Oh. Okay. I understand. Yeah, it was probably before the Election. Mr. Speaker, on page 40 of the Agreement it says that: "Current Grenadian Law in relation to GRENLEC does not impose or require the payment of withholding taxes, or dividends, or debt, or service payments." So which means and I say, as a matter of policy, the Government of Grenada has not required that GRENLEC pay any of those, not even VAT, which at the time, businesses were paying VAT. Right now, it's consumers; so even that they didn't pay.

They went on to say that the Government's tax proposal announced in the (GOG), Government of Grenada's Budget for the fiscal year of 1994, even what was provided in the Budget for Corporate Income Tax, they even exempted them from that, from the Budget that was not even read yet.

Also, part (d) says: "Currently, GRENLEC, which is owned by the Government, was exempted from duties and they had other concessions." So, they put in the Agreement, Mr. Speaker, that the Budget would not put any of those charges or any liability to the payment of Custom Duties, or any other fees on GRENLEC. So, why is it that just one company you want to give so much and it's a profitable company?

Mr. Speaker, they wanted even things like, at the time, the Permanent Secretary in Finance had to give permission to transfer funds. Even that they didn't want. They wanted exemption from that, because they wanted all the funds to go back and wanted nothing to stay here.

Mr. Speaker, one of the ways in which Government makes a little revenue here, from the sale of lands or assets to foreigners is with the Non-Alien Withholding Tax. Even that, Mr. Speaker, they exempted them from, and it makes you wonder.

Mr. Speaker, usually, when you have a sale like that, you would pay a finders' fee, or they have different names. But, the people coming to know that you have this, then they would give you a Commission. Like any Real Estate you're selling, there is a fee. Even that, Mr. Speaker, they wanted exemption from.

So, did this Government do anything wrong in selling to GRENLEC? And I don't think so, because I think the intention and I was in this Government, in the Cabinet, I know the intention was to relieve that chokehold on people from generating their own electricity, because according to the Agreement, you couldn't.

I will give you an example. In section 10; well, this one is a joke, Mr. Speaker. It says that: "Neither a buyer or any member of the WRB Group will engage in the business of generation, transmission or distribution, or the sale of electricity on Grenada, without the consent of GRENLEC." So, what they're saying is that, they own GRENLEC. You own that, but you are saying that not even the Government or anybody, it's only GRENLEC could give permission in the country for the generation, transmission or distribution.

And even going down, Mr. Speaker, like if the Government wanted any information on WRB, they said, they will provide it at GOG's expense. But yet still, they asked for all records of GRENLEC, all contracts, anything, all financial statements to be

made available to them, at Government's cost. So, any which way, it had to be the cost of the Government of Grenada.

Going to the sale, Mr. Speaker, and to add insult to injury, section 7 (10) says that: "The buyer agrees to provide the Government of Grenada with notice prior to offering only GRENLEC shares held by WRB, or the WRB Group and they would give them thirty (30) days to consider. After, if the Government does not wish to purchase, they would sell their shares to another Entity." So why didn't they do that, Mr. Speaker? Why didn't they give the Government thirty (30) days? Because the reason why, is the Agreement that they forced on the Government to sign, is that on a formula. And my calculation of the formula at closing date, the company was worth more than forty-five million EC dollars (EC$45 m), at the closing date you know, of the negotiation, before they took control.

So, Mr. Speaker, this was a bad deal and I am happy, like my colleague from St. David said, to be a part of the Government, taking control of this important asset, because there is not only the fact of being able now to have such an important Industry under State control, but the fact that it's liberalised. You can put a windmill, a solar panel.

My colleague from St. Mark was just telling me that she has moved over mostly to solar, to light the outside of the house. She's getting more light now at a less cost, and before this would not have been available, because they controlled that. They had to give you permission to put up a solar panel.

So, the future looks good, Mr. Speaker, for all Grenadians, because now we are able to generate our own electricity from natural resources, that's renewable, without damaging our environment, or polluting the environment.

So, I would just like to conclude, Mr. Speaker, by just reiterating to my constituents, the ones that are asking the questions, that it was a good decision. It was not the best way to purchase it, because, financially, if we had gone by, which is the norm, which is the Market Value, then it would be a lot less, but they didn't want that. But at the same time if to say the people on the Government side, that had concluded these negotiations, Mr. Speaker, if they had a heart and that is their symbol **(laughter)**,

why didn't they not agree to use the same formula for selling for the Government of Grenada at the local people's shares? Why? It's just them WRB that would use this ridiculous formula, that's why we had to pay at the high price, and at the same time the only reason why you had to do that is because they are a sovereign country, but they didn't want any arbitration to be done here in Grenada, they wanted it to go in the US at the expense of the Government of Grenada again. And then that same Agreement, they have it that the Grenada Supreme Court will be bound by whatever that Tribunal have decided. So, it was a sad time, but I am happy that it's over and it's time to move ahead. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Representative for St. John. Parliamentary Representative for St. Andrew North-West.

Hon. Delma Thomas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too, would like to express my deepest condolences to you and your family on the passing of your Mom, and to wish you a happy 2021, you and your members of staff. And my colleagues, I would like to wish you a very productive 2021.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here this morning, as the Parliamentary Representative for St. Andrew North-West. They are the ones that have me here and so my allegiance must be to them. That is why I stand today more hopeful than I've ever been about our Power Generation independence and the potential for cheaper energy costs to them and to the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Mr. Speaker, the recent finalisation of the deal, which saw the Government regaining the shares of WRB Enterprises, opened the opportunity for a brand new environment. And before I go further, Mr. Speaker, I think it is important that I place on record my appreciation and commendation for the effort of the Minister for Finance and Public Utilities, Honourable Gregory Bowen and the current Minister for Foreign Affairs, Honourable Oliver Joseph for their service and astuteness in ensuring the best possible settlement in the matter.

I also want to place on record, Mr. Speaker, the overall leadership of the Prime Minister and commend him. He always held this broad progressive vision about the sector. I also would like thank the entire team for supporting and seeing the vision for this, for our people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, in the Bible, in Proverb 29 and verse 18, it says: ***'Where there is no vision, the people shall perish."*** In this case we are discussing here, Mr. Speaker, the people shall flourish, because there has been a clear vision by this Government. **(Applause)**

Many of my colleagues have already spoken about the quality of the negotiation that went to ensure the arrangement and was able to settle at a lower cost than that was awarded by the Administration. We believe, Mr. Speaker, that Grenadians are fundamentally opposed to the idea that such a critical Industry is exclusively in the hands of a foreign Company. Mr. Speaker, this is really not a political issue, you know, this is an issue about the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique **(applause)** and we are representatives of the people, and, therefore, we have to protect their interest.

And while, Mr. Speaker, we may debate for ages, about the original deal, which is painful for me, Mr. Speaker, and must be painful for you and every Member of the team, but every Grenadian man and woman, that should be a painful issue for them, Mr. Speaker. And, while some critics might want to contend with the approach of this latest phase of the negotiation, we all can agree that the engine of National development must be controlled by Grenadian interest.

Mr. Speaker, but we're talking about critics, critics, really. And on the radio, you hear them talking about secret deals. Mr. Speaker, who can talk more about secret deals, Mr. Speaker? **(Applause)** They have no moral authority to talk about secret deals, Mr. Speaker. Secret deals, you say? Not this deal.

Mr. Speaker, the Chairman, the very Chairman of the Housing Authority, in the NDC time, I've heard him on the radio speaking about secret deals. But, Mr. Speaker, he was the Chairman then, a political operative, wanting to run for Election. Leading up to the last election he sold the Sandino Plant, and not a Member of the Board knew that

the Sandino Plant was sold, much less for the Grenadian people. **(Applause)** So, he has no authority to come to talk to us about secret deals, when all that you did in your time were secret deals. We are talking about a deal here that is affecting every Grenadian man, woman and child, and we cannot be speaking about politics when it comes to talking about protecting our people, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this Government's attitude, our Government, to foreign investment in the many sectors of economic activities, have been absolutely stellar; that is beyond reproach. In fact, some of the critics have suggested that we have been too inclined. But we have also understood that attracting and encouraging foreign direct investment is critical to the overall National development. However, it must be strategic and directed in special sectors that does not have the possibilities to compromise our national economic strategies, and in some ways, our very sovereignty.

The current state of affairs, Mr. Speaker, must never be seen as a fight or a conflict between WRB and the Government. It must never be seen as a fight between Gregory Bowen, Keith Mitchell, or any other Member of the team. Mr. Speaker, the very fact that we are interested in that, because we are speaking about protecting our sovereignty and protecting our people. They have selected us for a purpose, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, WRB, as any good business, has done extremely well for its shareholders; that's who they are accountable for. But as elected Representatives for the people, we have a different interest, Mr. Speaker, and therefore, we have to work on behalf of our people and that's what the Prime Minister has done, that's what Minister Bowen and Minister Joseph and the whole team have done. We are more concerned about the well-being of the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)** Make no bones about that, Mr. Speaker, and that is why we are here. That is why we are here at a second time, 15 nil, because the people appreciate that we are looking after their interest, and so we should not be side-tracked by those distractors. They are not even Opposition, Mr. Speaker. We have only one Opposition, look at him right there, so they are just Opposition distractors, opposing for opposing sake, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this current state of affair is a positive commentary about this Government's commitment to ensure national power generation security and responsibility. The current position now sets up that opportunity with the Government, committed to divesting its shares to local Grenadian interest. It's not for the Chinese, Mr. Speaker, so let them go away with that, because now they are realising that we were able to pay for the shares from local revenues, from revenues within our Budget, Mr. Speaker. And they may come with all kinds of things, Mr. Speaker, because they realise that what they're saying is not factual, and the people are seeing through what they're saying, Mr. Speaker, so now it is for local Grenadians.

Mr. Speaker, for some reason, you know, there is a mentality, and I believe it's a Colonial one, that we believe that everything foreign is better and more reliable. But, Mr. Speaker, our people can own the shares and be able to get the benefits, as any other foreigner. They can do and take control of those shares and so, Mr. Speaker, I am very hopeful as the Parliamentary Representative that our people would see better days coming.

Mr. Speaker, being in touch with my constituents, I know the people from Adelphi, Beauregard, Balthazar, Byelands, Mirabeau, Saab, Mt. Horne, Paraclete, La Fillette, Balthazar and Laca Bacaye, are looking forward to an era of cheaper electricity. Additionally, there are many Cottage Industries being developed around the country, even in St. Andrew North-West, and so they are happy, because their very survival depends on that. The real issue they are having is high electricity rate. And they believe that this new development will see them being able to provide employment opportunities within those Constituencies, St. Andrew North West and across the Tri-Island State of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you see, in this technological era, electricity isn't a luxury, but it's a necessity for all Grenadian men, women and children, especially in COVID times. Sometimes people have to stay home. Our children have to stay home and they depend on electricity to be able to access learning, every family, Mr. Speaker, in Grenada. And this Government, Mr. Speaker, we are always championing the cause for needy families across the Tri-Island State.

Minister Joseph spoke of the Bathroom Assistance Programme. We are also looking to provide electricity for our people, Mr. Speaker, but we must make sure that it's affordable. You give them electricity and they can't pay the bill, then after two/three months it is off. So, as a Government, we will be working to ensure that we can provide cheaper electricity for all the people, so everybody within our country should have electricity.

Mr. Speaker, the power generation architecture, through the policy of this Government, will create and encourage a new entrepreneurial spirit in this country, at the community level, Mr. Speaker, and in the interest of security. In fact, just yesterday evening, as I watched my phone, I saw it was 6:39 p.m., a young lady from Laca Bacaye asked me what about streetlights, and at that time, I was able to say, the new arrangement with Government will now see streetlights. Mr. Speaker, I have been in Government for over eight (8) years, Mr. Speaker, and every time people are coming to my office, Mr. Speaker, applying and we are applying and applying and applying and no streetlights. Sometimes, I felt very ashamed, Mr. Speaker, because, you see, when they go to GRENLEC, they say go to your Parliamentary Representative. So these people believe that we are not interested in them, and that we are not doing, we're just saying we are doing, but we are not doing. They do not believe us.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to say this morning, to my people of St. Andrew North-West that streetlights would be on its way, because streetlights provide for security. Just sometime last year, a man was cuffed down; a child was raped within the Constituency. And I am always appealing, week after week, at the level of the Cabinet, to the Minister of Public Utilities, we are putting in requests and we cannot get, because GRENLEC wanted to see the back of this Government, WRB, Mr. Speaker. It seemed to me that they wanted to see the back of the Government. And so, I had to say to people, it seemed to me that because of the conflict that was at the time, we were not getting any streetlights.

Mr. Speaker, I've seen ordinary people, I have been able to ask, maybe family members, and you see streetlights just come up, and then you say, well, how this one came there, and you are realising it was personal, somebody knows somebody, and

then they get through. But, as the Minister of Government, we cannot get. Remember, Government has to pay for the streetlights, you know, Mr. Speaker. But they are ignoring to provide any streetlights for us, because of political reasons. And so, I am very hopeful, Mr. Speaker, that we can now work to provide cheaper electricity and to provide security for our people.

It is something, Mr. Speaker, that my constituents has constantly questioned, what is happening with Government and GRENLEC or WRB? They never say WRB, they say GRENLEC. And so, Mr. Speaker, we had to be frank and say to them, that it is because this Government is interested in you the people.

For some reason, the Opposition element, Mr. Speaker, seemed to be shareholders of GRENLEC, because the way they are speaking, Mr. Speaker, **(applause)** they are speaking on behalf of WRB, and not of the people of Grenada, which they are putting themselves to represent. So you say you want to represent people, you ask them to vote for you, yet every time you get a chance, you are in the media speaking about WRB and WRB good and power outage and all these things. What about the ordinary people, Mr. Speaker? It is people you want to represent, so you cannot be speaking as shareholders, unless you own shares in the company, so, I am asking that.

So, Mr. Speaker, we have long rejected the notion that the GRENLEC meeting its community and social responsibilities runs in conflict with running an efficient and profitable company. The two (2) things are mutually exclusive. We believe, as a Government, and we believe we are in a place now where we will move forward, Mr. Speaker, to assist the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique with better energy, Mr. Speaker. I thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Parliamentary Representative for St. Mark.

Hon. Dr. Clarice Modeste-Curwen: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too, want to join with my colleagues and I am sure a number of other persons in this Tri-Island State, who would have sent sympathy and condolences to you and

your family, on the passing of your dear loved one. I have been there by two (2), both parents, and so I know and I understand what you're going through, and I just want to say to be strong and to always remember that God is in control.

Mr. Speaker, I know you would not mind, if I took this opportunity to also send condolences to my nephew, who is here from Canada. He has come to bury his wife here, as per her request and also to their families. And also, to extend greeting to the staff of this Honourable House. I know we had a date to meet here last December, which did not materialise, and so some of us were cheated of the opportunity to wish each other and the staff of this Honourable House and also this Nation the best for the holiday season. But certainly, we're early enough in 2021, to send our greetings and I want to take this opportunity to do that.

Mr. Speaker, as I review this whole arrangement, the whole WRB/GRENLEC issue, I have two (2) major issues, but there are a number of issues. And everyone who has spoken has mentioned something new and has been very explicit in giving details. The Member for St. George South-East, the Member from St. David and all of the other Members would have expressed appreciation for this move that the Government has taken and also horror at the arrangement.

So, Mr. Speaker, while I will not delve too much in what has been said, I want to note that the arrangement was made through the Electricity Act of 1994. And one of the things that caught my attention is that in the Act, it says, and I want to beg your permission to quote. It says: ***"The Company shall have a sole and exclusive license to generate, transmit, distribute and sell electricity in Grenada, until December 31st, 2073."*** Mr. Speaker, that was done in 1994, almost eighty (80) years to do what you want, buy, sell, withhold, do whatever to the Grenadian public with little measures in place to protect the public.

But, Mr. Speaker, what is alarming is that there was no serious termination clause to say, if we're dissatisfied, if new situations came up, how we can terminate this arrangement. What I noticed, in looking at the Act, there were two (2) very, very, very tiny windows that I am sure the people of Grenada couldn't pass through, or the Government, whatever Government was in office at the time.

I think thirty (30) years, or thirty-three (33) years, somewhere thereabouts, and fifty-five (55) years, the Agreement could be reviewed, but on one day, the day if it's thirty (30) or thirty-three (33) years, one day, on that day, as we reach thirty-three (33) years, since the signing of the Agreement, you could make a request for a change. And, one day fifty-five (55) years after the Agreement, you could do it. Other than that, there was no serious termination clause that will protect the Government and the people of Grenada.

But, Mr. Speaker, in light of the whole climate change issue, we have rising sea levels, coastal erosion, and we hear about it all the time, when people from St. Patrick, particularly in St. Patrick West, we've seen it, significantly, in St. Mark and island wide, as a Small Island Developing State. And, with what is happening and the rapid progression, the changes in our climate patterns, affecting Agriculture and so on, we have fifty (50), I did the Math, fifty-two (52) more years, you know, for the Agreement. So, are we saying that this Government should sit and wait for fifty-two (52) more years to say enough is enough? Those who are supporting it, they need to tell the Nation whether we should wait for fifty-two (52) years. Climate change is not waiting, Mr. Speaker, and so decisions have to be made now, and I want to compliment this Government and the initiative, **(applause)** led by the Minister for Finance and his support, the Member for St. David, on the work that they have done. The time is now, Mr. Speaker, and I want to applaud, and I want to proudly say, I am happy to be a part of a Government that would have taken this bold step. Climate change is not waiting.

Mr. Speaker, this Government has made waves, regionally and internationally, as champions against climate change, champions to reduce our emissions. And if you use only diesel, how can a Government that is saying we have to reduce emissions, we have to preserve Grenada, we have to be a part of this whole global trend to preserve our world, and have a company that the only source or the major source of energy is diesel, fossil fuel. It does not make sense. It is an embarrassment and it is illogical to people looking on. How can you? The two (2) don't go together, because if you're looking at the issues and the risks that countries, especially small countries like ours run, if we continue with those emissions, then we cannot support. And I think it may

have been late, but I think the time is now and it was very appropriate for this Government to do what they have done.

Mr. Speaker, this Company, what can they say that they have done to reduce emissions? The whole world is looking at a percentage reduction, bring this down, bring this down, and a number of measures to take. Even in the last Elections in the United States, one of the issues there was the environment, and some people said that they voted, because they expect more attention to be paid to the environment. The world is looking at the environment, and so we owe it to this little piece of rock, surrounded by water, to protect it, as best that we can and this Government is committed to doing that, so they have done nothing.

So, the defenders of this private company, as my sister would have said, maybe they are shareholders, in whatever way. Maybe they benefitted before. Maybe they still continue to benefit. Maybe they want to prolong the benefits, I do not know, Mr. Speaker. But, for you to defend something that is destroying and detrimental to our Nation, you have to have some benefits, somewhere, under the table, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)** Something is happening under the table, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I heard my dear sister talk about underhand things. This Government went to Parliament a few years ago, with some amendments to the Legislation to discontinue with that monopoly. And so, it was well known, nationally. It was not a simple thing, like, somebody said, like Nicodemus coming in the night. No. It was well-spoken about. People may not like it. People may not be happy. People may be concerned, but it was never done underhand, as how they sold the Doctors' quarters in St. Mark, the Doctors' quarters in St. David, and some twelve (12)/thirteen (13) properties in St. John, all over the place, and we only found out when we came into Government.

I remember we were looking at building a Doctors' quarters in St. Mark, so that the Doctor in St. Mark and St. John could have a place to be resident in the Parish, so that people could have easier access. And when we started, me and my neighbour, from St. John, started to investigate, that is when we discovered that the property was no longer Government's property. They could have put me in jail, because we were

moving on to do something there. I remember there was another project that we were looking at for the same land, and we were weighing, which was more important, only to find out it was not ours, and up to now people are still finding out, and up to now there are persons in Grenada who do not know the thirteen (13) or so pieces of property that belonged to the Nation, that were sold and we do not know.

So, let us talk about openness and transparency and the accountability that used to be touted between 2008 and 2013. **(Applause)** That was touted, that was their mantra, but in words only. We have been very open with this situation. And there will be concerns, because if it's not managed properly, we could have problems. If the expectations of persons, maybe shareholders or whatever, are not met, we could have problems and so it is important that this thing be managed properly.

Mr. Speaker, section 6 of the Act, it speaks to the condition of supplies, **"that the supply of electricity or energy by the company must be governed by the most"** and I quote this phrase: **"By the most economical method of supply."** Mr. Speaker, I am told that diesel is an economical method for GRENLEC. But, Mr. Speaker, at what cost to this nation? At what cost to the future generations to come, will we allow a Company to hold on to fossil fuels, when everybody is looking for a mix? We're not saying you can give up diesel completely, because the engineers say, we still need a little bit of that, but they are saying you must use renewable energy balance it, **(applause)** so that we can reduce the emissions in this world, and we believe it, and the majority of persons in the world believe that. So, therefore, if we say that, if our Prime Minister has gone out worldwide, and say, we, as a Small Island Developing State, we have to take measures, we have to keep our emissions at such a level and then we're only using fossil fuel, Mr. Speaker, then something is wrong with us, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, so this begs the question, where does that leave renewable energy, if we continue that way? How is our environment protected? And I mentioned some of the things about the rising sea level and all of that, how will we protect this Small Island Developing State. So, Mr. Speaker, I asked the question and maybe the Member from Carriacou and Martinique may be able to shed some light, because I know some years ago, when we were not in office and another Government was in office, there was an

EU funded project for Wind Energy in Carriacou, and I know it was put into the hands of GRENLEC, that is a fact, and they never did anything to ensure that this project was implemented. Yes, it might not have been a huge project, but it was a SEED Project that could have catalysed things for us. It could have been an example for us to follow throughout the Tri-Island State. Yet we lost the money and we lost a brilliant opportunity to implement a measure that could have brought some renewable energy to this country, **(applause)** Mr. Speaker, very, very, very sad.

Mr. Speaker, Members have spoken about the cost of energy. I will just limit myself now to the Tourism Sector and just give some details, because it's very clear. We cannot be competitive in any way, with other Islands or in any business, seriously competitive and sometimes people wonder why can I buy something cheaper in the supermarket that comes from another Island, cheaper than what is made here in Grenada. And, if the major contributor to the cost of production is electricity, then we could understand why.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want to give a little bit of facts, and I have a datasheet here. This is a fact that the Grenada Tourism Authority has been doing some research and also the Central Statistical Office has given us some data. So, I'll just mention it and to say that it is alarming. They have given us an average of 56% of properties total expenditure and they did that for hotels, and they did it for restaurants, 56%, more than half is just for electricity alone. So, you're not talking about salaries for people. You are not even talking about employing the numbers that you may need, because if you have a Five-Star Hotel and a Triple A, as Spice Island Beach Resort, you have to employ the appropriate staff, appropriately trained and have the experience and the appropriate numbers, so that you keep your stars. And, if you have to spend all of that for more than half of your revenues for electricity alone, it hinders you, it impairs you, it restricts you to how much you can spend on your staffing, how much you can spend to improve the plant, because you have to be constantly upgrading and we should be, but owners are seriously restricted by that.

Mr. Speaker, the cost of electricity affects the room rate. And if we check and when I go to meetings, they always say Grenada's room rate is high and cannot

compete with others. Thank God for a beautiful country, a beautiful environment and thank God for a wonderful people that keep people coming back. But if it was just the cost alone, Mr. Speaker, we would fail abysmally, when we compare to others.

So, let us take other countries, countries that have a same brand, but a hotel in different places, so if we take Radisson. There's a hotel of that brand in Trinidad, maybe it's not called Radisson, but it's from the same company. If persons are comparing price, room price, Trinidad and I go to two (2) extremes, Trinidad, maybe, the lowest producer of energy in the Region, and Grenada as one of the highest, and we still wait for the jury to come in on that, because we keep hearing that Grenada doesn't have the highest electricity rate, but we're not seeing how much it is, we're not seeing the comparison, so I wait for that. But until, then, I am told that Grenada has the highest electricity rate in the Region, or one of the highest. And so, if all other things were equal and it was just the cost of the room, where would you go? If you're getting the same quality of room and whatever other attractions and the price is different, you would go to the one with the cheapest rate. And, therefore, it puts us in an uncompetitive position with other Islands, as far as room rates are concerned.

So, Mr. Speaker, this situation has impacted on us very negatively in the Tourism Industry, and we have done well, in spite of that. So let no one say, tourism is doing well. We would have done better, if it weren't for the crippling rates **(applause)** that GRENLEC has imposed on us and the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Mr. Speaker, the issue of streetlights. It is going to be a recurring decimal. I guess every Member who stands up here, will speak about it. Why? We have suffered in every constituency for the last how many years. I have lost count and people come to our offices every day, and as one Member said before, some of the lights are sorely needed, because they are in areas that are dangerous, they're dark, and they're unsafe for people. So, it's a security issue, it's an economic security issue, and it is a health and safety security issue.

And we have asked. We have been asking and when the Member for St. George South-East was also the Minister for Works or Infrastructure, every year we bring lists,

bring a list, cut it down, you have twenty (20), cut it down to ten (10), cut it down to that, and we did not get one light, Mr. Speaker. And, we need to tell our constituents why. It was not that we didn't care.

As a matter of fact, a couple years ago, I had to put some solar lights in areas where we were afraid that people could be ambushed. And again, as we speak, I am doing the same thing again, erecting some solar lights, when we have an agreement. And I want to read the Agreement, section 9 of the Act, it says: **"The company shall enter into a contract with the Government."** And, Mr. Speaker, I didn't ask your permission to quote, but I beg your indulgence: ***"The company shall enter into a contract with the Government or with a local authority to maintain, in good repair and condition streetlamps and other associated fittings, which streetlamps shall be provided by the Government or local authority in any manner, which is acceptable to the community and shall supply electricity for use in street lighting."*** That is legal.

So, they have reneged on the very document that they signed, the very legislation. They have not given the people what is due to them, and you know, we didn't get new ones, that is one. But to add insult to injury, they are supposed to replace all those that go bad. I am sure in every constituency, throughout the length and breadth of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, lights have been out, they have been non-functional for months, maybe going into years and they have not been replaced. And what is most hurtful, we are paying for it, Mr. Speaker. The people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique are paying for lights that they do not get, Mr. Speaker, even at this time.

So, Mr. Speaker, there is a lot to talk about, but I know others do have to say. I just want to say that I think it's a good move. I am told that we have the competencies here in Grenada and we have to ensure that we manage it, because any good move could go awry, if the management or something does not happen, if people expect more than they can get, if they do not take into consideration that new equipment have to be bought. But the move in itself is a remarkable move, Mr. Speaker, and I wholeheartedly

support the Resolution, as put forward by the Minister for Finance. Thank you. **(Applause)**

(Honourable Yolande Bain-Horsford and Honourable Kindra Maturine-Stewart rose at the same time)

Mr. Speaker: I am going to go with the Parliamentary Representative for Carriacou and Petite Martinique, and then you afterwards.

(Laughter)

Hon. Kindra Maturine-Stewart: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, let me extend my deepest sympathies to you and your family on the passing of your loved one. And I also want to take this opportunity to wish you and the staff all the very best for 2021 and beyond.

Mr. Speaker, this afternoon, I rise to give my fullest support to the Resolution, as presented by the Minister for Finance to affirm the settlement of the Award made by the Arbitration Tribunal in the case between Grenada Private Power Limited and WRB Enterprises, as Claimants and the State of Grenada as the Respondent.

Mr. Speaker, as was alluded to before by my colleagues, it was the Grenada Private Power Limited and WRB, WRB being the Parent Company of the Grenada Private Power Company that brought and initiated the matter before the Arbitration Tribunal and hence the reason, Mr. Speaker, that they are listed as Claimants in the matter, and the State of Grenada is listed as the Respondent.

Mr. Speaker, one may argue that it was WRB's right to bring that matter to the Tribunal once they felt aggrieved, a right that was given to them under the 1994 Share Purchase Agreement signed between the parties, that is WRB and its affiliates and the Government, and I say "Government", Mr. Speaker, because as you know, Government is continuum. It was really signed, Mr. Speaker, by the then NDC Administration, and

WRB, yes, exercised their right. They opted to exercise that right to bring the matter to Arbitration, in accordance with that same 1994 Share Purchase Agreement.

Mr. Speaker, but the fact remains, that it was and in fact, WRB that brought that matter against the Government to the Tribunal, in March of 2020, and not the other way around, as I am hearing on some medium.

Mr. Speaker, WRB sought from the Tribunal many orders, including and very importantly, Mr. Speaker, they sought a declaration to declare that a repurchase event had occurred within the meaning of the Share Purchase Agreement. They argued that it was the Electricity Supply Act of 2016 that caused that repurchased event, since that Act, Mr. Speaker, terminated their eighty (80) year old monopoly over the Electricity Sector here in Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, the 1994 Share Purchase Agreement, among other things, outlined the various repurchased events. And, Mr. Speaker, these are basically events that if they had occurred would have entitled WRB to demand from Government, to buy back that 50% GRENLEC shares in accordance with that very same Agreement.

Mr. Speaker, Clause 7.9 (4) (a) of the Share Purchase Agreement provided that a repurchase event will occur should there be any limitation, or infringement on the monopoly license granted to WRB by the Government. Mr. Speaker, in addition to that, WRB also sought from the Tribunal, a declaration that compensation for the said repurchase of their shares in GRENLEC is to be calculated in accordance with the Second Schedule of the Share Purchase Agreement.

It is no secret. The Arbitration found that in fact, a repurchase event had occurred with the passing of the 2016 Electricity Supply Act, and that the compensation that was payable to WRB by the Government, for the said shares is to be calculated in accordance with the said Share Purchase Agreement and not based on the Fair Market Value, as was argued by this Government.

It is interesting, Mr. Speaker, that the Tribunal found that there was absolutely no Law, in Grenada, constitutional or otherwise, or any International Law Principles that would override the Terms and Agreement in that said Share Purchase Agreement. Resultantly, the Tribunal therefore ordered Grenada to make payments in the certain

sums that we have spoken about today, based on that formula in that said Share Purchase Agreement. Thankfully, Mr. Speaker, these payments have since been made pursuant to the Settlement Agreement, executed by WRB and the Government, which is now being affirmed by this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, I say all of this to say that from the creation of the monopoly in the Energy Sector, the repurchase events and occurrences, as to what is a repurchase event, the amount to be paid in the event of a repurchase, the currency it must be paid in and the interest payable, these are all factors and matters that are grounded in the 1994 Share Purchase Agreement.

It is, therefore, Mr. Speaker my personal opinion, that the 1994 Share Purchase Agreement was a direct assault on the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. **(Applause)** I say so, Mr. Speaker, having regards to the terms and conditions, under which those GRENLEC shares were sold, a National asset, to WRB.

Mr. Speaker, the Share Purchase Agreement, in my view, demonstrates that the then Administration lacked foresight and vision, as it relates to the advancement and change of the world's focus to that of renewable energy sources and the liberalisation of the Energy Sector.

Mr. Speaker, the Electricity Supply Act, No. 19 of 2016, in that Act, this Government sought to place and execute a framework for accelerated development of the supply of electricity from renewable energy sources and for the efficient generation and use of electricity.

Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, that this very said Act was deemed a violation of the 1994 Share Purchase Agreement that created the repurchase event? Yes. It is this said very Act, which essentially sought to liberate the Energy Sector by eliminating the monopoly created, as a result of the privatisation of GRENLEC.

What this Act sought to do, Mr. Speaker, was to introduce among other things, the right of persons, whether individuals or Corporations other than WRB to generate electricity from natural and free resources, such as Wind and Sun and according to the Share Purchase Agreement and confirmed by the Tribunal, this, Mr. Speaker, in this 21st Century, in 2020, constituted a repurchase event.

It must however, be noted, Mr. Speaker, that WRB under that very said Act maintained its monopoly, its sole right to generate electricity from fossil fuel and diesel etcetera. WRB argued, Mr. Speaker, that this change made their GRENLEC shares fundamentally different from what they acquired in 1994. In other words, Mr. Speaker, what they are saying there is that the value of the shares was likely to decrease, since there would be a likely reduction in profits due to the liberalised renewable Energy Sector, something that was never contemplated under the 1994 Share Purchase Agreement.

It is my view, therefore, Mr. Speaker, that the fear and reluctance exhibited by WRB, to embrace the need to move to alternative energy sources was based on the likely reduction in profit that was likely to follow, as a result. Under the 1994 Share Purchase Agreement, WRB was guaranteed maximum profits with the creation of that same monopoly, Mr. Speaker, and of course, the various restrictive repurchase clauses and the obligations among other things.

The enactment of the Electricity Supply Act, I believe, was a noble and genuine attempt to liberalise our Energy Sector. It is my view; it is a very forward thinking and very progressive bit of legislation, especially for Small Developing Islands like ours.

Mr. Speaker, I hear all sorts of talk about motives and who had axe to grind and vendetta nonsense. But the point is, Mr. Speaker, we are in the 21st Century, and we have to take advantage of our natural resources, the wind and sun. It's free and it's plenty, especially in Carriacou and Petite Martinique. And, I believe, Mr. Speaker, that a competitive Energy Sector, with multiple participants, would, no doubt, belie the condition needed to drive the costs down, and to, of course, improve the service to our people.

In light of the Settlement Award and the consequential termination, Mr. Speaker, of the 1994, Repurchase Agreement, Government can now pursue, forthright, without any hindrance, without any difficulties, limitations, the full intent, purpose and objective of the Electricity Supply Act, which, it is my view, would be able to bring much more benefits and relief to all the people of this country. And, Mr. Speaker, speaking about benefits, Government will now be able to fully implement the many renewable projects

such as a project that was earmarked for Carriacou and Petite Martinique, the Solar PV High Battery Hybrid Project, and we will be to do so, Mr. Speaker, without any hindrance. This is a project, Mr. Speaker, with grant funding support from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), the Caribbean Renewable Energy Fund, to the tune of $8.6 m.

Mr. Speaker, this is a project that will support Grenada thrust towards renewable energy. The project will facilitate the design, construction and installation of a Solar PV Battery Hybrid Plant in Belair, Carriacou. Mr. Speaker, since this UAE Project was announced, various countries in the Region were able to fulfil all the conditions that were necessary to be able to tap in into this project.

Grenada, however, Mr. Speaker, has fulfilled all other conditions, except that we could not obtain from the WRB controlled GRENLEC, a vital condition that was required by the UAE. UAE needed confirmation, Mr. Speaker, that the 600 kilowatts Solar Battery Storage Generation Plant, when constructed will be connected to the electricity grid in Carriacou by GRENLEC. Mr. Speaker, the lands at Belair has been identified, it was surveyed and cleared. The team from the UAE visited and approved and everything was in process. Mr. Speaker, the project to the tune of $8.6 m for small Carriacou and Petite Martinique was about to be written off, just as the EU grant funded Renewable Wind Project that was lost, because of WRB and GRENLEC. Mr. Speaker, a letter was provided by GRENLEC, which now must be revised to meet the approval of the granters of this project.

We are now at a situation Mr. Speaker, with the settlement and everything. Carriacou can now have that renewable project that was threatened, Mr. Speaker, by WRB and GRENLEC, **(applause)** which will no doubt, Mr. Speaker, significantly reduce the cost of electricity generation in Carriacou. Mr. Speaker, it will not happen overnight. But I am confident that the path is now clear for us to openly and deliberately pursue the objectives, all the stated objectives of the Electricity Supply Act of 2016.

Mr. Speaker, one of the fundamental provisions of that Act speaks to strengthening Government's participation in other regional and international organisations, whose agenda includes the producing of electricity from renewable

energy sources, the lowering of electricity costs and other mechanisms to reduce the national carbon footprint.

Speaking, Mr. Speaker, of our carbon footprint, and as one of our top tourism destinations in the world, I think that we have built a reputation as Pure Grenada, untouched, unspoilt, pristine, safe and highly desirable. Reducing therefore, Mr. Speaker, our carbon footprint will provide us; it will give us that synergy to execute on our efforts to keep Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, the purest tourist destination in the world.

Mr. Speaker, I am proud and we all can be proud of the fact that the Government majority ownership of GRENLEC as a result of the Settlement Award is a victory to our Nation, because it allows us to liberate our Energy Sector, in order to implement the framework needed to achieve the objectives outlined in the said Act. This is very good, Mr. Speaker, for our Nation. It is good for our people. It is good for our economy and is also good for our environment.

Mr. Speaker, as it was, prior to September of 1994, GRENLEC is once again a State asset, and as a sovereign Nation, I believe that the control of an asset such as the majority shareholding in GRENLEC, which is so crucial, Mr. Speaker, to our growth and development of our economy, is a remarkable achievement and it presents all of us now with that unique and exciting opportunities for the Government and people of this country, and I believe this is something, Mr. Speaker, that we all must be proud of.

As a country, therefore, Mr. Speaker, we now have an opportunity to move forward and to move towards an agenda of renewable energy that will subsequently reduce our independence on fossil fuels, lower the cost of electricity for you, the people, and perhaps, even more importantly reduce our carbon footprint to remain one of the truly unspoilt and pristine tourism destinations in the entire world.

Mr. Speaker, Grenada's energy future looks brighter and encouraging with this recent repurchase. Let us now look forward and work together to deliver on the many great things that we all stand to gain from this reacquisition. I am therefore, very confident that we all as a people will be reaping the benefits in the not so distant future. And so, for these reasons, Mr. Speaker, I stand in full support, resolute to affirm the

settlement of the Award, as so presented by the Honourable Minister for Finance. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Parliamentary Representative for St. Andrew South-West.

Hon. Yolande Bain-Horsford: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise to give support to the Resolution. And, Mr. Speaker, before I make my supporting remarks, I too join, with all my other colleagues, to express our condolences, my family and I, to your family on the passing of your dear mother.

Mr. Speaker, also I want to wish all our nationals and also our nationals in the diaspora, as well, Mr. Speaker, I want to wish them a very productive and prosperous 2021. Mr. Speaker, we are all aware of the present danger of COVID-19, but this should not dampen our spirits, or suppress our drive to keep advancing as a Nation. Mr. Speaker, I also want to wish my colleagues a 2021 filled with innovative progress, geared at delivering the much needed goods and services to our people near and far.

Mr. Speaker, clearly it has been articulated that the cost of electricity in Grenada is high and poses a challenge to businesses and individual households. This has been a song that has been sung for ages.

Mr. Speaker, businesses, for example, hotels, supermarkets etcetera are plagued with a monthly electricity bill that impacts negatively on their Profit and Loss Statements, and by extension, their ability to rapidly reinvest to spur growth and physical expansion, and, Mr. Speaker, you heard from the previous speakers.

In fact, I've known businesses that have closed down, because they cannot pay their electricity bills. This is no doubt. And I remember in the Tourism Sector, when I was there, that was the talk. The reason that to rent a room for one night is so high is because of the electricity cost. That was said over and over and over, by persons having dialogue with persons in that Industry.

I listened to the MP from St David and also to the MP from St. Patrick West, and he spoke about the old woman, who he met on her step. When these old people

receive this three hundred dollars ($300.00) from the Public Assistance Programme, Mr. Speaker, they have to sit down and see how they can spend this three hundred dollars ($300.00), and these are people that are not extravagant. These are people that check everything. They check their medication. They have to pay their water bill. They have to pay their electricity bill, and they have to pay for all the other little things, their food etcetera. And when you look at the bills, what is most high is the electricity bill. It's no doubt. I have seen it. I have taken monies from my pocket, and many of us may have done that, taken monies from our pockets to help pay electricity bills for our constituents. I know they're listening and they must be saying this is very true.

So, Mr. Speaker, given that Government has controlling interest in GRENLEC, structures and regulations can now be more easily designed by businesses to ensure that overall electricity costs are reduced and kept low over time. Mr. Speaker, I know this wouldn't happen overnight, but that is something that is going to happen gradually, but we know that it must happen. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, the profit motive is indeed, in most cases the primary goal of a business and so the Board and Management of that entity in that situation channelled all resources at their disposal to ensure that profit is maximised. In my view, Mr. Speaker, that was the primary goal of GRENLEC, over the past decades and represented a departure from other areas that could have brought more profit to the consumers of its service. This is no doubt that; that was their primary goal, no other.

Mr. Speaker, this Government would ensure that going forward, profit would not be the number one priority of the company and that the necessary successful operations of the entity would incorporate and encourage at other areas, such as social responsibility and workers' inclusivity would be at the top of their priority list of the company.

Mr. Speaker, it has been established that the use of fossil fuels to power the planet is unsustainable and is indeed killing the planet. Alternative sources of energy to power the planet must and will be implemented over time. This is a global drive, not only in the Caribbean, and our Island, although small, must participate in this thrust to adopt environmentally sustainable production of power.

Mr. Speaker, Elon Musk, the owner of Tesla, Space X and one of the two (2) richest men in the world, with a net profit of one hundred and eighty-eight billion US dollars (US $188b), has indicated that the sun can power all of civilisation. It is high time that we move away from fossil fuel production of energy and embrace solar, wind, thermal and many other forms of energy.

Mr. Speaker, this Government will ensure that GRENLEC repositions itself over time, to produce and distribute energy that is environmentally sustainable and in the best interest of our Nation and certainly, mankind.

Mr. Speaker, given that GRENLEC was owned and controlled by a private company, all its decision-making stemmed from that controlling interest and one can emphatically argue that those decisions were geared at achieving the interest of the company and its stakeholders. Mr. Speaker, maximising the interests of local stakeholders of the company, in my view, was not a primary objective of the company, and so our Nation's citizenry would have been short-changed, as a result, there's no doubt about that.

Mr. Speaker, the Government's ownership of the company now affords a construct going forward, that ensures the interest of local stakeholders is elevated to the prominence in the company's agenda, thus maximising the benefits to the Nation. Mr. Speaker, Government has approved and implemented the National Sustainable Development Plan of 2035, a fifteen (15) year plan to chart the Developmental Agenda for the Tri-Island State of Grenada. Certainly, Mr. Speaker, all Public Sector Entities must be aligned to this Plan and the Private Sector must also play their role to ensure the success of this Developmental Thrust. So, Mr. Speaker, the Government would ensure that GRENLEC's Strategic Outlook would be aligned to the Plan, which is anchored in the seventeen (17) Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations.

Mr. Speaker, the SDG Goal 7: ***"Affordable and Clean Energy - ensures access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all."*** This is the thrust of the Government in this initiative and the primary motivating factor, Mr. Speaker, in mobilising the significant resources that has resulted in the people of Grenada now

having controlling interest in GRENLEC at this time. So, Mr. Speaker, at this point in time, as the MP for St David said, I am very proud to be part of this decision-making.

I also want to commend the frontline negotiators, Minister Bowen and Minister Joseph for their hard work in pushing this envelope. Mr. Speaker, I know our people would be happy, because this has been a cry for years and years and years, and when this negotiation took place I've had so many calls from persons and different levels of persons. They said to me, just tell your PM to do it right, make sure he gets the dynamics right, we are waiting, we are happy. We are happy for that move that you all have taken.

So, Mr. Speaker, I am proud to be here this morning to be part of this and I want to express again, how happy I am and my constituents, and not only my constituents, you know, persons overseas from different countries were expressing also, that was a great move by the Government of Grenada. So, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for the opportunity here **(applause)** this morning to make those expressions, and I am looking forward to this move that we are making that would benefit all our people. Thank you.

(Honourable Nickolas Steel and Honourable Kate Lewis rose at the same time)

Mr. Speaker: I notice you have given way to the Parliamentary Representative for St. Andrew North-East, very gentlemanly of you.

Hon. Kate Lewis: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I too, join with my colleagues to extend deepest condolences to you and your family on the passing of your mom. And, as we begin this New Year I think it is fitting to wish all our citizens of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, a productive and healthy 2021.

Mr. Speaker, this morning, I am happy to support this Resolution, well, it's afternoon now, Mr. Speaker, a Resolution that brings to the end an Agreement made in 1994 that crippled our Grenadian economy for over twenty (20) years, Mr. Speaker.

Motions

Mr. Speaker, for many years, I have heard our citizens calling for greater investments in our Manufacturing Sector. I have heard many people speak to the fact that, as a country, we are not doing enough to add value to our local raw materials. And, this Government has always maintained that the cost of electricity is one of the main factors that deter investors from investing in the Manufacturing Sector.

Every time there is a new investment announced in Grenada, you will hear, well why not in the Manufacturing Sector? Here now we have an opportunity to do so, because we anticipate the cost of electricity to reduce gradually. It will not be immediate. **(Applause)** And, we must let our people understand that while we speak about reduction in electricity cost, it will not be immediate. Proper structures must be put in place.

I have seen even in my constituency, Mr. Speaker, where investments were made in manufacturing. Those Investments were short-lived. These businesses had to close their doors, because of high electricity costs, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, something like electricity, this is an essential service to our people. This should have always remained a national asset and for those who would have sold it into the hands of those private investors, giving them those terms and conditions, basically took away that right for our people to have access to such an essential service. **(Applause)**

Now, Mr. Speaker, we are in a position through the Public Utilities Regulatory Commission to regularise our Electricity Sector and the cost of electricity. And here the people of this country are the ones who stand to benefit, our constituents, our children and their children, they are the ones who will benefit. Businesses now will be more sustainable, because of lower input costs. Lower electricity cost will eventually lead to lower input cost. This will increase their employability. Our people of this country will now have the opportunity to access greater employment, and, Mr. Speaker, we, as a country will eventually realise greater economic growth. This is great news for us, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard the concerns about the repurchase price. Of course, we paid a pretty penny for it. But, this is not as a result of our own doing. This is as a result of what the then Government in 1994 signed on to. **(Applause)** Imagine

repurchasing what was rightfully yours above the Fair Market Value? Mr. Speaker, I am only left to assume that there was no economist on that team at that time.

Nevertheless, Mr. Speaker, we have to look forward and we have to look at the long-term benefits for our people. This poor deal of over twenty-six (26) years ago is no longer an issue for us.

Mr. Speaker, we know that progress is an unstoppable force, and as a Government we are focused on making progress for all of our people throughout this Tri-Island State. We know that a Company like GRENLEC is highly profitable. Now that it will be owned by Grenadians, through the share purchase, these profits will remain in Grenada for Grenadians, and of course, it will not be leaving Grenada to go outside, but it will remain here to be reinvested in our local economy. And this is what is important for us here, Mr. Speaker. We are now able to expand our local economy, because profits are now reinvested. We want our citizens to understand, our constituents, they are the ones who will stand to benefit. We have waited twenty-six (26) years. This Agreement of 1994 for eighty (80) years, Mr. Speaker…

Sergeant at Arms: The Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

Hon. Kate Lewis: Thank you. Mr. Deputy Speaker, if this Government remained in power and did nothing about this, I would have considered it a failed Government. But, I am happy that our Prime Minister, with his vision, understands that sometimes we have to make the hard decisions, but at the end will bring benefit to our people and this is what happened in this case, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, every year, thousands of our young people leave school, with the aim of searching for jobs. Government cannot create all the jobs we need, so we have always advocated for entrepreneurship. However, the high electricity costs have always been a hindrance to entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial development.

I am now more confident, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that with the impending reduction in electricity costs, our young people will be able to take advantage of this opportunity. We will now be able to create a culture of entrepreneurship amongst our young people.

Our young people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, knowing that we have a now liberalised Electricity Sector they too, can take advantage of investment in renewable energy and they will stand to benefit, because we do have a responsibility to protect our environment, to reduce our carbon footprints and that is why investment in renewable energy is very important here.

Our young people can now work and study at home, comfortably online, because one of the things high electricity cost will do is to prevent access to education, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Those who are complaining that this is a bad move, they are not on the ground with our people, they do not know what our people feel. Not everyone is able to pay the high electricity bills on a monthly basis, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Many a times, we, as the Parliamentarians are the ones footing this bill. We are the ones encouraging and helping our young people, or our citizens in general, to pay electricity connection. With a reduced energy cost, access to education for all of our people will be a thing of the past. We will see an improvement in literacy and education for all of our people, including our young people.

Therefore, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the past twenty-six (26) years is now behind us. I look forward to the next fifty something years, many more years to come, Mr. Speaker; well, fifty-two (52), because we had this for eighty (80) years, and I am looking forward to lower electricity costs, greater investment in our Manufacturing Sector. I am looking forward also to investment in renewable energy and profits of this company re-invested in our local economy. Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. **(Applause)**

(Honourable Nickolas Steele rose)

(Laughter)

Hon. Nickolas Steele: I can't catch a break today.

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Honourable Minister for Education.

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I don't know what on what grounds I qualify for your recognition at this time. But, I do pretty much appreciate it, and of course, my brother would definitely be able to go right after.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to give my full support to the Resolution before us, and I rise considering too, the number of presentations that went before me. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I could not sit here and not contribute to such a historic moment for the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is historic. **(Applause)**

And, so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that regardless of your political affiliation, regardless of your background, regardless of who you are, if you don't see this as historic, you cannot be Grenadian and you cannot be considered a patriot. **(Applause)** Because, Mr. Deputy Speaker, what we are discussing here is not just the past and the present, but we are discussing the future of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we speak about sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals and we speak about this long-term Strategic Plan for Grenada, let us not fool ourselves. If we are not able to address this issue now, the 2035 Plan that we speak about, forget it, because a lot of what is in it, we would never be able to achieve if we don't address the issue of high electricity rates in Grenada.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other thing that I feel very, very strongly about is that we seem to have a problem in Grenada, giving credit where credit is due. And I look at this situation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and people who were part of the negotiation then, who were part of the sale of GRENLEC for fifteen million dollars ($15 m), a company that was turning over profits of over fifty million dollars ($50 m), these said people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was okay then, what they did, but it's still not okay now what this Government is doing, unable to give credit where credit is due. And again, I say, this Government must be credited for its foresight, its vision and the boldness of putting people first, again. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I listened and a couple teachers called me and they wanted a clarification, saying we don't understand, the Union said that the Government is not being truthful, the Government had all of these monies there, refused to pay, and

refused to give us this increase that we're supposed to give, and they're still saying they're unable to do that, they want a deferral and all of that. What is the issue? And I said to them, the issue is very simple, that the Government has a responsibility to follow Laws and rules that guide its operations; very simple. So, when it comes to public expenditure, there are some things you could do and some things you cannot do, and I think about a Government that operates in a situation where it could just do anything, anyhow, anytime, and we speak danger.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have said it over and over, we cannot compare the two, we cannot compare the fact that COVID-19 came and because of that Government was unable to spend some resources under the Capital Budget, and so was able to have savings, and I still add to that, without reservation, that even more than that, the fact that this Government was able to manage the economy the way that it did, so coupling the two. **(Applause)**

But, Mr. Speaker, how do you then explain that you can now use resources from your Capital Budget and just be spending on revenue, and that is something so simple, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I believe sometimes people speak, not necessarily based on what they know, but out of convenience and what they hope to achieve by what they say, because I doubt that we have any Union Leader in Grenada that doesn't understand that you cannot use monies under Capital Budget to pay salaries and to pay increases; I doubt. **(Applause)**

But, Mr. Speaker, the other thing that is extremely critical and I explained to one teacher. I said this, talking about this is one, talking about recurrent and capital expenditures and what Government could do and cannot do and can pay and cannot pay is one thing. But, I expand my mind to think about what if Government did not have the savings to meet that expenditure, what if? Just what if there was a situation, because we never asked for this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we never asked for this. The Court ruled that we had to meet this cost. We had to buy-back the shares. It wasn't a request that the Government went to make, so you can literally say that the Government was forced into this situation. But just what if, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Government did not have the savings and was not in a position to easily and readily

make that payment, and you know what I see, greater disaster, more noise, because when the Court garnish the Government accounts, they don't care about current and expenditures **(applause)** that relate to Capital and Recurrent, what they know is that the Government has to pay. So, the Court does not see Capital and they don't see Recurrent, what they see is the sum of money that Government has that now has to be forced, which means that ordinary contractors, who the Government would be owing, they would not be able to get their payments, because the Court will now decide what the Government would do with the money that it has. And so the same teachers, the Government won't be able to decide that it is able to pay or not to pay them their regular salaries. So, the conversation is going to shift. The conversation is not going to be about 4% and increase, the conversation is going to be about our monthly salaries. **(Applause)** And that is why I say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I fail to believe that there is anybody within the leadership of any Union, in Grenada, that does not understand that. And that is why I say, I believe that some things are said as a matter of convenience.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I recall some years ago, we had and I believe most constituencies had that, some village meetings to explain to people what Government was doing in amending the Legislation. I don't want to say it doesn't apply to every constituency, I do believe that it does apply, that in every constituency, you know someone who is in the management of GRENLEC, I am sure for all of us, every Constituency Representative here. For me, I have what I consider to be good friends. You have constituents who are employed by GRENLEC and that is in every constituency, I would imagine. And I remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the challenge it was to explain to people what Government was trying to do. Now, the same people who sold the Company for fifteen million dollars ($15 m) back then, were the same people in these meetings, trying to say to the ordinary people, don't bother with the Government, they want to take back GRENLEC. Don't bother with them, it's the workers they want to punish in GRENLEC and you had very good people, good workers, good citizens, who were employed in GRENLEC believing that at the time. I could speak, because I had the experience. I had workers from GRENLEC attend

some of those meetings and expressed freely, how they felt about the amendment in the Legislation.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for all of us, we could identify, well for, I would imagine, for most Grenadians, we could identify with what the Government was trying to do. We just have to remember, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we were paying between three and five dollars ($3.00 and $5.00) a minute, for a call to the US. It was the same principle and policy upon which the Government was acting, in the interest of the Grenadian people, that's all. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, since then, with the amendment of the Legislation, which was intended to open up and give the opportunity for ordinary Grenadians to access alternative sources of energy, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the battle started maybe even before that.

And so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is nothing to do with people, who are employed with GRENLEC, or to managers in GRENLEC, this is about the people of Grenada, the future of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique; and, as I said before, it is about when we speak about sustainable development of this country. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think about what if Government did nothing, made no attempt to amend the situation then.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I consider this situation to have been one in which GRENLEC was the player, the coach and the referee on the field. So you generate electricity, you set the price, you regulate the price, you're in total control, totally in charge, totally in control. Which country really wants to remain in a situation like this?

But then again, think about the profits, the millions, over fifty million dollars ($50 m), every year, going outside of the country, monies that can stay for the development of Grenada. But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we think about our students, and reference was made to that, we have to think about it not just in the in the general context of education and development, but I want us to zero in to our current situation of COVID-19, where it is no longer an option if you study online. But, the situation brings us to the point where you have no choice and you have to access education online. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is unfortunate how many of our students are unable because of connectivity issues, the cost of electricity, and so we have to look at those issues.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, very importantly, very importantly, community development, community development. Everyone spoke about streetlights; I would just add one thing to that. Remember the restriction came and I clearly remember the Prime Minister speaking on this when he said ten (10) maximum per constituency. The restriction came when the Homegrown Structural Adjustment Programme started; when Government started to look closer at what it was spending, as it relates to streetlights. And, I checked and the bill, I am told, is over five million dollars ($5 m) per year. And, Mr. Speaker, I still have to explain to my constituents, most of them don't understand, most of them never knew that Government is paying for the streetlights. Their view is that, just put a pole, just put a light and now most people want it right in front their veranda. **(Laughter)** Right! They don't understand. But Government is spending over five million dollars ($5 m) every year, just on streetlights. Think about what we can do with five million dollars ($5 m) every year.

But, Mr. Speaker, another example, in one of the communities that I represent; that area did not have any electricity poles. That area had no electricity, but it's an area that was frequented and we made appeal for support, and again, I have absolutely no attack on GRENLEC, in that regard, because, which business will not take advantage of a situation, I mean, except you're in charity. So, the company was doing all the right things. You get a situation you could take advantage of, as a business, why not? Right! It is not a Charity that they're running.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, ten (10) poles were erected, about ten (10) poles in that area, and you know what it cost the Government of Grenada? It was about twenty thousand dollars ($20,000.00) for that project.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we hear about the community project of GRENLEC; that should have been a community project; that should have been an investment in the community. But, Government had to take resources to facilitate this project, over twenty thousand dollars ($20,000.00). But not just Government is suffering in this situation, both Government and the Private Sector, and I believe, in a lot of cases, Mr. Speaker, where electricity price would go down, companies would be able to offer goods and services at cheaper prices. Who benefits? The people of Grenada.

And, so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is not a Nancy story, it's real, except that I won't name the companies or the organizations. Business A is spending $19.4 m, annually on electricity, in Grenada. Business B is spending $1.5 m, annually. When these people put their costs for services, how do you question them, how do you attack them, how do you say they don't care? If you have to put out $1.5 m every year, for electricity, I would imagine that has some impact on the final cost to consumers, quite obviously.

A Statutory Body in Grenada, three million dollars ($3 m), annually, for electricity. Ministry of Education, $2.8 m, annually. I still get calls: **"Minister, we don't have furniture in this classroom."** I still get calls saying: **"Minister, we don't have this in the school"** and this is monies that can go back into development of education. Mr. Deputy Speaker, Government's bill, $15.6 m every year for electricity only. Something must be critically wrong with this.

But, it brings me to a community in my area of Crochu, where, for years, persons have been asking about electricity on the Crochu Road that leads to Cabier Beach, a community that is not just about residential area, but it's also about tourism, because we have about two (2) or three (3) Guest Houses operating in that area, with no lights along that road. Of course, the cost of ensuring that this happen, Mr. Deputy Speaker, based on what we did in another community, I anticipate that this is between twenty and thirty thousand dollars ($20,000.00 & $30,000.00). Something has to be wrong with us continuing to maintain that status quo.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, an ordinary community, and I am using practical, real examples in my own constituency. That Community Centre, electricity was disconnected for over two (2) years, because the Community Centre was run by a Community Organisation, they can't afford to pay what that bill was. And so, until I intervened as Parliamentary Representative, the electricity in that Community Centre was totally off.

In another Community Centre, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the average bill was eleven hundred dollars ($1,100.00) per month, one thousand, one hundred dollars ($1,100.00) per month. Which Community Organisation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is going to be able to

raise every month, one thousand, one hundred dollars ($1,100.00)? And so, Mr. Speaker, using that last example, what that Organisation that was managing the Community Centre did, through a Government Project that brought Solar Lights, through the Ministry of Energy, to that Community Centre, guess what? The bill went from one thousand, one hundred dollars ($1,100.00) per month to forty dollars ($40.00) per month. And that is why alternative sources of energy has to be a top agenda item for Grenada moving forward, a top agenda item, if we are serious about moving forward.

In one community, where the fishermen were affected, spoilage, no electricity, could not afford to put electricity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when a Solar Project, through the same project, Ministry of Energy, was implemented, Mr. Deputy Speaker, fortunately, in their case, they didn't have a forty-five dollar ($45.00) bill, because our inverter is still connected to GRENLEC, in that other case, which is not in my constituency, they used a battery, so they actually ended up, at the end of the day, with no bill from GRENLEC, and they're able to safely, securely keep their fish, so that we can all have access to it, no spoilage anymore. Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is the way we have to go, where ordinary people benefit from these initiatives.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I want to just say I totally agree with all of the presentations made before, all of the points made before, and I just really want to press and push the point that alternative energy has to be a top agenda item for Grenada. I know that we have businesses, locally, that are positioning themselves, readying themselves, because of these millions that I just referred to, to take advantage of this situation, and I am certain that the ordinary Grenadians are going to benefit from their action.

Mr. Speaker, I love the fact that this Government has said that this would be open, that ordinary Grenadians would be able to purchase shares, the way to go. And the final thing I would mention, as was mentioned before, the environment, the environment. Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to care, and we have to demonstrate that we care, not just by calling ourselves Friends of the Earth, not just by…

(Laughter by Members)

Hon. Emmalin Pierre: Sorry. Did I give a joke? Not just by calling ourselves Friends of the Earth, not just by talking about reducing carbon footprints and renewable energy is so important, we have to demonstrate this, Mr. Deputy President, by doing something. And to not proceed along the line that we are going, is to really say that we have abdicated our responsibility to protect this Nation and to act in the interest of the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

So, again, I just want to say this, I 100%, fully support this Resolution, and what it would bring, what it will do for the people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Member for St. George South.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me first say that this was never a fight with WRB or a foreign investor to get rid of. That's not what this Government sought to do a year and some ago. This Government recognised that every single household in Grenada, that every single business in Grenada is connected to electricity and pays for electricity and as such that type of utility should be regulated and that type of utility should allow competition. And in doing that, WRB pulled the trigger on a gun that they have held to the heads of the Grenadian Government and people for years, since they bought GRENLEC. They pulled the trigger on the gun.

We sought to make sure, like in any other country, that essential services like electricity are regulated; that every household that pays this premium, including the Government to the profits, and it's not an issue with the profits, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because not even the Government can escape paying the full rate to an entity, that in recent time, has never made a loss, including during the terrible times of 2004, of Ivan, did not make a loss. So, it is reasonable to say that the Industry should be regulated.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let's talk about that gun that has been held to the heads of the Grenadian people since the purchase, and they pulled the trigger on it. They paid fifteen million EC dollars (EC $15 m). During the period, they earned one hundred and twenty-four million EC dollars (EC $124 m) from the Grenadian people. We paid for electricity.

Many will say, well, electricity improved and yes, I will get to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but in even paying for Social Services, helping people put food on their tables, those who can't afford, those who are unemployed, those who are sick, and get support, electricity must be paid, and a portion must go to that foreign entity. And, in them pulling the trigger, they then forced the Government and the people of Grenada to pay another one hundred and seventy-one million dollars ($171 m).

I say that again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this adds up to, they put in fifteen million EC dollars ($15 m) and they've got two hundred and ninety-five million dollars ($295 m). It is not about the profit, because WRB, by no means, is a victim in this. And the Government regulating and them pulling the trigger, WRB is not a victim. They have walked away with two hundred and ninety-five million dollars ($295 m). And let it not be said that they are the ones that improved our Electricity Industry. The Grenadian people, the Grenadian workers of GRENLEC **(applause)** are the ones that improved our Electricity Industry, and it came from the Grenadian people's money that we paid in electricity bills. That is what caused the improvement of electricity.

And why I am sure of that is because other Caribbean Islands, who maintained ownership of their own Utilities, don't have load shedding either now. We Caribbean people are able to rebuild. We Caribbean people are the ones that build our Utility Services, where the profits went are what is different in this case. Every dollar to build GRENLEC came from the Grenadian people, in this instance.

Government Budget allocation in healthcare contributed to the building of electricity and the profits to WRB. Government Budget to education, a portion of that went to WRB. This very Parliament building operating, a portion of it went to WRB. X-rays taken in the Hospital, a portion of that goes to WRB. Blood tests, a portion of that goes to WRB. Medicine storage, a portion of it goes to WRB and streetlights, a portion

of it goes to WRB. So, they are tapped in, in every single area. And all we sought to do was to regulate and for that they pulled the trigger.

And I heard patriotic or so-called patriotic Grenadian saying, well, the arrangement was good. It was working for us, electricity, we don't have load shedding etcetera. And I say again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to repeat, the other Caribbean Islands that maintained ownership of their own, don't have load shedding either. **(Applause)**

So what you are telling me, as a patriotic Grenadian or so-called patriotic Grenadian is the only way that something like electricity generation could work well in Grenada is if a foreigner owns it? It's not about a foreigner running, it was the Grenadian people that ran it and maintained it. **(Applause)** And it's the same Grenadian people that will run and maintain it, as we move forward. The only difference now is, because the foreigner pulled the trigger and said I will not be regulated, and rather than regulate, I will force you to buy me back. That is all that has changed. The very same well trained workers in GRENLEC that can go throughout the Island, throughout the Caribbean and be respected, helped rebuild Dominica, **(applause)** helped rebuild all of the other Caribbean countries. They are still here. What has changed is who profits from it. We cannot say that it is patriotic of anyone to say that ownership should be foreign, and that's the only way something can be successful and the only reason something can be successful.

What do we say about the late Sir Royston Hopkin? Grenadian owned hotel, one of the best in the Region. **(Applause)** Grenadian owned, Calabash Hotel same, our very own National Insurance Scheme, our Credit Unions that are growing from strength to strength, all Grenadian owned, with Grenadian money. This is not about saying that you are patriotic by saying that it has to be foreign owned to be successful. And then there are questions I hear too, from those same so called patriots, not happy now that something is back in the hands of the people, where the money came from? **(Laughter)** Where the money came from?

You know, the question should have been asked, the fifteen million dollars ($15 m) that was given to the people of Grenada, the Government then, where the money went? Where did that fifteen million dollars ($15 m) go? What did that Government do

with that fifteen million dollars ($15 m), to be able to explain that the Grenadian people had to pay two hundred and ninety-five million dollars ($295 m) over the years to a foreign entity? **(Applause)** What did you invest fifteen million EC dollars (EC$15 m) into that made such a difference, that we had to pay two hundred and ninety-five million dollars ($295 m) over this period? Was it in roads, education, healthcare, or was it just simply in an Election? Ask the question and maybe they will answer, because I can't see it.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have paid for the improvement. Let nobody say otherwise. We, the Grenadian people have paid for the improvement and it was Grenadians labour. But we can't own it; that, there is a problem with. So, those who say no, we like it so, electricity generation should stay in the hands of the foreign entity, are the same ones that tell us, Grenada for Grenadians, you're selling, don't sell this, you're selling the lands.

Let me explain the difference, Mr. Deputy Speaker. An investor comes into Grenada, buys a green field, totally undeveloped property, bush on it; spends his own money to buy that; then spends his own money to employ Grenadians to build it; then hires an additional amount of Grenadians to run it; then brings foreigners here to spend their foreign dollars here to keep the Grenadians employed and us employed, so bringing the money in, is not the same as a Government selling a State asset that was operating and giving them a full monopoly, taking away any other form of regulation there for it. If we were to do the same thing, it would be to allow one hotelier to come in, build and say, no other hoteliers could come after that, nobody could tell them what to do and everybody has to stay there. So, there is no comparison. It is not about a foreign investor, it is about a bad deal. **(Applause)** So, let's be clear. This Government hasn't changed and become anti-investment, foreign or domestic. This Government is calling it for what it is, a bad deal that cost the Nation two hundred and ninety-five million dollars ($295 m). If they had done that bad deal with a local Grenadian, we would have called it out to be a bad deal, same way. But it cost the country more because the money went out, so it's even worse.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the same individuals are also saying we ignore agriculture, we need to put more in agriculture, we need to develop our agricultural products. Mr. Deputy Speaker, agriculture, we need to add value, we recognise that. To add that value, we need to do Agro-Processing. To do Agro-Processing, it would take electricity. To find new markets for new crops, you need to do a certain amount of cold storage. To do that storage, it will take electricity. To add the hours of processing also, you need lights. Security for Praedial Larceny will need electricity as well, if you're going to use, as we have started, cameras for monitoring, etcetera.

Putting the industry under Regulations, under the PURC and allowing other individuals an opportunity to produce electricity is all we have sought to do. And we were brave enough to make that step and say that, if, in restoring that right to the Grenadian people to regulate and make sure the industries are regulated, restoring that right to the Grenadian people that they too could be involved in a sector called power generation, which after the sale was untouchable, only WRB could do it. To restore that right, if we had to run the risk of buying back the company, because of that bad deal, we were prepared to take that risk and we took it, and we stand here today to say we have accomplished it. I don't think WRB expected us to do it. They didn't expect us to do it. We've done it. And we will accept the criticism for it, because some of those who criticise cannot find it in their way, to praise. And I think they're only criticising, because this bad deal was doing good under this Administration, because, as I have told them before, it was a bad deal, including Members of their own.

It's been mentioned before, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but I just want to also say for the record, one of the final Acts in 2020, I believe of WRB, to borrow money to pay dividends is unforgivable. **(Applause)** That, in itself, justifies why the industry needed to be regulated and also that they never had the Grenadian people at heart. Which other company with shareholders could justify borrowing money to pay dividends? It's not done; it's not done. Nobody borrows money to pay dividends. In the industry Financial Sector, it is known as a poison pill. It is done by a majority investor, on their way out to get as much money as possible and leave the entity with this debt. It's called

a poison pill, that's when it is done, and in some countries, it is considered illegal, and that is a fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Grenadian businesses can now get involved in power generation and explain to me why, as an independent Nation, Grenadian businesses should not have been allowed to do that before? Since the sale, no Grenadian could get involved in a certain activity without getting permission of a foreign investor, and this is supposed to be acceptable, and people really want to say that what we sought to do was to settle a grudge? Thank God there was a grudge, if there was one. **(Applause/Laughter)**

So, I look forward to Grenadian businesses getting involved in power generation now, finally, and only have to ask the permission of the Regulatory Authority, which is dealing with the quality and the costs and not a foreign entity, to get permission in their own country, to do a business that, that foreign entity is allowed to do, and that is what we are discussing here, Mr. Speaker. Righting this wrong is one of my proudest moments as a Member of any Government. **(Applause)** And for some out there, who seem to have lost their sense of patriotism, simply because this proud moment has occurred under this Administration, I say to them, there are other Grenadians like Julien Fédon, T.A. Marryshow, Eric Matthew Gairy and Maurice Bishop, who are saying in their graves: **"Shame on you." (Applause)** They gave sweat and blood for us to be in control of our own destiny and that is what this Government has done again. To believe and defend the concept that Grenada can only prosper under foreign ownership is unacceptable. What's worse yet, to put in a Clause that this Massa mentality must remain for eighty (80) years, and if not, the people must buy back their freedom. That's the deal; we had to buy our freedom back. And you honestly have people outside there saying, where you get the money to buy the freedom? **(Applause/Laughter)**

Mr. Deputy Speaker, where are we going to, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We have other examples of what we are doing, being right, not just in Grenada, but elsewhere. The liberalisation through the OECS mechanism and CARICOM mechanism of the Telecommunication Industry, without doubt, caused the prices to go down, caused competition, healthy competition, caused local Caribbean people to be able to get involved in that industry themselves, and created the very same spin offs that we are

looking for. We have things in Grenada now called Call Centres, employing hundreds of people, because the cost of telecommunications has gone down. **(Applause)** We have Grenadians attending classes, all over the world while here, because the cost of telecommunication has gone down. We are able to keep our students safe as best as possible during lockdown and still have education go on, because the cost of telecommunication has gone down, because there's competition. And, I look forward to coming back into this House, in the not too distant future, or hearing someone else in this House, saying in the not too distant future, that we have these spinoff industries now because the cost of electricity has gone down **(applause)** and that as proud Grenadians we are also generating our own electricity safely, in a green environment adhering to the Pure Grenada that we truly believe in.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is why I cannot help but speak out, I cannot help but sound emotional. I cannot help but feel pride in what we have accomplished and we stayed within the Fiscal Rules.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the moral of this story is, this was needed, this was long overdue and this was done without breaking any Rules. And all we sought to do was to regulate and give Grenadians an opportunity to be involved in an industry that they had a right to be involved in. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I thank you for giving me the privilege and honour of speaking on this matter here today. **(Applause)**

Mr. Deputy Speaker: Thank you Honourable Member for St. George South. I think it is appropriate that we take the lunch break, a very short break at this time. There are some lunch boxes out there in…

(The Clerk conversed with the Deputy President)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: You can rotate. We do not want the hall to be empty. One minute, Member.

(One Member sought the Deputy Speaker's attention)

Mr. Deputy Speaker: So maybe, some may wish to go now and then when they come back, the other will. It's over here, right? It's in the kitchen over there. Member for St. Patrick East.

Hon. Pamela Moses: Good afternoon, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Of course, quite a lot has been said today. I don't know what else I can add to this discussion. But just, you know, as the Representative for St. Patrick-East, please permit me to share, briefly, on some reactions of persons in my constituency regarding the repurchasing of our Electricity Company.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, generally, persons are very satisfied with the efforts that Government has made to reclaim our sole Electricity Company. They understand that Government was not given a choice by the Courts, and that they ruled that Government must repurchase. Our people understand that being our sole natural asset, providing electricity, Government did what any Government would do, safeguarded the interests of our people. They believe that the actions taken will filter down to them, down to their pockets, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They believe that they will pay less for electricity. They believe that they will be able to take better care of their children and be better able to pay their bills, so that their children can have a better education, and therefore lift their socio-economic status, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This basically is the fate expressed by the people that I would have discussed with and would have shared information throughout our constituency of St. Patrick-East.

Honestly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the day comes and the price drops, both yourself and I will benefit, but so will everyone else who has an electric light or pay an electricity bill anywhere throughout the length and breadth of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Mr. Deputy Speaker, everyone, throughout my constituency will benefit; all of our villages, every single one of them. And I wouldn't start to call, but I just want them to know that each and every one of them will surely benefit. It's not anyone special. Everyone, Mr. Deputy Speaker, deserves lower rates, whether it is the single mother, who wants to make her ends meet, the concerned citizen, who wants to protect the environment, or whether it is the manufacturer, who wants to make profit,

and therefore expand the business and create more employment for us here in Grenada. Mr. Deputy Speaker, when we hear creating employment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, any such actions that can push towards that direction would surely be welcomed by my constituents and, of course, anyone in St. Patrick, or throughout Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. It is their opinion, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that in the lighting up of the community, as was said here today by almost every MP, that the company failed to provide such service to the people, particularly in the lighting up of our very dark areas, very little effort was made.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, some people reported that they've been waiting for years, for streetlights in their community, years to transform those dark areas, years for protection for their homes and for their families. As a people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, going forward, we expect greater consideration to be placed in that area, as it is really an important need to secure our people, as well as the infrastructure on our Island.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the greatest concern that came forth though, from the people in my constituency was in the managing of this company and the running of this company. Who will be running the company? My constituency, the people in there, do agree that any enterprise that is run by Government has never been as well managed as a private one in a few situations well. And so, they have expressed this level of concern for the welfare of this business enterprise being managed, whether it is by Government and that anyone, or any company that will be managing it, whether it is local or private. And they were very happy when the expression was made that most likely it could be a private company, local, or most likely abroad.

Sergeant-at-Arms: The Speaker, in the Chair.

Hon. Pamela Moses: Mr. Speaker, the people in my constituency are very concerned about this. Mr. Speaker, we know that shares will be available to persons throughout Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, and maybe, not everyone in my constituency would be able to afford to buy a share, but those who are, would be willing to do so and are awaiting the time when it comes.

Mr. Speaker, moreover, they are extremely happy that the monies that we have paid our electricity bills won't be leaving Grenada for Miami, anymore, but instead they will stay here in Grenada, and so, develop our Tri-Island State. As such, Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents, the people of St. Patrick East, I can confidently give my full support to the Resolution that has been put forward by the Minister for Finance.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I wish the very best for 2021 to each and every one of us here today, the people of St. Patrick East and the rest of our country. And to you, Mr. Speaker, to your family, may you all become closer and stronger, because of your loss. Thank you. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for St. Patrick East. Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Despite the fact that we are a little bit famished in here, we have been going from since 9:00; I would dare stand to speak on this Resolution.

Mr. Speaker, again, I've been going through some of it, because I believe if you have to do justice to an important document like this, it must be studied, and not only studied by me, as a layperson, but by Counsel.

Mr. Speaker, I am not new to this place or even new to this debate. The first time that I got counsel on the Sale Purchase Agreement between WRB and the Government of Grenada was in 1994/'95/'96 and I remember at the time, the gentleman that was counselling me as a Counsel was Sir Daniel Williams. And, in his words, I can remember the Agreement that was signed between WRB and the Government of Grenada, he coined it as scandalous. And it was then, Mr. Speaker, that now we're hearing and I would not go back to revisionist history, we are this point. And I've been hearing from people and from my constituents and they're saying, what we really want to know is what will become of the company now that we have it.

But, Mr. Speaker, we have to go back a little bit, at least I will, and you must understand that where GRENLEC was and where it is today. And it is indeed, the fact

that Grenada went through difficult times in the 80s with GRENLEC. At the time, the Minister of Works, our Prime Minister today went on a transformation of Grenada, water, roads, electricity and telephone. And at the time of the delivery of electricity to the people, the engines were not enough, they couldn't supply, so we had some blackouts, and I think we remembered what ensued and the investigations and other stuff. NDC made a proposal to sell the company culminating in 1994, September. Mr. Speaker, at that time, I was just getting my feet wet in the Politics of Grenada, so that was a transforming effect on the Politics of Granada.

It was not only GRENLEC that was sold, you know. Remember the National Commercial Bank, our dearly beloved bank? Nobody speaks about that today, because it is forgotten. But then, after consulting with my Political Leader at the time, Dr. Mitchell and with Sir Danny Williams, as towards getting more acquainted with the Agreement, in my mind, and the facts are there to stay, that it was a bad Sale Agreement. I will not speak with two corners of my mouth. I think it was a bad sale then, and I still believe that.

Mr. Speaker, I left York House, in 1996 and I travelled to the United States. Going to University in the United States, one thing that you have to do, you have to do Political Science. You must do that, American Government and you have to do American History. And it was then that I understood what is called the Sherman Anti-Trust Laws of the United States, and doing a class like that brought me right back to Grenada, where it is stated explicitly and it is still applied today in the United States, because at the time, we had what is called Standard Oil in the United States. They controlled the new industry, in terms of kerosene, gasoline and they had a monopoly on the production of oil in the United States. The US Government said **"that is not good for our country and our people, let us move to break it up."** So they moved to break up Standard Oil and all these little companies what we have here today came from the Sherman Anti-Trust Law. The US Government went on to break up what was called Mardelle, AT&T, we have everything today.

Lately, we know they moved to break up Microsoft. They moved to break up Google and probably we're looking at Facebook and other stuff like that and this is what

they're saying it. So, it just galvanised in my mind, for any Government, at any time to give a monopoly to any business in the country, the consumers suffers. And I believe it was highlighted with the Telecommunication Industry, and so, again, we are at this point.

In 1995/'96, I asked the question, as to why we did not reverse it at that time and then Counsel said, well, they may go to Court. I think that was tried, but the arrangement and the Agreement were signed, and so, even if it was not in Parliament, because it was signed by the then Government of the day, the authority was given through the Minister for Finance to sign the Agreement. So, they had to stand by the Agreement that imposed all these draconian measures on the people of Grenada.

Mr. Speaker, when I came back, one friend of mine said to me, **"Mr. Clement, you must do something about the price of electricity in Grenada."** He had a five (5) bedroom family house in Trinidad. He rents a one bedroom house in Calliste. The price of his electricity in Calliste in his one-bedroom apartment is five (5) times higher than what he pays for his entire family in Grenada, and I said, I know. He said, **"how can you talk about country's development, when your price of energy is so high?"** And, we can go throughout, Mr. Speaker.

In 2013, when we came in and I was looking at some numbers, I saw the Airport's electricity bill was about ten thousand dollars ($10,000.00) a day. They paid between two hundred and fifty thousand dollars ($250,000.00) to three hundred thousand dollars ($300,000.00) a month electricity bill. And I said, we have so much roof space on the Airport why that has to be so?

Mr. Speaker, a good friend of mine, in his own way, he said he tried it. He ran a generator to generate some electricity to his hotel and GRENLEC shut him down. The cost of generation of electricity by running his generator and buying his oil and so forth was thirty-five thousand dollars ($35,000.00) a month. But his electric bill to GRENLEC, for the month was seventy-eight thousand dollars ($78,000.00) a month, and he asked what is going on in this country. And, Mr. Speaker, I support the idea that it was stifling our country's development, and I still support that today. I said I am not going to talk on two corners of my mouth.

But, Mr. Speaker, there is something that we must get clear, and the question that I have today is, how do we move forward with what we have? It is not the first time our country has gotten into serious problem with signing energy deals. You know, I hear we talk about having shares. If I have to make any recommendation today, Mr. Speaker, I would say make recommendation to GRENLEC, in terms of the purchase of the shares, as how the Green Bay Packers is done. Green Bay Packers is not owned by any entity, it is owned by the people of Wisconsin and Green Bay. I think everybody is allowed to buy two shares, so everybody has a stake in it. I do not know what the principles might do today.

But, Mr. Speaker, I do believe that there are some fundamental questions that must be answered, because in my mind and this is why I have to get myself familiar with the Resolution, in terms of Schedules I, II and III, which I did not have time to do, and maybe, which the general public did not have time to do, because therefore, we did not see it, and I would have to ask questions about it, not just to just buy it wholesale. Because what I did, Mr. Speaker, the information that I got was from the Press Conference, given by the Minister for Finance, in terms of this negotiation between WRB and the Government of Grenada, and at the end of the day, I made a conclusion. It's like you buy something from me without telling me where you get the money from, and that is my conclusion. You bought something for me without telling me where you get the monies from.

Mr. Speaker, when I look at it on the value of what was said by the Minister for Finance, I have problems there, because he said the monies came from savings from Capital projects. Okay. So, I went back to the books and I have it here, you know, Mr. Speaker. In 2020, the monies that were allocated for Capital Projects, there were $225.3 m. But, in my understanding and when I turned the next page, according to the table here, it says from the Capital Projects for 2020, in terms of the monies, sources of Capital Expenditure, NTF that is National Transformation Fund - $145.5 m; others - $40.7 m; World Bank – eight million dollars - $8 m; CDB – seven million dollars ($7 m); Republic Bank of China – five million dollars ($5 m); EDF - $4.9; Kuwaiti Fund – one

million dollars ($1 m); GEF/UNDP – one million dollars ($1 m), and the rest is just small amounts and a total of $214.2 million.

But, Mr. Speaker, we have to understand and from my time, you have to understand budgeting. When we say Capital Expenditure, there is not $225.3 m sitting in the bank, you know. And you would know there is the cash and there is the non-cash, $225.3 m is allocation. You have to look for the monies. But then we ask ourselves, how is capital projects funded?

Mr. Speaker, there is a Capital Project, say for fifty million dollars ($50 m). You do not have fifty million dollars ($50 m) waiting in the bank, you know. Usually, well, you were there, so you would know. The people would allocate the money for you and you draw down. You pay as you go. There is a reason why it is called 'Capital', you know, Mr. Speaker. Some Capital Projects could go on for years and you keep on drawing down on it as you go. Recurrent is because it's there every year. But, Mr. Speaker, my question is, you fund a particular project for me, if there is any savings on it, can I take it and put it somewhere else? I have never seen that before.

Moreover, Mr. Speaker, the same Capital Project that the Minister was talking about, in 2020, the same Capital Expenditure that he was talking about, when you go to the 2021 Budget, it says here that the actual or the provisional Capital Expenditure was $122.1 m, that is for 2020. So when I do the difference, I say if there is any savings, if there is any savings there, Mr. Speaker, it's $102.2 m. This is no way equivalent to sixty-three million US dollars (US$63 m), Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, when we look at it, in terms, I am not even going to say sixty-three million US dollars (US$63 m) in its entirety, because we are in Grenada here, it is one hundred and seventy million EC dollars (EC$170 m). But, Mr. Speaker, moreover, on the Schedule here, when I look at it, we have to understand the trappings of this here. How did we get to that point? And again, it went back to the Sale Agreement. The buyback mechanism could have been triggered for almost anything. And, in my mind too, that was scandalous. And the equation to be employed, in terms of buying back the company, that too, Mr. Speaker, was scandalous.

Mr. Speaker, I asked the question, and I am going to ask it, again. Did we miss any opportunities within Government to have a better deal at any point in time? There was one time after 2013, I thought the Government of Grenada and GRENLEC would have come to some amicable conclusion, in terms of renewables. Okay. This fell through.

Then at one point in time, I do believe it was said that WRB made an offer of eight dollars and twenty-seven cents ($8.27) for their shares. And Government was offering five dollars and forty-nine cents ($5.49), or five (5) something. So, I do believe I said to myself, can we meet in the middle?

Mr. Speaker, if it is that we missed an opportunity there, then probably we would have missed a few million dollars well. Because in my calculations, WRB here, as it is stated nine (9) million shares, and then two point whatever million shares, the number is up to eleven point something million shares. Even if, Mr. Speaker, and you look at it that way and let me point out to these figures here. In totality, GRENLEC, how many shares; nineteen million shares, nineteen million shares at a value of twelve dollars ($12.00) per share. You would have paid GRENLEC, in totality, or WRB, $140.5 m. But, if you look at it at eight dollars and twenty-seven cents ($8.27) per share, you would have paid in the vicinity, of about ninety-six million dollars ($96 m), $96.7, or you could say ninety-seven million dollars ($97 m), which, Mr. Speaker, would be a lot less than what we paid of one hundred and seventy million dollars ($170 m).

Moreover, the powers that be, I do not know if it was deliberately so, but we, in the Parliament of Grenada should have an idea that when we passed that Legislation in 2016, it should have triggered the Buyback Clause, which it did. And when that was done, everything went downhill, negotiation would have stopped. Investment in the company would have stopped, and these people knew that they were going to initiate the Buyback Clause, Government has no recourse, so take everything that we can get and go.

What did they do, Mr. Speaker? They went to the bank, they got a loan, scandalous again, a loan of fifty-seven million dollars ($57 m) to pay dividends, in 2017. That outstanding loan is still there. Some is paid back, Mr. Speaker, but GRENLEC still

has to pay back forty million dollars ($40 m) on that loan. I think today, Mr. Speaker, GRENLEC probably is paying three hundred and thirty-three thousand dollars ($333,000.00) a month, and we could go back again, because of the Sales Agreement. And I think, over the years, when you go back and you look at the Hansard, you will hear that I said, what WRB did in Grenada, they could never have practiced that in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, in looking and finding more information, and this is what it is. I believe, in this House, we are servants of the people and not masters. And if the people are crying for more information and more openness, then we should give it to them, because at least, I did not get it. When I read the Resolution, I asked, where is Schedule I, II and III? And I did not get it until yesterday. It might have given me a better idea what we were negotiating and that is what we were crying for. Which people? The people of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Mr. Speaker, you see, I will have to cool myself here today, because I heard the Member for St. David said to me that he was anxious to hear from me. He called me and he did not get to me. Mr. Speaker, the first time I saw the Member for St. David, he came where I was living, because he was anxious for information. He wanted to know. He wanted to know certain things that were said. But, Mr. Speaker, I will leave that there for today. Mr. Speaker, tell them, don't trouble Tobias Clement.

Mr. Speaker, the Member for St. Patrick West stated that Government never used any resources from Capital Project that was given by other Governments. Mr. Speaker, and I just, I had to laugh a little bit, and it was stated clearly that he was Minister for Finance then. We had Ivan in 2004. I do believe it was stated clearly, at one point in time that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago of the day, gave some monies for the purchase, or to do something with the Coast Guard. I think it went into the Fund and it was used thereafter. Did we ever get that Coast Guard that was allocated or the monies that were allocated? It went into the general Fund. But, he said a while ago, the Government never used any monies that were allocated for any projects, elsewhere.

Mr. Speaker, you know, I go back to history, and our Government seems to have always been involved in matters sometimes, that end up in Court. The same Minister for Finance ended up in Court. Privy Council ordered him to pay the Claimant from his own funds. I think it was Derrick Knight, at the time. I mean, to me, that was something else. And when I see and I know there is a Court Conclusion here that if the Government refused to pay, poor Minister for Finance, it might fall back on you. But, nevertheless, we found the money and we paid for it. I say, hooray to us, hooray to us, because we have our company. We have GRENLEC, 100%. Well, not well not 100% back, but, you know, we have other shareholders too. But, at least, sixty-one point, how many percent of that company back, at a price, at a very, very steep price. There are some concerns that are legitimately raised. Where do we go from here?

Now, Mr. Speaker, I understand that there is a new Board, temporary though it may be, but I would like to know, in the transition, who are the new Directors on the Board of GRENLEC? How were they appointed? Who is the Chairman of the Board? What procedure was used to appoint the new Chairman? These are some of the questions to be asked.

A very concerned citizen called me yesterday, because he had made application in terms of renewable energy for his solar panels. And when he called to find out from GRENLEC, he was told that it was suspended and people are concerned. People are very concerned that we have it now and what we are going to do with it is of grave concern. Mr. Speaker, I said I get most of my information from the Minister for Finance, and this concerns me too.

Now, look at GRENLEC, Mr. Speaker, as it is. WRB controls the majority of the shares. But what did WRB do over the years with GRENLEC and about GRENLEC? It's almost like a free for all, just take the profits; take the profits. All the Engine Operators are Grenadians; all the Linesmen are Grenadians; all the lower Managers are Grenadians. It's only the General Manager of GRENLEC that is foreign. Are we not capable of running the company now that we have it? I find it, Mr. Speaker, highly insulting to say that you would ask the International Community to bring in a Management Company into Grenada to manage GRENLEC. Really? At what cost? At

what cost? Mr. Speaker, these things don't come cheap, so I hope, I hope that will be corrected.

Mr. Speaker, now, what did we get? What did we really get for the one hundred and seventy million dollars ($170 m) that we spent? And, Mr. Speaker, we can start upping the price, because we talk about one hundred and seventy million dollars ($170 m). We could add forty million dollars ($40 m) to that, because that is what is still outstanding from the debt that GRENLEC had. Then, look at it here, the Government of Grenada now has to pay seventeen million EC dollars (EC$17 m) in legal fees that were incurred by WRB. They also have to pay the Court arbitration, six hundred and forty-seven thousand dollars ($647,000.00), that is for the Court. But then, what they never told us, Mr. Speaker, WRB Lawyers costs seventeen million EC dollars (EC$17 m), which is the six hundred and sixty-three thousand, one hundred and forty-two dollars and fifty-one cents ($633,142.51). I would like to know how much the Legal team, for Grenada costs. I am hearing through the grapevine that altogether both WRB legal fees and the Grenadian Government legal fees is thirty-three million dollars ($33 m).

Now, you know, you go there, loser pays all, so that is what we have here. So, together with the one hundred and seventy million dollars ($170 m), plus forty million dollars ($40 m), plus thirty-three million dollars ($33 m), we are going up, two hundred and forty-three million dollars ($243 m). So, let us go up, Mr. Speaker.

Now, Mr. Speaker, again in the Press Conference, the Minister for Finance said that we could have load shedding anytime, because when was the last time we invested in an engine, since 2006. One engine is off grid, conked out. Mr. Speaker, we have two (2) more operating. They are at the end of their lives, so they could go any time. I mean, I would not want to wish this on Grenada right now, at this point in time, not at all, not at all, Mr. Speaker, because if this happens, Government done, education done, a lot of things done, honestly. So, I would not be surprised, Mr. Speaker, in the future, we will have to come up to this Parliament for emergency allocation in order, maybe, to buy engines, so that, well, he did say, that we would have to rent some until, maybe, something would have to be done.

Mr. Speaker, moreover, the workers are talking, you know. When you drive throughout Grenada, you will see some orange markings on the poles. 65 to 70% of the polls are slated to be changed out, not only the poles, but the lines too, because we understand and we know there was no investment in the company over the years. You brought it right down, because you knew that you were going to sell it. And so, the price that we paid for it is probably four or five times the price that it is worth, at the end of the day. Maybe, when you put it all together, Mr. Speaker, we are looking at almost close to three hundred million dollars ($300 m).

Is it this Government's fault? I did not say that, you know, but this is where we are at. But, I ask the question, did we falter at any time, when we could have gotten a better deal? Maybe, maybe not. How do we proceed? And that is the critical point here now, you know. How do we proceed now that we have it in our hands?

And I do get called from constituents, too. I get calls from abroad too, as to what are we going to do with it? How is it going to be managed now? And I hope to God, that the price of electricity drops significantly, because this will be good for our country. And if it is good for the country, it will be good for me too. You know, I pray for the good of the country, so that if the country does well, I will do well. But there are fundamental questions that must be answered, Mr. Speaker, must be asked and must be answered. There is nothing wrong in asking critical questions of the Government and holding the Government accountable, and this is where we are; and were those questions asked in 1994/1995, Mr. Speaker?

Mr. Speaker, if I look here now and as we go on, people are guessing, yes, I heard it and I did have to say, I said no. People called me and asked me if it is the Chinese who bought the company. I said I did not get that information and I cannot give that information. I could only go on what was said in the Press Conference. But in my calculation and in my estimation, the answers given in terms of the funding and the payment of this amount are not in the document that the Minister talked about.

(Time Bell rings)

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, I am requesting about five (5) minutes?

Mr. Speaker: Okay. Five (5) minutes more.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Sir. So, Mr. Speaker, and I do believe, I do believe, maybe, I shouldn't say, "maybe", where we are today and where we will be in the next twenty-five (25) years, is a matter of just time, because probably the monies that we're spending now, some of us may not even be around to pay it, you know, but we have paid dearly in the past. And I hope, Mr. Speaker, I hope, in going forward, in going forward, the right decisions would be made, because it's our children and grandchildren that will have to pay for it. And if we are talking about the love of our children and the love of our country, we should do what is right by our country, in terms of what we do with what we have in our hands now.

Mr. Speaker, I would rest now, and I will wait for additional information, so that I can make a judgement on this, because it is still open up and in the air. Mr. Speaker, the people want to know, let us be transparent with our people and just let them know and this is what it is. Why the hide and seek? I want to know, the people want to know, so give us the information, Mr. Minister. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Honourable Prime Minister and Parliamentary Representative for St. George North-West.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, first of all, I would like to, of course, as my other colleagues have already indicated, and of course, I did already to you, through other means, I am expressing my sympathy on behalf of myself and the Government and the country as a whole on the passing of your Mom. And I know the Minister for Education is a member of the family, so I have noticed that she didn't have to give you sympathy, she would have done it already, for herself and for you, and I do and I know what it means, Mr. Speaker, because no matter how old your Mom becomes, every day of their life means a lot to you. I know how it

feels, Mr. Speaker, because my Mom is ninety-eighty (98) going to ninety-nine (99), and every day I pass there, I have a sense of appreciation for life, someone reaching a certain age and still enjoying a relatively healthy life. This is something all of us would wish for.

Mr. Speaker, clearly, I would want to join my other colleagues in, of course, endorsing the Motion for accepting the settlement of this important action of the Government with respect to the Electricity Company. And I just want to say this; I stand, really, with a sort of mixed emotions today, Mr. Speaker. I feel sad, because I feel that we're coming here, at this time, to have to discuss the getting back the control of electricity, which is so vital for the stability and peace of a country and development in the 21st Century. We have to have gone through, literally, decades of being marginalised, the level of pain that would have gone through the country over the years, is something that we all have to feel sorry for. A lot of people's businesses would have been hurt. A lot of activities that could have been possible were not done. So, a lot has gone down the drain, so to speak, so I am sad about that.

But, Mr. Speaker, I am heartened also. I listened to my colleagues today and their level of presentation, their level of understanding, Mr. Speaker, from all the Members on the "Government Side", demonstrating their understanding of the importance of this action that the Government has taken. There was a high level of understanding. There was a high level of passion, Mr. Speaker, that I saw coming from this Honourable House, from the Members on "This Side" of the House. I cannot say this about the presentation of the Leader of the Opposition, because to tell you the honest truth, I really don't know what the Leader of the Opposition said up to now, honestly, a pretty jumbled presentation. I don't know whether he support the action, whether he didn't support it. He speaks on one side of his mouth and another side he said something else. I don't know. The truth is, I don't know, and he alone may be able to decipher what he was saying here today. Mr. Speaker, he alone. No one will be able to understand you, and when he speaks to the people, I don't know whose people he's talking about, because the people outside there are clearly understanding what this Government has done. The people outside there, in North-East St. George's and

around the country, because North-East is very close to North-West, understand clearly, what this Government has done, so I really don't know who the Leader of the Opposition is speaking on behalf of today.

Mr. Speaker, the fact is, as the Minister for Finance pointed out, when in 1994, the Government of the Day decided that they wanted to sell the Electricity Company, they put out bids. WRB was not the lowest bidder. You see, that's the strangest thing. They put out a bid and the conditions of the bid were given. WRB did not come up at the top by the same group that they had to assess the bids. But, for some strange reasons, Mr. Speaker, that the Government chose WRB. And, what was significant, Mr. Speaker, is that knowing that an election was due, knowing that the electricity was a monopoly, National Security asset, you could not understand why the Government was in a rush to sell the Electricity Company to a family business and majority share at that time.

But, Mr. Speaker, I want to just, as one who has been the only Member in the House of Parliament, at that time, I want to share some things that probably no one would know. About July 1994, I was called by a friend, who said that there was one, Mr. Robert Blanchard here, who was one of the persons looking to buy the Grenada Electricity Company and he wanted to have lunch with me to share their plans. And, of course, as Leader of the New National Party then, I accepted the invitation and we went to True Blue Inn for that lunch.

When the gentleman came, they brought in the starters, the soup, the soup was there, the pumpkin soup, I can't forget, and I have to say this, because it's a very interesting piece. We started talking about the arrangement for the sale. And after listening to him, I said, **"you know, I understand, as a businessman, you have that right, but I have great difficulty as a Grenadian, that you are coming here to buy 50% shares. This is the value that you're getting for the share of the company and from what you are indicating, it appears that the deal is very much unfavourable to the country and the people, as a whole."** And, I started to talk. The man became red, Mr. Speaker. Do you know the soup got cold, none of us drank the soup and the lunch ended? He was so angry. The man got literally vicious. I couldn't believe it.

Here is someone coming to invest in a country. I am just telling you how I feel as an individual, as the person representing some of the people in a country and you're getting so mad with me, to the point that the man literally became threatening. From that day, I realised we were in a lot of trouble, because if that was the mind-set of that individual, who was going to be taking over majority shares in the company, I am not surprised of some of the things. And I really wondered why the Government felt then, that they had to rush into this arrangement.

Mr. Speaker, I have heard, I think the Member for St. Patrick West said this, and I believe other Members made similar comments. This sale was probably the worst sale that was undertaken by any Government concerning a national asset, which guides development of the country in many, many respects. And it's insulting in every respect, Mr. Speaker, because, you know, what many of us don't know… In fact, I heard the Leader of the Opposition made some false statements about load shedding in the 80's and so on. He has to clarify this, because he's not aware of the facts. I was the Minister for Works; I was the Minister for Public Utilities.

Mr. Speaker, as the Minister for Finance said, in 1984, only 48% of the country had electricity, only 48%. The Leader of the Opposition won't know that. At that time, the Minister for Finance was the Manager of GRENLEC. I was the Minister responsible. The Chairman of the Board was Dennis Campbell. When we saw the state of electricity and the fact that even in my home village, many parts had no electricity, we sat together and decided we must do something about this. We couldn't go borrow money, we couldn't. There was no Father Giver or so, we decided to work and see the assets of the company, what it was generating and decided we would embark on a serious plan. It was Minister Bowen, the Manager then, myself and Dennis Campbell, and we got some few other committed Grenadians and held discussions. We decided we want to embark on a serious Rural Electrification Programme throughout the length and breadth of the country. How do we do that, with no resources? We decided, first of all, we must do a survey, right around the country. And the question is, which village or villages do we bring electricity to first, because all around the country there were problems. So, we decided it would be done on the basis of the amount of homes in a particular village and

homes of persons and the quantity of the homes in the villages, and the ability to meet the expenses of electricity for those homes. A combination of factors were used, Mr. Speaker, and after that survey was done, you know which village came in at number one? Munich in St. Andrew. Mr. Speaker, I am sure you probably remember. Munich came up number one and Munich was the first village in the country that got rural electrification. **(Applause)** That's the history, Mr. Leader of the Opposition, that's the history. So, in fact, Munich had what you called…

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Festival of lights.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: …what?

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Festival of lights.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Festival of Lights. Every year there was a celebration, because I remember one, Mr. Calliste, was the only man in the village, who you used to get a little cold drink from with a kerosene fridge. And I remember how he was so happy, and the people were so happy. Mr. Speaker, from then onwards, every single month, we were lighting villages around the country.

Mr. Speaker, this Rural Electrification Programme, I have to tell you and tell the Members of this House must have been one of the main factors that I am Prime Minister of this country today. I am telling you this. It was so popular with people throughout the length and breadth of the country. And so, everybody wanted to get electricity, everybody wants. I remember we had one in Plains, in St. Patrick. It was like a massive gathering, one of the biggest sessions I ever saw in Plains. People cooked food. They were happy. I remember Red Mud. The best roti I've ever eaten in my life was in Red Mud, an Indian community there, and people were just celebrating, electricity reached their communities and so on.

And I remembered once, Mr. Speaker, I was home, about 5:00 the door knocked. I was at my Mom's home then and when I opened the door, I saw six (6) people. They

came to ask me, from the village in St. Andrew, they wanted electricity. Everybody was getting electricity and they couldn't get and so on. So I said, well, based on where you were, it was difficult for us to bring, because we had to look at the number of homes and the place was so far in North-West St. Andrew, that is in…

(Inaudible comments)

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Morne Longue, right. The last pole was almost two (2) miles away, so it would have been a cost to bring in electricity. That's why I said it would be difficult for us, because based on the cost factor, it would be difficult for us to justify it and many other villages were waiting. And they said, well, what can we do? I said, well, look, if you can get people, first of all you have to get permission for the lands to put the poles. You can dig for the poles, we will send technical help, we will make the poles available. Mr. Speaker, within a week, the people came with all the signatures of all the people, and do you know, Morne Longue was able to get electricity. Clozier was another major one, because Clozier was so far from the last pole, because Clozier was way down, I think, Florida or some place, and that village didn't have a lot of houses at the point, in Clozier, so that's the history.

So, the workers of GRENLEC, and I think this is one of the things that we forget. We didn't hire anybody from outside. The workers of GRENLEC were the ones doing this programme throughout the length and breadth of the country. **(Applause)** We did not borrow any money, Mr. Speaker, this was the investment, the workers production was being used. So, Mr. Speaker, by the time, 1995, Mr. Speaker, over 96% of the country had electricity. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker, and that is what was so sad, Mr. Speaker, about this whole exercise. When the Government came in, in 1990, instead of them taking the position where we left it, how they decided to sell that Company was amazing to me, and literally gave it away. I heard a lot of statements here this morning about fifteen million dollars ($15 m). It wasn't sold for fifteen million dollars ($15 m); you have to say eleven million dollars ($11 m). It was eleven million dollars ($11 m). A man gave you fifteen million

dollars ($15 m), and you gave him back four, and then you take another two and invest back in the company for things that the company should do. So really you could say, you get nine million dollars ($9 m). What they claimed the four for; they had to buy a generator for eight. So, they say they're going to put eight and the Government must put four, but the Government only had a few shares. They had 50%.

So, technically, if you're buying a generator, I should only pay the amount based on my share capital. But, when the profit is being shared, they take their sixty something percent, but when the expenditure was to be incurred for buying generator, we had to pay 50%. So, the whole arrangement was so ridiculous, Mr. Speaker, you couldn't believe that a Government sat there, and the question you have to ask yourself, what is the basis upon which these decisions were made? You couldn't understand it, and two hundred and twenty thousand US dollars (US$220,000.00) was given for managing the same people who bought it, you know. They took a management fee of two hundred and twenty thousand US dollars ($220,000.00), you know, a yearly management fee. So, in addition to all their profits, the management fee comes up again, while they're sitting in Miami.

You know, Mr. Speaker, it's quite insulting that any Grenadian and I have heard one of the Members of this House said so, would want to sit and support this. You can't believe that any Grenadian would want to support this. And you know what happened, Mr. Speaker? This thing, instead of becoming a national issue, it became a political issue. And there are some people claiming today that they joined the NNP, that was a lie. The NNP was by itself, alone in this exercise, standing up against this deal. I challenge anyone to say that they would join the NNP. Join what? It became an NNP/NDC issue, when it should have never been an issue of an NNP and NDC. It should have never been that.

I remember that Parliament session that we had and we pointed out, how could you do that to this country? The formula that they used to come up with the price of electricity was so biased against the Government. When we ran a regression model on the formula, the thing was purely in favour of the ownership of the company, nothing to do with the consumer. Everything was in their favour. We pointed that out and because

they knew we had scientific background, they got one guy from Barbados, they claimed was an economist, and I challenged him and he couldn't defend it. But all they were saying is that the Government signed and the Government signed; so if the Government signed, it has to be right.

Mr. Speaker, I, as a Member of the Caribbean Democratic Union, the NNP was, which was associated with the International Democratic Union, I represented the Party on the IDU. You know about the IDU? The President of the IDU was John Howard of Australia, the Prime Minister of Australia, the Vice President, and he was responsible for that section, but he was the President of the IDU. I was Vice President for Latin America and the Caribbean and President George Bush was Vice President for the Americas. So we met regularly, at IDU sessions, and that gave me an opportunity to meet with these leaders and to look at ways in which of getting help for our countries in the Region and that's how we benefited more under President, the young George Bush, than any other Government of the United States.

And during his time he sent down the Chairman of the Republican Party. I have never forgotten that, Haley Barbour down to Grenada. He became Governor of Mississippi, for many of you who may not know this. And he came to Grenada and we sat at Calabash and I brought him a copy of this Agreement. When he looked at it, he said: "Who signed this?" I said: "a Government of Grenada signed this." And, he took it back up to the States. He told me give him a chance, he will talk to the President. And I remember, the President did call me. But, after they found out with the Ambassador in Barbados, that the thing was signed in Parliament, he said***: "Well, Keith, there is not much we can do. The US Policy is, if the business of their citizens gets an initiative in a country that is signed and approved by the Parliament of the country, all the people, all of us involved, it's not a party that signed it, or just the Cabinet, the entire country signed it."*** There was nothing we can do. That was the kind of thing. Imagine the Chairman of a top Party in the United States, looking at an arrangement and saying: "Who signed this?" But, it became, as if it was, I had a personal problem with WRB and it was against the…

Mr. Speaker, I want to read you the Hansard of the statement that I made in Parliament at the time. Let me just read this, Mr. Speaker. I said, and this is reading exactly from the Hansard: **"Mr. Speaker,"** that's me, **"we must stop playing games with this country. The point of this matter is simply this. If you want to proceed to sell or to privatise, it is clear, Mr. Speaker, we are saying, give the Grenadian people the first priority."** This was a comment in 1994, quotes from the Hansard, which I asked the Clerk to make available. I went on further: **"Put out the shares to the public; give them an opportunity to participate fully"** and I said **"this joke that we're only selling 50% is really an NDC deceit."**

Mr. Speaker, I went further. I went on: **"I've listened to two (2) Ministers of the NDC Government then;"** that's why some of the supporters of the NDC and some of them who are now talking NDC, you must first find out what your Party and Government did before you open your mouths, because you might appear to be supporting something that you yourself might have difficulty defending. So I said then to two (2) Ministers of the Government then. ***"I've listened to two Ministers of the NDC Government, the present one, and one who is now the Minister for Tourism, decrying the fact,"*** listen this one, **"decrying the fact that the Government does not get anything from the Electricity Company,"** that's when we were trying to sell it. They're saying they don't get anything from Electricity Company; the same Company that rural electrified the entire country, the workers there. **(Applause)** They said they're getting nothing from the Company; listen further what they said; **"but, that the workers are getting big bonus,"** that's the NDC. Mr. Speaker, that is not NNP saying this, you know.

Two (2) NDC Ministers said the workers are the ones getting all the benefits. I said, Mr. Speaker, **"the Ministers, in my view,"** and I said it, I am quoting myself, **"the Minister never studied what is actually happening there in the company. They would have seen that the Government gained, enormously, from the Electricity Company,"** that's what I was saying then, **"from 1985, right up to 1990, and including in their time. This is a fact. They are making the statement that the workers are the ones benefitting alone.**" So, what did they do, Mr. Speaker? What

did they do? The same Government that loves, the same Government that a lot of supporters of the National Democratic Congress are now still supporting, they did not have the political guts to cut off the profits that they say the workers were getting, the workers were making all the money. But, listen what they did, they raised the share capital of the company and since the profit sharing is based on the share capital, a worker with a certain amount in 1987/1988, who was getting six thousand dollars ($6,000.00) profit-sharing will now get a maximum of one thousand dollars ($1,000.00), because by one stroke of the pen, the share capital of the company was raised from nine million dollars ($9 m) to twenty-five million dollars ($25 m). That was NDC. That's not NNP that did this, you know. You know, that's why I say, Mr. Speaker, some of them must listen. They must know what they're supporting.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, there are some workers in the GRENLEC Company, not just those who are there now, but those who were there before, and all of them have to get a lot of credit. When Montserrat had its problems with electricity, the hurricane, it was the Grenadian Electricity workers from GRENLEC that went down to Montserrat. There's a gentleman named, may God bless his soul, Raymond Lewis, better known as Barrel. Barrel was well known all throughout the length and breadth of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique, leading workers all around the country, bringing electricity. When the Cuban workers came in 2004 and they joined with the GRENLEC workers, they said, we have some of the best electricity workers in the Caribbean. **(Applause)** They said so. So, whatever profits they were making and getting, I cannot be mad with them and I don't want anyone of them to feel that this Government will do anything to hurt them. As citizens of the country, they also have an interest in ensuring that the service of electricity become an issue that all and sundry would be able to get and at a reasonable price, and the better the prices are, the more people will do different activities, and the more people would be able to cooperate in every sense of the word. So, I would never make that a problem, and I want that to be clear.

And, I don't see how anyone in GRENLEC could feel that some company, some family business from outside would treat them better than their own Government here would treat them. I can't see anyone thinking that way, Mr. Speaker. And, that's why I

have a difficulty with this whole process. A man would invest eleven million dollars ($11 m), well, it is now nine, as the Minister just said. But, just from 1994 to 2020, he makes over forty-six million US dollars (US$46 m) in profits, in profit sharing, you know, not the other benefits we're talking about, you know. That's why they can buy yacht now and I don't blame them. They have a right, because we did it, and that's what I cannot understand. If I am supporting a Party and a Party makes that decision, I am not saying I would necessarily withdraw from supporting it, but I will not support my Party doing that arrangement. What is best for the country, my Party must come second.

The debate in the United States today, is what? It's that your country comes first. My Party, if it does something that's against the interest of the country, I can't support it. And, some of some of us must realise that when we take a decision, we must not take a decision to support a man or a Party first, country first, country first, always. **(Applause)**

And, Mr. Speaker, that's why today, when I listen to Members, outside of the Leader of the Opposition, I am impressed, because I see people who understand the benefits that this will occur to the country as a whole, not about Party or individual Members, but what is best for all of us. I am so happy to see this, Mr. Speaker. And, therefore, I want to just say this again, please, when we see something is right, let us support it, what is best for our country. Let us give what is best for our country.

And then, I listened to all sorts of statements people are making outside there now, and I wonder what's going on. Everything is about party politics, who you like and who you don't like and who don't like you. It's not about this. I see some people on television talking about they offered advice and the Government refused it. Mr. Speaker, you know, this Government can always stand tall in doing what is best for the country. There are some people, when they are associated and they are benefitting, they feel they're getting and the juice flowing they're there. Just take them out from the juice and they turn bitter. They never left because the Government did anything bad, you know. They sit down quietly and nice there. But, contract up; we don't need you anymore, because we know what you were doing. The juice stopped, you get bitter. Your face getting hard as rock stone, you can't rest, everything bad now.

Mr. Speaker, if you're going to put these people on a programme to talk, what you expect them to do? Because they're hurting, they're hurting. They are not normal, and Grenadians know them. They're involved in all kinds of stuff. People know their character. They know their sense of morality. People know them. They know all of us, and they know all of us, who is what, who is double dealing, who do all kinds of stuff. They know all of us.

But, this is what we have, because of an issue, as serious as this comes on stream and it becomes an issue of personalities. It's not about personalities, Mr. Speaker. I am proud of the fact that we have taken this decision to gain control of our Electricity Company, so that we can bring benefits and take the decisions. And, I want to caution, because I think one of our Members said this today. This is not something that tomorrow morning the price of electricity will drop. It does not work so. I think the Member for St. Patrick West, puts it best. We have to be cautious of how we proceed. The company has to continue to be viable. The options are going to be made available. Every aspect of the arrangement must be studied, carefully. We are confident that over a period of time, it will benefit all and sundry. But, it's not going to be with the stroke of the pen, that it will happen overnight. It will not work that way.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to give high commendation to the Minister for Finance and the Minister for Foreign Affairs, because they put enormous amount of time and energy in negotiating this Arrangement, to give us the best possibilities that we have available to us. I want to compliment them, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

And, Mr. Speaker, for those who say, well, if we can buy this, so therefore, we can give the 4%, you know, it's quite amazing. It is quite amazing. So, you can take grant support, Capital Project funding and just pay more in salaries, Recurrent Expenditure, which becomes Recurrent, not just a one-off and forego a serious national issue that you have an opportunity that all would benefit, you know, Public Servants, nurses, police, farmers, every single person will benefit.

In fact, over a period of time, some of this, the 4% and the Government is not saying, we are not paying, you know, the Government says, let us defer it. In fact, it is

in the Government's interest to pay now, you know, because the 4% will be compounded later, it's not in our interest. But, this is pandemic times, people outside there are hurting. I mean, up to this morning a business lady called me, she has to give up her business, and every day you're getting stories. People are now looking to Government to employ them, when they were employing people before. The small businessperson, the hoteliers, the restaurant owners, they are hurting outside there. Those of us have work. You have work, but we are saying whatever Government is able to do with 60/70% of the revenue we are now earning comparatively speaking. So, whatever additional expenses, Recurrent Expenditure has to come from the recurrent revenue. We are at least getting a salary, we should be very happy to know that the Government helping those who have no jobs; the single mothers outside there, writing me all the time. Sometimes I have to call Members in different constituencies and say, well, this lady called me, five (5) children, nothing to eat. That's what we should be worrying about. We are Christian people. We shouldn't be spending time and say give me more, give me what you promised. Let's all recognise this is pandemic times. Watch the lines in the United States, thousands of cars, people going out looking for food and they're telling you they never begged for food in their entire life. We have a job here. We're getting paid on time and we're still talking about pay this and pay that. And, no one is saying we're not honouring, we'll honour our obligation, but have a conscience. Those of us who are working, have a conscience.

I went, at Christmas time, together with the Member for the Town of St. George, and the Minister for the Market, Minister for Works, to visit with the ladies in the Stadium who were asked them to move and they were literally crying. They say sometimes ten dollars ($10.00) a day they're making. How could somebody come from wherever they come, ten dollars ($10.00) a day, they can't even pay the bus? So, we must forget them and give me more, 4% or 10% or 3%? I don't want this. Give my sister, give my brother, he needs it more than me. That's what we must do now.

Mr. Speaker, I just have to appeal to their conscience. The Government is appreciative of those who come out to work now in these tough times. The teachers, who sat there during the worst of times and taught kids and gave time, we appreciate it

and we will never forget it. But at least, we still have a salary coming and those of us who have it must also look towards our brothers and sisters. I feel the pain outside there. These are tough times, you know, Mr. Speaker, tough times. I don't think any one of us prepared ourselves for this. None of us prepared for this. No businessman prepared for this. No farmer prepared for this, because with the St. George's University not here, even Real Value, the Supermarket Chain, they had to let go a lot of workers, because the loss of St. George's University, they told me the amount of money they were making and the amount of sales have dropped dramatically, because of the loss of St. George's University and a lot of the hotels activities. So, the thing is affecting a broad sector of the society. It is not one set of people, and we all have to understand that this is not a time to fight each other. This is not a time to score cheap, political points. I call on my friend, the Leader of the Opposition, this is not a time to come here and gallivant and try to score points and talk about where money is and where you get money, the fact is it has been paid for and it is paid for with local money. **(Applause)** If somebody gave us, you should be happy for it. You should not be worried. Is that your issue about where it came from? It came from here, and let us accept it and give the Minister credit. What is your problem? You don't want us to get the money? You know, there are some Grenadians...

(Inaudible comments by the Leader of the Opposition)

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: Behave, Leader of the Opposition, behave yourself. There are some Grenadians, who are very happy, if we couldn't pay the money. You know, some people were praying that if we didn't have it, they would come here and take some of us and go with us to sell us. I got that impression, because that is the only other alternative. I would have offered them the Leader of the Opposition, first. ***(Laughter)***

But, Mr. Speaker, having said all this, I will just say it was a long day, but I am very happy. As I said, I am extremely impressed with the presentation of all the Members. The level of deep analysis that I saw coming from Members, I am

impressed. I sat here and I said, look, I did not have to say much. But, because I was there a long time ago, I felt I needed to give some historical aspects. There are lots more I can say from the Hansard that I spoke on, many, many years ago, that should have made us think twice about this sale. But, I am extremely happy, and to say that I give my absolute support, Mr. Speaker, to the settlement of this important arrangement, and let use it to the benefit for all and sundry, throughout the length and breadth of Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, as I wrap up the debate, I want to indicate, on behalf of my colleague, with whom I did the negotiations, how happy I am. We always knew that the rest of the team had our backs, Mr. Speaker, by the encouragement we got. But the public annunciations made here today, Mr. Speaker, really showed up, and we are deeply appreciative of them, Mr. Speaker.

Just to go through very quickly, on some of the points made. Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister, who has tremendous knowledge of this issue. I could remember, Mr. Speaker, way back in '93/'94, when we were out there, articulating the points where this would lead us, Mr. Speaker, and everything we predicted came through, Mr. Speaker. The purchase price, fifteen million EC dollars (EC$15 m), and if they had used the Discounted Cash Flow Method (DCFM), Mr. Speaker, we would have gotten more.

Dr. the Rt. Hon. Keith Mitchell: That's right.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: They used the least, in all methods of valuation, the Book Value, it was at the Book. So that, Mr. Speaker, was how we ended up with the fifteen million EC dollars (EC$15 m), Mr. Speaker.

But, their price, and we talked about Schedule II, so briefly, let me give you, Mr. Speaker. It is the value of the open market of the Company assets other than Goodwill and Land; the value of the Open Market with land and encumbered and buildings and

so forth, and the replacement costs on site of the company's fixed assets, excluding land, that's all the engines and so forth and you discount them, Mr. Speaker, for depreciation.

But, listen, Mr. Speaker. Maybe that is why WRB thinks that an engine could last now for fifty (50) years. You know the discount rate, 2%. It means that this engine is dead and out of use, after fifty (50) years. That was the figure that they used. Whereas now we know the maximum that an engine made and those were just strong, rusted diesel engines and so forth, would have been twenty (20) years, Mr. Speaker. Right now, when you to twelve (12), fourteen (14), fifteen (15) years, these engines should be retired and scraped and taken into the Scrap Heap, Mr. Speaker. But, when you have 2%, 2 ½% and so forth… So when you discount, you take the price of an engine now, the modern price and you discount it. So, after fifteen (15) years, Mr. Speaker, it just dropped down by what? About 10% or somewhere there, 10/20%, because the price would have been up so much now, when you discount it there, after fifteen (15) years, and you get a 30%, but it is 30% of what, not of the old price you paid, two million, it would be 30% of the present price, which is about twenty million and you are still up there into the twelve/sixteen million. In fact, it might be valued more than when you bought it new the last time, Mr. Speaker. That is what this formula would do.

And, then you have to pay, Mr. Speaker, Goodwill, five (5) years of profits, and that is profits before taxation, Mr. Speaker. So, if GRENLEC is making twenty million dollars ($20 m) a year before tax, you have to multiply that by five and just add it to the value, and that is the formula they used, and, as I indicated before, the formula that the Government of the day insisted on, not wicked WRB, wicked NDC.

(Laughter)

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Mr. Speaker, the management, a lot has been said about it, and that's very good; management to ensure financial stability of GRENLEC, but this, if we look at the Act, the Public Utilities Act and the Electricity Supply Act, it says: ***"The Commission must ensure that the Company makes a fair return on***

investment." So, nothing you could do, the PURC will always ensure that they make a fair return. The Law is set in that way.

So, if somebody, Mr. Speaker, comes and they take all the power like SGU, sets up its own system and takes the powers by itself, the PURC is obliged to tell St. George's University, you have to contribute to some overheads, and we have spoken to all the big suppliers on that already, Mr. Speaker. All of them have indicated their willingness to ensure that the company makes the right returns on investment. So, if they saved thirty US cents (30¢) on every unit by doing it themselves, they will take two and three cents as the PURC tells them, you have to pass that back to GRENLEC. So, GRENLEC is not generating, GRENLEC is spending no money, nothing whatsoever, but they must make it. So you, even though you get off the system and doing things for yourself, you have to give them something, Mr. Speaker, and they know, because the PURC, inclusive of myself, spoke to all the big persons who can go by themselves and they said, gladly, I will give them even more, because they are benefitting and the company will not be destabilised. So that fear, as I have spoken already, must not be there. Every time you come for a licence to do things for yourself, the PURC will tell you what you have to do, and you know beforehand, Mr. Speaker. So, the management is there to ensure this.

Mr. Speaker, the Government's treatment of local investors compared to foreign WRB, I listened to the analysis by the Member for St. John, and it is a telling story, Mr. Speaker. While we knew what they were doing with WRB, we were not aware of what they were doing with the local persons, and it was good that he was there at the time, asking for some things and noting now. Mr. Speaker, he may have seen this Agreement, maybe, not too long ago, because he asked me to ensure that I got the Agreement to him. It is only then, I am sure that he made the analysis and he must be shaking his head and says: ***"Oh yes, yes."*** My daughter has a word, she says: "wicked," wicked against your own people. So now, Mr. Speaker, it is dawning on me, why they will put their own citizens under stress by giving them this formula to live with, because, maybe that's how they operated. The Member for St. John, being an investor

and a developer at that point in time, and you see the difference. We know who they love, who they don't love.

But, in a meeting with the Trade Union Council (TUC), we reiterated the part that Grenadians first, Mr. Speaker; from all angles, Grenadians first. And again, I can see why now, the Grenada Trade Union Council is calling on us and any Administration, come to discuss for fear that anybody will again, fall into this dismal situation, Mr. Speaker, as such. And, the Leader of the Opposition really labelled it well, 'the deal, the deal,' yes, Mr. Speaker.

Climate change, a big factor; with it are opportunities, Mr. Speaker, for us, as a State. What you do not find the GCF and other people, the European Union and so forth, they don't give to private companies. The Member for Carriacou and Petite Martinique told us very clearly what is happening with the 600 kilowatts unit there. Their average load, Mr. Speaker, is somewhere in the vicinity of twelve. The peak might be 15/16, but the average load is something like 12/12.50 kilowatt. So, if you are going to get, Mr. Speaker, 600 kilowatts from renewable and battery storage, you know; that means, in the night, you can energy out of it, as well. It means that they have gone past that, and our target is 30% renewable by 2030. With that unit in place, they will be hitting the 50% target, Mr. Speaker, and that is the only thing we can be boasting about, in the next two (2) to three (3) years, because we are just at 1.5%.

And, all of those who are saying that WRB was interested in; I mean, they told me blatantly at a meeting that we had, I think Minister Joseph was at that meeting, up at Beaulieu, that the renewable energy is not there, what are you doing it for, it's intermittent and so forth and so on, it's costly and they don't want to invest in that, because you could rip and pull away from the diesel engine and from what is there, Mr. Speaker. But we do have now, renewable energy, moving forward. It is not only the 600 kilowatts, Mr. Speaker. We have the geothermal, where the first indications, after doing the test. The test was done by New Zealand and by Japan, and they say we have a potential of five-zero, fifty (50) megawatts, and we should start with one-five insulation, and we are on this now, Mr. Speaker.

The European Union gave us money for Winter Bind, about three million euros. It went to naught. Don't worry with WRB. They don't want to see any renewable there. So, they may have danced around and so, and go in their tenders and so forth and came up with a limited system and showed it failed. So all of those who were saying that WRB was interested in renewable energy, not in Grenada; certainly not in Grenada, Mr. Speaker. They may go to Jamaica, take the money they make here and because Jamaica's market is open, it is closed here. You can't come in where they are, but once they see opportunities elsewhere they take the money they make here and they go and try to make opportunities for themselves, Mr. Speaker. Tourism and small businesses, including Agro Industry, critically important, Mr. Speaker; they must benefit from a reduction in price of electricity.

Streetlights; the Management Models, the 2016 Electricity Supply Act, at the price, Mr. Speaker, the Management Models, the management must concentrate. That must be one of their main purposes, transitioning into renewable for reduction in prices. And, yes, we must now build our expectation, but when you know that is the target of the company, not to reap out only, but to go with prices. We will achieve it, Mr. Speaker, at a much earlier stage, because that is the purpose, the central purpose of existence for now, our energy production people, Mr. Speaker.

Then the company itself does not have to invest. Not only will it be investing. There will be independent power producers. They will come and spend their own monies. As a matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, we have four (4) applications already, and when we tell these people, how they behaved, they looked at this big price we used to pay, forty cents (40¢), forty-five (45¢), and they come in and say, I could give you thirty-five cents (35¢), and we say, no, don't bother yourself. Tell me the lowest price you can make it for, because you will be competing. So, the PURC will look at four (4) or five (5) proposals and they will see the least. If one can sell for seven cents (7¢) and the other for six cents (6¢), they will go with the one for six cents (6¢), because ultimately, the consumers will benefit, and that is the model of the Legislation, Mr. Speaker. And when they put it into GRENLEC lines, GRENLEC sells and GRENLEC makes the same thing.

What is happening how? You put your panel on your home; GRENLEC would buy it from you for thirty-one cents (31¢), and sell it back for you for eighty-one cents (81¢). So on one unit, they're making fifty cents (50¢). The biggest profit they ever make is when they buy from homeowners. It's just that homeowners are not a lot, Mr. Speaker. All of this will go, because the PURC will dictate the price.

When somebody runs a facility, it is connected to the line and it could help other people, as well. So it reduces the investment requirement for the company and whenever the Company has to invest, it has to spend monies and then it is depreciated over time. So, the model, Mr. Speaker, is really, really good for all of us, particularly for the renewable system drive.

At the Management Model, Mr. Speaker, I hear we're talking about taking a wholesale, big company outside and bring here. No, Mr. Speaker, that's why we're looking to SIDS DOCK, we're looking to IRENA and we're looking to the World Bank for various models. And the World Bank is already on board, indicating that we look at the option, both of them, because you want to transition now. So while our local people, yes, and I'll tell you that they're good, they are definitely good, at this level, we want a level for about five (5) years with a team who knows about renewable. All of us should have learnt that a while ago, but WRB was not interested in ensuring that we do that. So, that team must be there for a while to say how you run a Diesel Engine, how you run wind turbine, how do you run geothermal, Mr. Speaker. These experiences do not come easily. So, what that team would have imparted onto us, a lot of these things, sure the management company is not there for years, and their main focus is to do the Integrated Resource Profile to ensure that we reduce the price of electricity at the fastest rate, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, WRB controlled GRENLEC, has been blocking PURC at every point. If they're going to do something, and they move on with it, they move to the Court to block them. You can't ask yourself why and why. One thing the PURC has found, Mr. Speaker, is that they have over-recovered from 2000 to 2020, fifty-two million dollars ($52 m), Mr. Speaker. This should not be in their coffers. Fifty-two million dollars ($52 m) should remain with the consumers. But they have over-recovered. And

every time the PURC moves, there is a Court case. Their plan is to move out of here before these things are exposed, Mr. Speaker.

And then some of us, Mr. Speaker, we hear the GCPI, the community projects and GRENLEC saying we're doing this for the community and that for the community and it's on the radio. They over-recovered fifty-two (52) and they spent fourteen million dollars ($14 m), Mr. Speaker, so they were talking their own consumers money to give you back little projects, fifty-two versus fourteen, Mr. Speaker. So out of the overtake, the overkill of fifty-two, they gave you fourteen, and how much are you left with, thirty-eight, that's theirs illegally, those are all the things that used to be going on.

So you cannot have oversight and regulation. They are going to pick that up and stop you, because the Law requires that you return this to the consumers, not take the thirty-eight and give it them, but you drop your rates, so that over a period of a year or two years they get back their monies. Why would you? No, you cannot regulate us, we're WRB and we were set up by a certain Administration that would not give the Member for St. John anything, but will give them everything. So, what are we coming to do? In fact, they said that we hated them. Before the Tribunal, I was there. They said we hated them and we're doing everything to throw them out.

So, when they were asked, well, if you behave properly, would you stay? They said, we don't want to stay at all. This Government will only be doing things for the benefit of the consumer, but they said that the rules say that you will get your return on investment. How they want to come and take six or eight percent if the industry say that now. In the bank, you are getting, what? You have to pay the bank to keep your money now? But they won't take six or eight percent, they wanted twenty or so return investment they used to be making, Mr. Speaker, that is what existed at that point-in-time. So the PURC now would be able to regulate and do exactly what is right and give a rate that the company will exist.

Mr. Speaker, they asked, why did we not pay for it? That's a question that the Trade Union Council asked again and Minister Joseph was there. I said, well they gave it to you at fourteen, they offered you at fourteen, in the year 2014, Mr. Speaker. In the year 2014, we dared not enter into such transaction. You know where we came from in

2013, Mr. Speaker? We had to put ourselves in harness and model our patterns, so that we can come out of the doldrums. Remember what was happening? We were selling Capital assets to pay salaries and so forth. We were way down, nowhere to go. As we came out of it, two (2) things could not happen. We could not pay more than the market value, perhaps, they may have seen with us. So when they're asking us for fourteen (14) and the market value maybe five, six, we could not do that and then we did not have anything. We were just coming out of the doldrums to say pay for the ninety-six (96), or one hundred million EC dollars (EC$100 m.)

We all remember 2014. If you don't remember 2008 to 2013, remember that, and they will give you an indication of what was happening there. So could we have done it? Blatantly, no. It was the fiscal prudence and management from 2013 up to now, that gave us the room, that gave us the wherewithal to do anything. You can't spend Capital and Recurrent; that is why we had something there to be able to do it, Mr. Speaker.

They asked what about the Directors of GRENLEC and so forth. Well, GRENLEC is a private company, although listed. So, Mr. Speaker, they have their Articles of Association. Yes, we have to change the Articles, because in it there are things written like GPP and WRB and all these things. So, the Ministry of Legal Affairs must work with us and with a private company for GRENLEC to make these risks.

Now, we have twelve (12) Directors, and we knew why we had twelve (12) Directors. It's ungainly. The theory of management tells you never go past these big numbers, even massive Organisations. So, we'll have to change the limit and we are working with the World Bank and the experts and IRENA and SIDS DOCK to get the optimal number of Directors and these things will be changed.

Pretty soon, we need to have an AGM. We are not blaming GRENLEC for not having an AGM, it was COVID time and everybody understands. But within a month's time, we want to have the AGM, when we would appoint a Chairman. The Articles make provision, Mr. Speaker, when you have a meeting, as all Organisations do, you choose a Chairman for that meeting. So, we carry on now, but there are lots of things

to do and we definitely want the AGM, so that we can make the amendments to the Articles of Association and have the company going forward, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what the company prepared and the company and its associates, and the Member for St. Andrew North-West and other Members indicated that there is a connection and a clique. And what they wanted was, one, Government has to acquire the company, has to take it back, because of the ruling, but six (6) months thereafter, load shedding must start. That was their plan. They know exactly what was going on down there. And on top of that, we must be embarrassed, so that the Court garnishes out. That's why they came down, Mr. Speaker, in May and put the thing into; register it into Grenada. So, they were ready for us, from both angles, load shedding should start, but lo and behold load shedding started with them. The engine went and they had to rent six megawatts, at five million dollars ($5 m), for six (6) months. If they did not do that quickly, right now, it was blackout to the highest extent. So, it started with them, Mr. Speaker.

And, praise to the Almighty, we were not embarrassed, Mr. Speaker. Prudent management over the last how many years had us in a position where we could starve off the Court, yes. And there are those who think when you register an external judgement in our local Courts, it will be treated harsher than a local judgement. I am not saying anything like that, because I know our local Court is totally independent and if we make good representation, we may get out of it. But the Court is a Court and the judgment is a judgment. We would have been really embarrassed, and that is what they were looking for; two (2) things, load shedding, as soon as we take it, and embarrassment again, we can't pay for it.

So, Mr. Speaker, having said these things, I again, want to thank all my colleagues for the contributions that they have made and for the history, the very articulate history given by the Prime Minister. I remember those days quite well, Mr. Speaker, because I too, helped with poles on the shoulder, when the Linesmen couldn't make it, when we had ten (10) of them going out, and a pole is very heavy, and all ten (10) will come back, and you say, "brace" and they braced and we go up this hill, in the track in the mud to bring poles to people, Mr. Speaker. So I do appreciate it. I know

where GRENLEC came from, and, indeed, we are very happy that we can stand here today and say that we have done something tremendous for our country. I recommend, Mr. Speaker, the Motion for its passage. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Leader of Government's Business.

Question put and agreed to.
Motion approved.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to move the Resolution standing in my name:

Resolution for the purposes of section 17 (2) (b) of the Constitution, which reads:

WHEREAS there has been a worldwide outbreak of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), and on the 11th day March, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the outbreak a global pandemic;

AND WHEREAS on the 22nd day of March, 2020 the Ministry of Health of the Government of Grenada confirmed the first case of COVID-19 in the State of Grenada;

AND WHEREAS on the 25th day of March, 2020 the Governor-General, by Proclamation, pursuant to section 17 of the Constitution declared that a state of emergency existed in the State of Grenada, when Parliament was not sitting;

AND WHEREAS on the 30th day of March, 2020, the Governor-General, by a second Proclamation, pursuant to section 17 of the Constitution, revoked the first Proclamation and declared that a state of emergency existed in the State of Grenada, when Parliament was not sitting, and on the 17th day of April, 2020 that Proclamation was approved by a Resolution of both Houses of Parliament;

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AND WHEREAS after the expiration of six (6) months the declaration of a state of emergency dated the 30th day of March, 2020 lapsed pursuant to section 17 (5) of the Constitution;

AND WHEREAS on the 12th day of December, 2020 the Ministry of Health of the Government of Grenada confirmed that a cluster of twenty-six (26) positive cases of COVID-19 was discovered, bringing the total number of active cases of COVID-19 in the State of Grenada to forty-four (44);

AND WHEREAS on the 21st day of December, 2020, the Governor-General, by a third Proclamation, pursuant to section 17 of the Constitution declared that a state of emergency exists in the State of Grenada, when Parliament was not sitting;

AND WHEREAS on the 17th day of January, 2021 the Governor-General, by a fourth Proclamation, pursuant to section 17 of the Constitution, revoked the third proclamation and declared that a state of emergency exists in the State of Grenada, when Parliament was not sitting;

AND WHEREAS section 17 (2) (b) of the Constitution provides that where a declaration is made when Parliament is not sitting, a declaration of emergency shall lapse at the expiration of a period of twenty-one (21) days beginning with the date of publication of the declaration unless it has, in the meantime, been approved by a Resolution of both Houses of Parliament;

AND WHEREAS section 17 (5) of the Constitution provides that a Resolution of the House of Parliament passed for the purposes of section 17 of the Constitution shall remain in force for six (6) months, or such shorter period as may be specified therein;

AND WHEREAS the Leader of Government's Business proposes that the House of Representatives make such a Resolution;

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED by a majority of all the Members of the House of Representatives that the declaration of emergency by the Governor-General dated the 11th day of January, 2021, as set out in the Schedule to this Resolution be approved for the period ending on the 14th day of July, 2021.

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I am sure the Minister for Health and maybe the Minister for Legal Affairs will make some comments, but this is the norm, Mr. Speaker. The Governor-General could proclaim a state of emergency and it is only during that state of emergency that we could curtain the freedom of movement of persons under the Constitution. And when the Parliament is not sitting, then, it is only for a limited period, and because we do not wish to come here every time, or ever so often and because the science from the Ministry of Health have indicated that we would want an extensive period after the cluster, so that, while we do have the emergency in place, we can bring it back to 6:00 o'clock to 7:00 o'clock, if the Ministry of Health says, here there is a big problem.

So, the Governor-General does not even have to proclaim, the Parliament has said that you're in a state of emergency for this period and as such we have time to fluctuate up or down. We might bring it to 12:00 o'clock, we might take it out to 1:00/2:00. But, if a problem is now encountered, then you can bring it back right away, as the Executive may say, Mr. Speaker. So we all know what happened in the meantime and this is the norm. We have done it already and the preambles, the recitals, really expound on what it is and the reasons for it, Mr. Speaker. Parliament is now sitting, so we must give it its blessing.

We could give it a shorter time period than six (6) months. I don't know that any Grenadian would want us to give this a shorter time. And we want to, again, say that when we say emergency, that gives the Executive the authority to curtail your movement, to put in a curfew then. You should not put it a curfew, if you do not have this prevailing in the Land. And, so, Mr. Speaker, I recommend this Resolution for approval by the House of Representatives.

Mr. Speaker: Honourable Minister for Health and Member for St. George South.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this Resolution and to give some comments on it.

Mr. Speaker, as we look at any news, speak to any family member anywhere else outside of Grenada, we see that things are getting worse and at the same time we hear of things getting better with respect to our vaccine.

Mr. Speaker, our brothers and sisters in Barbados are facing their own now greater trials and tribulations from COVID-19. Our brothers and sisters in St. Vincent are also going through their own trials and tribulations with respect to COVID-19. In the United States, in the United Kingdom, in Canada, in Europe, and recently, as has been announced, there is a new strain identified out of Brazil, and the US CDC made statements today saying that they have also picked up a new strain out of the US.

The fact is that this virus is not going to go easily and has not gone as yet. It is going to put up a fight. It is going to find ways to adapt. It is going to find ways to prolong its existence. It is going to find ways to get as many hosts as possible, us, our families, our friends, our neighbours in other countries. It will do what viruses do and it will continue to do so, until we have dealt with it, the same way we have dealt with other viruses.

Mr. Speaker, I stand here, before you, and all of us, stand here before you, because we are fortunate enough to have not succumbed to Polio, to Measles, to Rubella, Mumps, Smallpox. We even now, are able to vaccinate against the Human Papillomavirus, a major cause of Cervical Cancer, Hepatitis, Yellow Fever, Influenza Virus, the Flu, H1N1, all, from vaccinations.

A colleague of mine, when he heard some of the resistance and push backs from persons, with respect to vaccines being the solution that is accepted, said that he wished they could have been with him at the UWI hospital in the 70s, when he was an Intern, as a Paediatrics Doctor to see how many of our Caribbean children were suffering from these very same diseases that we no longer mention anymore.

COVID-19 will be among us until we get rid of it, and the way that we will get rid of it, is with vaccination. Between now and then, Governments across the world need all the tools possible to fight it. And, in almost every instance, Governments have

regrettably, and in almost every instance, each and every one of those Governments have regretted having to take severe measures, of curtailing movement of their citizens, of issuing states of emergencies, to give them the authority to curtail those movements and it is only for that purpose. We don't have an imminent election. We don't have any other reason to contemplate this, except to give us the necessary tools to react as quickly as possible as this virus continues to try to infiltrate our society. And it has literally surrounded us now, literally.

There is not a Land in any direction, a country or an Island in any direction, that is not going through extreme challenges right now with community spread. We had our incident in December, with December cluster, that greatly curtailed our ability to celebrate a very sacred time for us all. We had our first death as well. We are not immune as a country or a people. So, these measures, while this says all the way to July, it is my sincere hope and expectation that we would not have to go all that distance. But the Law prescribes six months and the Law also clearly says, it can be revoked at any point in time. So, it is the book we are following, so to speak, to the letter.

The curfew is not put in this because we do believe that we should and will exercise that flexibility based on, at any given time the local epidemiological situation and the threat. So, there's no need to write it in, in the hope that there's no need to keep it on for longer than is required. It is required now, because the threat has never been greater. We know our interconnectivity with our family in our neighbouring Islands. We know that daily we move between some of the Islands without, for want of a better phrase, respecting that national border, but acknowledging that historical ties between Grenada and St. Vincent, specifically Carriacou, Petite Martinique and Union Island and the rest of the Grenadines, it's active trade back and forth. Families live on one side or the other and constantly communicate.

But, in a same way our friendships, our loves, and our trade go beyond any national border, so too, does this disease. It does not respect Immigration and Customs regulations. It will smuggle itself in, but it can only smuggle itself in with people. It cannot come on the wind or in the tide or with a fish or with a bird; it will come with one

of us, moving back and forth. So we need to acknowledge that, that it is with our movement that it moves and that is why sometimes unfortunately, it is necessary for all proactive Governments to find the ways and means to curtail the movement of its own people. The very same Governments, which under normal conditions, would want to encourage that movement. That movement is trade, that movement is friendship. That movement is business, that movement is healthcare, that movement is education and all have suffered.

So we bring this, and I stand here, this is not one like the other one that I am proud to say we are introducing. But I'm proud that we have found the strength to say that it is necessary, and that we are very much aware that it is not popular. It is not popular among us either. None of us sitting in this House want this, not a single one, and all of us sitting in this House look forward to that time as soon as possible when this can be repealed and we can exhale and go back to life as normal. That time, Mr. Speaker, comes when we have a national vaccination.

For those who have their levels of anxiety on vaccination, I acknowledge and give them that; anything new does come with a certain level of anxiety. But I ask that they allow the information to be shared and not jump at the disinformation and misinformation. And then I also ask of them, if it is not with a vaccine that we will rid ourselves of this thing called COVID-19, then how do they expect us to?

I look forward to any person's recommendations as to what we should be doing instead to get rid of COVID-19. And I will listen to any and all including those who have said, we'll just leave it and let it, those who have to die, let them die. No, that's not the responsible thing and that's not what we will do. And I look forward to anyone coming forward to the Nation or to us to say this is what you should do instead of a vaccination, and this will result in the nation ridding itself of the COVID threat within the next month or two. So the anxiety is normal, the knowledge must be shared and we will get to our solution if we all approach this open-mindedly. Other nations are doing the same. There is no global plot here. There is a disease that we need to rid ourselves of with a vaccine. In the interim, there are steps that we must take to control the spread and the risk of the virus. One will allow the other to happen. They are literally symbiotic. Take

the actions, minimise the risks, get to the vaccine; get to the vaccine, remove the restrictions, get back to life as normal.

So, I support this in that it gives us the necessary tools to react. We all recognised and must acknowledge the work done by the frontline team in controlling the December cluster outbreak. But the success of that team is based on their hard work and dedication, but also their ability to react in a timely manner. If we had to wait to come before this House for an emergency session or if we vacillated as to what to do, we would not be successful in controlling it. This is all that we're asking right now in the passage of this. Allow us to have a legislation with the ability to react, where the need arises and the ability to ease where the need arises and the ability to remove as soon as that day is here. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for St. George South. Honourable Representative for Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Hon. Kindra Maturine-Stewart: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I rise to give my support to the Resolution to extend the declaration of the state of emergency. And, Mr. Speaker, this is an effort for us to be able to legally manage the COVID-19 pandemic situation here in Grenada, Carriacou and Petite Martinique.

Mr. Speaker, as the Parliamentary Representative for the constituency of Carriacou and Petite Martinique, I am indeed, very, very concerned, as to what is happening with our neighbours, our neighbouring St. Vincent and the Grenadines. And the information coming therefrom, Mr. Speaker, is that as of today's date, there is just about two hundred and eighty-one (281) active cases in St. Vincent and Grenadines, with a concentration of certain clusters within the Northern and Southern Grenadines. Mr. Speaker, those of you who know how we operate between Carriacou and Petite Martinique, you would understand why I am deeply, deeply concerned.

Mr. Speaker, it is a matter relating to our way of life. It is a matter relating to our livelihoods. Mr. Speaker, just over in PSV, we have over twenty (20) persons from Petite Martinique who travel every day, over to Petite Martinique for work. They are not

the only ones that are working at the PSV Resort. There are other persons from neighboring Grenadine Islands. Likewise, Mr. Speaker, we also have many persons who traverse, go back and forth, unchecked, between Petite Martinique, Union, Canouan, Bequia, Mayreau, Carriacou on a daily basis, sometimes not just once per day, but three, four times per day.

Mr. Speaker, we have persons, we have the Fishing Trade where people go over catch their fish in Petite Martinique, go over to Union to sell their fish. Persons go over there to buy and sell provisions, so it's really a way of life and livelihoods for persons. How then, Mr. Speaker, do we put a system in place to effectively control and to ensure that the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique are kept safe and free of the COVID virus.

Mr. Speaker, I do not have, at this time, the formula nor a solution. But, I believe Mr. Speaker, that with the extension and the existence of the state of emergency that as a Government, as a Cabinet, that we would be able to create the legal mechanisms that will be able to, maybe, in the first instance to restrict persons to go back and forth.

Mr. Speaker, I want to also use this opportunity to appeal to the constituents, to the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique at this time, to avoid unnecessary travel to St. Vincent and Grenadines at this time. And if you have to do, if you have to travel for whatever purpose or whatever reason, I would ask that you ensure that you check with the Immigration authorities, prior to departing. Make sure you have all your relevant documents, COVID-19 test certificate, and upon entry back into Carriacou that you also clear with Immigration authorities in St. Vincent and Grenadines and also in Carriacou.

Mr. Speaker, I want to make this special appeal for us to keep a watchful eye, as to what is happening on the ground. Yes, we do have the support from the Royal Grenada Police Force, the Coast Guard, they're doing a wonderful job, as it is now. But our borders are vast and expansive, and of course, you know, some people always know how to beat the system, always know how to come in another track. So, I want to ask the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique to keep a watchful eye out, to help us. If you see something, if you heard or if you hear of something, let the authorities

know. Persons who are to come legally into Carriacou, must first and foremost clear with the Immigration authorities and they are subjected to the mandatory quarantine that is in place by this Government.

Petite Martinique and Carriacou is a very small community, small society. And so, sometimes, Mr. Speaker, we know a lot of information are with the Police and the relevant authorities do not necessarily know. And so, I want to appeal to the people to be vigilant and to help us, to help you, to help us to keep Carriacou and Petite Martinique safe. And, Mr. Speaker, we can only do that if we have the legal mechanism, the legal and formal mechanism in place, so that we can restrict movements. You see the virus does not have legs, and I don't believe that it has wings, so it moves with people. It moves in the day, as well as in the night. And, it appears to me now that Nicodemus in St. Vincent is moving rampant throughout Vincent and the Grenadines.

But, Mr. Speaker, we do not want Nicodemus in Carriacou and Petite Martinique. And so, we need to put all the structures that we can, legally and otherwise in place to protect the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique. And hence the reason, Mr. Speaker, I support this Resolution to extend the state of emergency, so that we can put the necessary regulations, the necessary legal framework to ensure that the people of Carriacou and Petite Martinique and by extension, of course, the State of Grenada, COVID free. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. **(Applause)**

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Representative for Carriacou and Petite Martinique. Honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I too, rise again, to give some support to the Resolution, keeping our people safe. I rise from a scientific point of view as to where we are. I do believe, Mr. Speaker, that we, as a people or even as a Government, I find that it's almost boiled down to individual responsibility. And sometimes I find that our people are just lax in the responsibility to themselves, to their family, to the nation's family, as a whole, and I would continue to urge our

Grenadian people that we were very fortunate on this side. I say God has been merciful onto us, in that we are at this point in COVID-19.

Mr. Speaker, one of the questions that I asked was, in terms of determining a vaccine in Grenada. Mr. Speaker, I was taken aback, when, I think it was last week, the World Health Organization (WHO), major projection that poor developing countries like ours, may not get the vaccine till 2024. They did say that. It was shocking.

Then, Mr. Speaker, the day after WHO made that projection, the Indian Government, which has, in India, they have some of the biggest Pharmaceutical Production Industry, restrict the companies from shipping vaccine out of India. When you think about it, Mr. Speaker, if you have 1.2 billion people to vaccinate, you can't afford to let vaccine out of your country. So when I see this, Mr. Speaker, this is not, in terms of the bigger countries about your brother's keeper. I say here in Grenada, maybe just two hundred thousand (200,000) doses may do the trick for us, but it would not come easy, Mr. Speaker. So, when they take care of their people first, what they have spilt over, then we might get the crumbs from the table.

So, Mr. Speaker, with this in mind, we have to let our people know what our position is in this country, because even at this point in time, money may not seem to be able to buy the vaccine, because some countries will not let the mechanism they have in place, send it to us.

Mr. Speaker, you know, in December, it was projected that vaccination would start in Canada in September of this year. But, because of the powers that be, bigger brothers will be bigger brothers' keeper. The next week after that was announced then the necessary arrangement was made. So, Canada may have started vaccinating already.

And, Mr. Speaker, you can see what is taking place, the companies are able to produce the vaccine. Look, for instance, in the great United States, twenty million vaccines were sent out, only six million was used, so they have fourteen million waiting in reserve and they will not give it to anybody else. But, they're not using it, as they supposed to use and it is happening in the countries where the vaccines are created.

Mr. Speaker, I know our people are tired. They want to get on with their own business, they are suffering. You know, Mr. Speaker, I ran into a Taxi Driver earlier this week, and he said, the only thing that he invested in was his Taxi Business, and his insurance came up and he doesn't have the money to pay the insurance.

Mr. Speaker, you could multiply that. Yesterday, I ran into a constituent of mine and I was taking her, I gave her a ride. I say make sure you mask up on everything and she said, yes, I have my mask, I'll put it on. And, she said, Mr. Clement, this is the first time I am seeing in the market, that green peas are not selling, because people do not have the money to buy. You know, I look back at where we are and some of us might be very fortunate. And those of us who are very fortunate, despite it all, we must remember our brother. In these times of difficulties, Mr. Speaker, I say to us again, be our brother's keeper, because I remember, Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of COVID, when I analysed the last one hundred (100) years with the swine flu, I said the world went on lockdown three (3) times before they got it right. In some cases, they are only to the second lockdown. And you know, Mr. Speaker, they might open up again and they may have to go into a third lockdown. But, how many of us can withstand such?

But, I would again support the Resolution to tell our people to be vigilant. I would say, go beyond the protocol that is established, because sometimes you can never know and the danger in it, is that, despite the PCR test might be done, the PCR test is not 100% bulletproof. You might escape the PCR test, but we know that a high percentage of people, who have contracted the virus do not show any signs. And one friend that I called in the United States, their in-laws had COVID-19. They said that they just felt a little bit sick, but not anything, just, you know, and because the test was given they went and test, they were tested and they discovered the entire family had COVID-19 and they did not know. And this is where you can have community spread sometimes, because you don't feel sick, you don't see any signs/symptoms, you do not follow the protocol and you could be spreading it to other people. So, Mr. Speaker, I do support the Resolution.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Leader of the Opposition. Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I thank all the Members for their contribution and the support for this very important Motion. After all, it is the health of our people at stake and we must do what is necessary and I want to commend the population, Mr. Speaker, as well. When the decision was taken to impose the curfew on the Proclamation of the Governor-General, I did not hear a lot of hue and cry. I guess they saw what was happening. But, I still want to reach out to the young people, particularly those who sit around, they may figure I'm not going over there; I'm staying in my environment. But even if you stay in your environment, you must still follow the protocol, Mr. Speaker, the distancing and wearing the masks. You may say, well, I am with this friend; you are from a different household. The Minister for Health will tell you it's households. If you're in your household, then you may not do so. But you may be by your friend, it might be the neighbourhood, but it's not neighbourhood, it is household.

And, I want to take this opportunity, Mr. Speaker, to appeal also to my constituents that they must follow. Yes, throughout Grenada, but I have a special responsibility for my constituents. Please follow. We have lots of elderly. When you go out there and you move along with your friends, you're going home, you're going home to the elderly grandmother, to someone who has a problem at home, always think about them, and, then you will tell your friend, wear your mask, etcetera. Some people think it's, you know, it's an insult. Whenever the secretary comes into me, I put my mask on. It's because I respect her. Yes. And she reciprocates, as well. It's not because I don't want to hear you, I don't see you. If we all follow that pattern, Mr. Speaker, in the workplaces, we will do what is necessary, we will do what is right, and we will save lives, Mr. Speaker.

I just want to end, Mr. Speaker, because I know some of the people even listening outside, they said, well, the Minister didn't tell the Speaker anything about condolences and so forth. But, I mean, the Speaker is well aware of what transpired

and the length at which I will go to. And normally, yes you have to do it, but once I've done it already, I don't want to remind the person of it. In particular, as he pointed out, his mother and my mother had the identical names, so we would leave it at that. Mr. Speaker, I know that you're strong enough, and as such, I want to commend this Resolution for approval by this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Leader Government's Business. Just before I put the question, you know, I was speaking to a lady about two (2) days ago, and she said to me that the amount of money she's spending now on hand sanitisers, she doesn't think she's spending that much on food, because she has three (3) children in the house, a four (4) year old, a six (6) year old and an eight (8) year old. And all day they're hand sanitising and they wouldn't move from the house without mask and they go outside, they come from the bathroom, they're still hand sanitising. So, I am just saying this to say that the children that we were most concerned about are very cautious about protocol. The elderly folks are serious about the protocol. It's the young group of people that are less likely to follow. So, I think we need to encourage them that this is no respecter of anybody.

Question put and agreed to.
Motion approved.

Clerk Assistant: Item 16 - Request for Leave to move the Adjournment of the House on Matters of Urgent Public Importance.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I beg to move the Adjournment of the House, ***sine die.***

Adjournment

Question proposed.

Mr. Speaker: Leader of the Opposition.

Hon. Tobias Clement: Mr. Speaker, thank you. I won't be very long, but on the Adjournment, I just want to express my sympathies to the Stewart family.

Mr. Speaker: To the…?

Hon. Tobias Clement: The Stewart family, the owner of Sandals, Butch Stewart from Jamaica, passed away. He was a serious investor here in Grenada and I do believe maybe the Government might want to do that also. I had the opportunity of meeting the senior Stewart once, and I found him to be a very amicable gentleman and his heart was really and truly into bringing that service to our people. So, on behalf of my family and as Leader of the Opposition, my deepest sympathies to the families and to the Jamaican family. Thank you.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Thank you. Honourable Members, oh, Leader of Government's Business.

Hon. Gregory Bowen: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I just wish to advise the House that all the Departments, Tourism, Trade, everything have already expressed their sympathies and we will ask the Minister for Health to do so maybe at this House Sitting.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Honourable Minister for Health and Parliamentary Representative for St George South.

Hon. Nickolas Steele: Yes, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, our condolence messages were sent, myself, personally to the family, the Prime Minister, officially, publicly, the Ministry of Tourism, GHTA, GTA. But I thank the Leader of the Opposition

for this opportunity to register in this House, as well, on behalf of the Members of this House, our condolences to the Stewart family. This was a gentleman that had contributed greatly, to the Region, and Grenada, in particular, as well.

Mr. Speaker: Thank you. Honourable Members, it would be remiss of me if I did not express our thanks to the former Attorney-General, Sir Darshan Ramdhanny, who is not with us now. And I am sorry, I did not do that early this morning to express my welcome and congratulations to our new Attorney-General, Madam Attorney-General Forrester. Miss Bernard, if I enter the House for a Sitting and I look that way and I didn't see you, I don't feel good. I want to put it straight out, I don't feel good. When I see you there, I know that we are on the right track. So, I want to thank you for your service, your dedicated service. And, I also want to wish you all the best for 2021. I mean, we will take 2021 now, we will do '22 and '23 afterwards. So, thank you so much.

And, just before we leave, I don't usually get a chance to speak, so I must take time and watch people go down and pick up their bag and come up and go down and pick up their bag and come up, so I can get some time to say something. It's the first time, in my whole sojourn as Speaker of the House that every Member of Parliament spoke and debated a Motion. **(Applause)** And, I thought that was unique. Sometimes, two persons or three persons, or even four persons might speak on a Motion and we say, oh, it was well debated. Today, fifteen (15) persons spoke, and because of the nature of the Motion and recognising that we only had two (2) Motions, I forego following the Standing Orders to give enough time to ventilate. It may not be so the next time, but this time I had to do it. I just couldn't say, don't say anymore, because I realise how passionate the debate was and let me commend on this.

I also want to commend and say thanks to the members of the COVID Committee. It was said by every other Parliamentarian here, except by the Speaker of the House, who never really got to express it publicly. Mr. Minister for Health, I want you to commend, on behalf of the Parliament and the Speaker of the House, our appreciation for the work that has been undertaken by the members of the Committee. Sometimes we mentioned the first respondents, and we look at the Hospital persons

and so on and we forget the Standing Committees, and I want you to commend them for us and please express our sincerest gratitude for the service that they are performing. And we mention all the time about the first respondents, let us not forget those who do not have a job, but those who spend time ensuring that they take care to lend a hand to the brothers and sisters and the vulnerable and they never shout. They never shout, they never asked for a raise, they never asked for assistance. They go out there and from their heart they give out and when we speak, we must not forget them.

And finally, the members of staff of Parliament. I must say that I am very pleased to have been given the opportunity to serve in this Parliament, all of the years that I served, with great staff. And this staff, under the leadership of the Deputy Clerk, we have seen a forward move to modernise and to improve the Parliament. And his team working with him is providing the kind of support and because of who he is, because of who he is, he's able to encourage members of staff to continue to work and work hard, even if they are not appointed to the Post and some of them are performing the task for over two (2) years, and there is always some reason why they cannot be appointed. The Parliament cannot function like that. It's not all the time staff would be willing to just say: ***"Okay, Mr. Augustine, let's do it."*** We must be able to recognise their hard work, to recognise them for what they're doing and to remember that the Parliament has a specific role in Government. So, I want to wish them all the best for 2021 and we would continue to work to make this Parliament, maybe the best in the OECS.

And, I just want to say that we have not had many Committees meeting. So, we want to start the process. There are issues that we need to discuss in the House Committee, for example, the Strategic Plan for the Parliament and the Benchmark discussions that we had. So, there is a meeting scheduled and Members of the Committee would find that on their notices. Honourable Members, thank you for listening to me so well, I must so that more often.

Question put and agreed to.

House adjourned sine die at 4:37 p.m.

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