



**2018/19 SESSION
of the
BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT**

31 May 2019

*Sitting number 21 of the 2018/19 Session
(pages 1651–1740)*

**Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., JP, MP
Speaker**

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BERMUDA HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY**OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT****31 MAY 2019****10:01 AM***Sitting Number 21 of the 2018/19 Session*

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

PRAYERS

[Prayers read by Mr. Clark Somner, Deputy Clerk]

CONFIRMATION OF MINUTES

[Minutes of 17 May 2019]

The Deputy Speaker: Are there any objections to confirming the Minutes?

There appear to be none. Minutes confirmed.

[Minutes of 17 May 2019 confirmed]

MESSAGES FROM THE GOVERNOR

The Deputy Speaker: There are no messages from the Governor.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS BY THE SPEAKER
OR MEMBER PRESIDING****APOLOGIES**

The Deputy Speaker: Yes. Today we have received word that Mr. Lawrence Scott and Ms. Leah Scott will be absent from the House.

MESSAGES FROM THE SENATE

The Deputy Speaker: There are no messages from the Senate.

**PAPERS AND OTHER
COMMUNICATIONS TO THE HOUSE**

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.
Mr. Deputy Premier?

**OFFICE OF INFORMATION COMMISSIONER
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AS AT MARCH 31, 2018**

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker. On behalf of the Premier, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Office of Information

Commissioner Financial Statements as at March 31, 2018.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you.
Finance Minister, Mr. Dickinson.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Good morning, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Good morning.

**BERMUDA MONETARY AUTHORITY
2018 ANNUAL REPORT**

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Bermuda Monetary Authority 2018 Annual Report.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Finance Minister.

Mr. Furbert, Honourable Member.

**CONSOLIDATED OVERALL REPORT OF THE
EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE APRIL 2019**

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have the honour to attach and submit for the information of the Honourable House of Assembly the Consolidated Overall Report of the Efficiency Committee April 2019.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member, Mr. Furbert.

PETITIONS

The Deputy Speaker: There are no petitions.

**STATEMENTS BY MINISTERS
AND JUNIOR MINISTERS**

The Deputy Speaker: There are three Statements, [the first] one is by the Education Minister, Mr. Rabain. Mr. Rabain, you have a Statement?

UPDATE ON T. N. TATEM MIDDLE SCHOOL

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker.

Good morning, colleagues and good morning, Bermuda.

Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to provide a status update on the progress made to address issues at [T. N. Tatem Middle School](#). It is important to me that I honour my commitment to inform all stakeholders about this matter before the end of the school year. Allow me to briefly take a moment to recap the work that has already been done at T. N. Tatem.

In December 2016, T. N. Tatem was closed due to mould issues. A report submitted in December 2017 included the following recommendation: "While results of air-quality testing through the majority of the T. N. Tatem Middle School campus showed no cause for significant concern, a visual assessment of the building indicated several factors, particularly relating to water intrusion, which will result in worsening of conditions if left unaddressed."

On February 3rd, 2017, a few weeks before the school was to reopen, when asked about T. N. Tatem, via a Parliamentary Question in the House of Assembly, "Would the Honourable Minister please inform this Honourable House of . . . cost of the repairs and [mould] remediation?" The then Minister of Education, Wayne Scott, replied, "A total of \$93,000 has been disbursed for repairs and mould remediation. This comprises air quality testing of \$18,000; heavy-duty cleaning of \$38,000; and mould abatement of \$37,000."

We now know that these repairs did not address the water intrusion as recommended by the air quality report received in December of 2016, and I must reinforce that the report stated that there would be a "worsening of conditions if left unaddressed."

In October of 2018, scheduled health and safety inspections were conducted at T. N. Tatem Middle School. The report showed that the school was safe for occupation except for one room, which was closed in order to have necessary remediation works carried out.

In February and March of 2019, additional reports were done, as mould and air quality issues once again began to show. The report stated, "The issues that we noted today are the same issues which we noted back in 2013 and are the same issues that closed the school in 2017" The department's Facilities Team immediately began to look at how to address the source of the issues.

On April 8th of this year, the Ministry and Department of Education received a letter, from the T. N. Tatem PTSA, voicing concerns regarding the health and safety of the school building. As a result of these new concerns, students and teachers from T. N. Tatem were temporarily relocated to Purvis Primary School, Paget Primary, Heron Bay, and the Hamilton Fire Station while the school was inspected by the Health and Safety Officer, Mr. Titus Gordon, as requested by the PTSA and school staff.

By the end of April, after the temporary relocations, all current T. N. Tatem students were transferred to Sandys Secondary, Dellwood and Whitney Institute Middle Schools, with the T. N. Tatem staff redeployed to the same middle schools. The decision was then made to close T. N. Tatem for the rest of the school year while the reports that date back as far as 2013 were reviewed to decide whether all necessary repairs could be completed to enable the school to reopen in September 2019.

We can report today that the Department of Education Facilities Team, in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works, utilised the reports received in 2013, 2017 and 2019 to complete an assessment of the school building to determine the extent of the repairs and maintenance required, as well as the potential costs. I have been advised that repairs will take at least 10 months and cost approximately \$3 million. The length of time and projected cost to effect the necessary repairs have informed my decision not to reopen T. N. Tatem Middle School for the 2019/20 school year.

This decision is critical and was not made lightly, as a safe and healthy learning and teaching environment is paramount for our students and staff at T. N. Tatem Middle School. We are invested in ensuring that this remains at the forefront of all decisions made in regard to our schools.

Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, to date I have met with the T. N. Tatem PTSA Executive, the T. N. Tatem School Principal, the T. N. Tatem Health and Safety Chairperson, T. N. Tatem staff, and the parents of current T. N. Tatem students to inform them of my decision. I have also corresponded with the parents of current P6 students who have applied to attend T. N. Tatem in the next school year. It was critical to meet with school staff and the parents of T. N. Tatem students, to listen and obtain feedback as we discuss next steps, before making this Ministerial Statement. My goal is to maintain a transparent and collaborative approach with all stakeholders in the best interest of our children and staff.

Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, the Ministry and the reports which date back to 2013 have confirmed the issues with the school and also, sadly, confirmed the failure of the previous Administration to address these concerns when given the opportunity during the school closure in 2016. These are the very same issues that have brought us to the place we are today—a place in which our teachers feel as if their opinions do not matter; and this should never happen. I wish to commend the teachers and the parents for standing up for their students and for themselves.

Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, moving forward, we are in the process of reallocating the students who would have been admitted to T. N. Tatem as M1 students for the next academic year, as well as talking to current parents of T. N. Tatem students about their current school placements. The Ministry of Education will also

do all we can to assist our parents and students to ensure that their learning experience during the next school year is as productive as possible. Additionally, parents will be provided with vouchers, as necessary, to mitigate the pressure of having to buy new uniforms for the new school that the students will be attending.

In regard to the future of T. N. Tatem, this decision to close is, at the moment, applicable to the upcoming school year only. As we move forward with our plans to reform education and phase out middle schools, the outcome of those discussions will frame the decision-making process on the future of T. N. Tatem. At this point, I cannot say what will happen with the school beyond the upcoming school year of 2019/20. We will continue to engage with the staff, students and parents of our community so that safety, health and high-quality education are central to every decision we make on behalf of our staff and students.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Hon. Dennis P. Lister Jr., Speaker, in the Chair]

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next Minister who has a Statement down this morning is the Minister of Works.

Minister Burch, would you like to present your Statement?

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker: Good morning.

RAILWAY TRAIL AND GIBBETS ISLAND

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: I rise this morning to report on developments surrounding a portion of the [Railway Trail and Gibbets Island Beach](#), more commonly referred to as Police Beach, located in Smith's Parish at the Flatts Inlet.

A portion of the Railway Trail was leased to a private trust in June 1998, for 21 years, to the 31st of May 2019, to provide access to privately owned land off of the Railway Trail. Mr. Speaker, the grant of this lease effectively blocked access to that entire portion of the Railway Trail from the general public, who cannot access it without traversing land that is now privately held.

Mr. Speaker, Gibbet is a beautiful island off of the Railway Trail that now belongs to a private trust. The beach, although not accessible to the general public by land, one can see [the island and] its wonderful, tiny beaches from the North Shore. Gibbets Island also is, unfortunately, known as the Gallows Island due its dark history. There in the 1600s and early 1700s, executions were held in full public view. That was the time when slavery was highly prevalent in Bermuda. A pole still seen there is sometimes wrongly identified as being part of the Gallows. It is

actually an earlier version of a navigation light for passing ships.

One of the more prominent executions held there was in 1681 when a slave named Indian John from New England was executed. He apparently tried to escape, lit the owner's house on fire and wanted to kill all members of his family. After his execution, his body was left hanging from the gallows for days after. Such a gruesome practice of the public display of executed bodies was meant to serve as a warning to other slaves who contemplated rebelling or escaping.

Mr. Speaker, from our research, the name Police Beach is derived from a 1977 agreement between the Bermuda Police Force, as it was then known, and the private landowner to allow policemen almost exclusive access to the beach. In practical terms, that meant white policemen only. That agreement formally ended in 1992.

Mr. Speaker, Gibbet Island is now part of the African Diaspora Heritage Trail and bears the dark historical marks of slavery in these Islands. The Railway Trail in Smith's Parish passes through this area and into the Flatts Inlet. There used to be a railway bridge there that the train used to reach Shelly Bay and beyond, and plans are afoot to replace it.

Mr. Speaker, with that background of both the trail and the beach, I have decided to take a number of actions. At midnight tonight, the 31st of May 2019, at the expiry of the current Railway Trail lease, it will not be renewed. And thus, from tomorrow, visitors and locals alike will regain unfettered access to that portion of the Railway Trail that has been denied for the last 21 years.

[Desk thumping]

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: The former leaseholder, like any other member of the public, will still be able to access their property from the trail.

With regard to the beach, Mr. Speaker, the Railway Trail currently dissects the land that people refer to as Police Beach. That land on either side is still under private ownership. While the beach is public from the high-water mark, it is important that land access for the general public is provided. Presently, the beach cannot be accessed from the Railway Trail without traversing private land, permission for which in recent times has been denied.

Mr. Speaker, in the first instance, the Ministry will begin discussions with the owners of land to the North Eastern side of the Railway Trail to gauge their interest in selling it. Should that route be unsuccessful, the Government will pursue ownership under the terms of the Acquisition of Land Act 1970, specifically the provisions for compulsory purchase contained therein.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to acknowledge our past—all of it. But when the opportunity arises even in a very small way to take steps to correct past

injustices, we must. It is never too late to do the right thing, and I believe we are doing so in this case.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

The next Statement this morning on the Order Paper is that in the name of Minister Furbert.

Minister, would you like to present your Statement?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Go right ahead.

EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE REPORT

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to provide this Honourable House with the outcome of work undertaken by the [Efficiency Committee](#).

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will recall that, in March 2018, the Premier and Minister of Finance appointed the Efficiency Committee under the authority of Section 61(4) of the Bermuda Constitution. This committee met 32 times between the dates of 13 March 2018 and 31 March 2019. Its purpose and remit were to review the functioning of all government departments to recommend improvements in the efficiency of operations. This provided an extensive scope for the committee to structure its approach.

Mr. Speaker, the committee consisted of the following individuals: yours truly, Wayne Furbert; Ms. Cherie-lynn Whitter, Permanent Secretary of Government Reform; Ms. Tina Tucker, Director of Budget; Ms. Ianthia Fox, Senior Management Consultant; Edward Ball, Jr., BPSU representative; Glenn Simmons, BIU representative; Senator James S. Jardine, JP; Mr. Richard James; and Karamoko Darrell-Dickens, Bermuda IT representative at that time.

Mr. Speaker, the committee determined to focus on those areas where the greatest value could be achieved. Its work included reviews of the following: the Office of the Tax Commissioner, Registrar of Companies, Social Insurance, and the Office of Project Management and Procurement; overtime and wages in various departments, boards and committees; and cross-ministry expenditure on materials and supplies, to name a few.

Mr. Speaker, at the Office of the Tax Commissioner [OTC], the department charged with administering the collection of the taxes and undertaking duties in accordance with legislative requirements, the committee observed significant deficiencies in the area of the adjudication of stamp duty, collection, staffing levels, as well as IT infrastructure. The committee identified processing deficiencies that had resulted in \$354,972 worth of expired, uncashed cheques. One

cheque dated as far back as 2006. Further, “unadjudicated” stamp duty on some 1,590 property conveying files highlighted a huge backlog of work, with the resulting loss in significant amounts of revenue for the Bermuda Government, representing in the region of \$8 million. What is more, some 318 files dated as far back as 2013.

Mr. Speaker with the committee’s intervention, I am pleased to report that the OTC has now recovered a total of \$315,578 of the \$354,972 expired cheques. Further, of the \$8 million of unadjudicated stamps, the OTC has now received \$3,859,731 in cash, and a further \$2,951,238 has been billed but not yet collected.

Mr. Speaker, Parliament should be aware that the Efficiency Committee identified a significant shortage of staff due to the hiring freeze of the former Government. This had a significant impact on auditing businesses to ensure that they were paying payroll tax and collecting accounts receivable.

Following a series of meetings with the Tax Commissioner and his management team, which included the review of extensive data points, the committee advanced recommendations that, to date, have resulted in the addition of four temporary resources and the collection of over \$3 million of old debt.

Mr. Speaker, the support of the Efficiency Committee to the Office of the Tax Commissioner has resulted in the significant strengthening of administrative processes relative to the adjudication and collection of taxes, with that office now in a position to complete a full review of its systems requirements and take the necessary steps to maximise efficiency through the further automation of processes. As a result of the committee recommendations, the OTC will now recoup about \$800,000 paid in credit card processing fees, which has historically been paid out of the Consolidated Fund. Mr. Speaker, the committee’s work at the Office of the Tax Commissioner alone has had a multi-million dollar impact on the Consolidated Fund.

Mr. Speaker, at the Office of Social Insurance, the committee reviewed, in consultation with the director, the matter of outstanding accounts receivable for Social Insurance. As at November 2018, this amounted to \$44 million, of which, at that time, some \$28 million was over 120 days old. The committee has advanced a raft of recommendations to address compliance, collection and IT infrastructure issues at the Office of Social Insurance to arrest this long-outstanding debt collection issue. The committee highlighted the synergy between the Pension Commission and the Social Insurance Department, and have advanced a recommendation that could result in a joint board to oversee both, as there could be some cost savings in doing this.

Mr. Speaker, the Efficiency Committee worked with the Department of Immigration, other relevant government departments, the Chamber of

Commerce Real Estate Division and a representative from the local legal fraternity to review the processing of alien licences for the purchase of Bermuda property. It had long been advanced that extended processing delays negatively affected sales and, as a consequence, potential buyers had lost interest and were terminating purchases. The processing impediments represented a loss of revenue to the government.

Mr. Speaker, based on recommendations from the Efficiency Committee, steps have now been taken to automate the circulation of alien licence files within the government, with a view to considerably reducing the processing time for properly executed submissions. Further discussions with realtors led to a more progressive way of calculating leases, by which government will now receive millions of dollars of additional revenue.

Mr. Speaker, other Efficiency Committee recommendations related to procurement of material and supplies have reignited the drive towards framework agreements for the government, and work is currently in channel via the Office of Project Management and Procurement to consolidate government's buying power across a number of areas. It is expected that the Office of Project Management and Procurement will complete an evaluation of the purchasing of goods and services throughout government. The office will then make recommendations for cost savings to secure the best price, and further, to evaluate and implement short-, medium- and long- term goals and opportunities for cost savings.

Mr. Speaker, the committee made 93 recommendations covering a wide range of departments. These included 24 recommendations for immediate change and 69 recommendations for medium- to long-term changes. Mr. Speaker, the cost to the taxpayer for the work of the Efficiency Committee was [approximately] \$130,000. However, with the improvement in efficiency and better controls, the committee was able to obtain revenue for the taxpayer of over \$12 million, a return of investment of over 9,130 per cent.

Mr. Speaker, the committee remains grateful for the candour and keenness shown by the public officers with whom we met. All expressed an appreciation for the support of the committee in advancing collaborative recommendations to address long-outstanding issues.

Mr. Speaker, in closing, I would like to thank those members of the Efficiency Committee for their time and efforts in this venture. Particularly, I would like to recognise and thank Senator James Jardine and Mr. Richard James, who did extra work on the side. Their contribution was valuable. Their advice was very much appreciated.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

There are no more Statements. We will move on.

REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

The Speaker: There are none.

QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker: Ministers, we have questions this morning for the Statements that were read. And we will start with the Minister of Education.

Minister, you have three Members who have indicated that they have questions for you this morning. And we will start with the Opposition Leader.

Opposition Leader, would you like to present your questions?

QUESTION 1: UPDATE ON T. N. TATEM MIDDLE SCHOOL

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

On page 2, the Honourable Minister states, "In October of 2018, scheduled health and safety inspections were conducted at T. N. Tatem Middle School. The report showed that the school was safe for occupation except for one room, which was closed in order to have necessary remediation works carried out."

Just curious—were those works actually carried out concerning that particular room?

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Yes. The works were underway at the time that the school was closed.

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, no—supplementary.

The Speaker: Supplementary? Yes, continue.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. In consideration of the work actually having taken place, I guess what I was curious about was, as the Honourable Minister also states on page 3 that it is approximately \$3 million for the works to be done to get it, I guess, habitable back again, can the Honourable Minister give us an idea of the additional work, outside of this room, in order to get it up to par? It seems like quite a bit of money in order to get it back up to par. Can he give us a better idea of what else needs to be done?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I thank you for that question.

Mr. Speaker, I asked our facilities departments to look at the school and come back with a thought to repair the entire school to a point where it was completely safe for occupancy. Some of those works included replacement of the roof, replacement of floors, electrical work, replacement of HVAC systems, some plumbing work that needs to be done for leaky pipes, and all that sort. It was an extensive list that was given, but at this point, it was an approximate list of what needed to be done. And it did list some of those items.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, supplementary.

The Speaker: Second supplementary. Go ahead.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Taking that into consideration, I guess what I wanted to understand then, coming up with this \$3 million figure, is the Minister still receiving bids for this work?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, thank you for that question. The work has not gone out for bid. As I stated, I asked the Ministry of Public Works to give a cost estimate of what it would take to repair the work.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you.

The Speaker: Further question? No? Okay.

Minister, the next Member who has questions for you is the Member from constituency 23.

Honourable Member, would you like to put your question now?

QUESTION 1: UPDATE ON T. N. TATEM MIDDLE SCHOOL

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister: His Statement, on page 1, indicates that in December 2016, the school was closed for mould issues. Reports submitted in December 2017 included various recommendations concerning how negatively impacted the school would be without further remediation being carried out.

The question is, Why, if this report was in December 2017, is the Minister now referring back to what the cost was likely to be in February of 2017 when, in fact, in December 2017 his Government was in charge?

The Speaker: Thank you, Member. Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I thank that Member for pointing that out. That is actually a typo. That should say January 2017, not December 2017.

The Speaker: Thank you. Supplementary or new question?

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: I have a supplementary.

The Speaker: Supplementary. Continue.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Is the Minister in a position to actually submit that report that was done, as he said, in January of 2017? Is that report available here at the House, or is that already in the public record?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my Statement, we want to be as transparent as possible. All of these reports have been made part of the public record. They have been issued to the parents and to the PTA and to the teachers at T. N. Tatem. And I have released them during various press statements I have made concerning T. N. Tatem, as well.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Second question, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes. Supplementary or new question?

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: A new question.

The Speaker: New question.

QUESTION 2: UPDATE ON T. N. TATEM MIDDLE SCHOOL

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: The question is, Given that the Minister had access to these various reports, what follow-up was done to . . . Since it was clear to the Minister that nothing had been done based on the report to which he referred, which we now realise that the date was wrong, what follow-up did he do, given that he had the information, to make sure that it did not wait until the school was almost irreparably damaged in order to decide that something else needed to be done?

The Speaker: Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Again, thanks for that question.

Mr. Speaker, the report that the Honourable Member references, the January 2017 report, was not brought to our attention until we got to the point of having to close the school when I requested all previous reports. The assumption was always that if a report was done the work had to have been carried out and the school was safe to occupy.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Member, you have a supplementary behind you. We will take the supplementary from the Honourable Member from constituency 19.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister: Recognising that we have technical officers, civil servants whose job it is to keep the Ministers informed, did the Minister ascertain why this information which is so critical to this problem was not brought to his attention by any of his technical or public PSs?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, thank you.

I have already raised that with the technical officers as to why the report had not been forwarded to me when we were looking at the issues. And that has been addressed in house.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary?

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Yes.

Can the Minister give us some indication as to what the outcome of . . . he says it is being addressed. What is the outcome? Because it seems to me to be not just untenable, but inexcusable, to have reports that are necessary for the safety of our children that are not shared in the particular areas where something could be done. What exactly is being done? What can the Minister share?

The Speaker: Minister, she is still talking.
Now you can stand.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Again, thank you for that question.

Actually, I take that . . . and actually I am grateful to that Member for supplying that question,

because it lent itself to our trying to figure out what happened when the school was closed in 2016. A report was submitted nearly a month later. But the actions were not actioned on at that point by the current Administration. This Administration has made it very clear that reports of this nature are not to be put on shelves. And if issues do come up like this, we have to look back into previous reports and see what was and was not done prior to just doing another report and moving forward with that.

So, the answer to that Member's question is that I have directed my technical staff to not withhold any report of this nature in the future as we move forward with any of our schools.

The Speaker: Thank you.

New question? Third question. Yes.

QUESTION 3: UPDATE ON T. N. TATEM MIDDLE SCHOOL

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Yes. My third question is, the Minister has indicated in his Statement, at the bottom of page 4, concerning the closure of the school, that they really have no clue what is going to happen to the school beyond . . . between 2019 and 2020. If the Minister has no clue as to what is going to happen with the school, is the Minister satisfied that, in spending approximately \$3 million to remediate the school, it is going to be money well spent?

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. And I thank you, Member, for that question.

Mr. Speaker, it is currently in the public domain via the press statement that was released yesterday at the press conference I had yesterday, and the conversations I have had with the teachers and with the students. We, this Government, are in the process of having a holistic look at our school system from preschool through high school as we move forward with school reformation and the phasing out of middle schools. That conversation is currently in place. And those conversations will invariably include T. N. Tatem.

As we have not completed those conversations, this is the sole reason I have stated that we cannot state what will happen with T. N. Tatem beyond the next school year. Once those conversations have concluded and we have done the appropriate consultation with all of the stakeholders who need to be consulted with, a decision will be made and put forth to the public.

What I want to make crystal clear is that the school will not be open for the next academic year. Beyond that, what will happen with the school will de-

pend on the outcome of the current discussions around school reformation and the phasing out of middle schools.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary or—

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in his response, the Minister mentioned a press conference that he held yesterday on this particular topic. Is the Minister suggesting that this Parliament ought to be operating based on ministerial conferences that he gives in the public domain before coming to this Honourable House?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: The answer to that question simply is no, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Just a supplementary for clarity, Mr. Speaker.

If the answer is no, then why would the Minister refer to the fact that he held a conference yesterday?

The information was discussed in the conference that he held *yesterday*, and somehow, we as parliamentarians *today*, in the absence of specifics in his Statement, are meant to know what he said in his Ministerial Statement [*sic*]?

[*Inaudible interjections*]

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Sorry, in his press conference.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Was that a question or a statement?

The Speaker: I was waiting for the . . .

[*Crosstalk*]

The Speaker: Your question was whether there was information in today's Statement that was omitted from yesterday, MP?

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: No. The question today is . . . the Minister indicated that information was given in his press conference yesterday. My question

was . . . The Minister said, No, Parliament is not meant to be operating based on his ministerial conferences, any press conferences that he has given. The question that I have resulting from that is, If we are not operating based on *ex post facto* information from yesterday's press conference, would the Minister not have deemed it appropriate to at least start by saying, *Yesterday, in my press conference, I declared X, Y, Z.* Because this is not doing it.

The Speaker: It was more . . . You are trying to ask the Minister that you feel the Statement should have been presented here with more of yesterday's details. We are trying to get to what your real question is so he has something to respond to.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: My question is, for clarity, why would not the Minister have come to this Honourable House initially to advise us, who have oversight of what happens in the public domain and the concerns that we have for our children . . . why would the Minister not have come to this Honourable House rather than to tell us to listen to his press conference yesterday to figure out what is going on?

The Speaker: The question here is, Is the content of the two the same? If the content of today's Statement is the same content of yesterday, then he is using the opportunity today to inform the House.

[*Inaudible interjections*]

The Speaker: Well, well, well, well . . . Let us not go to that level. Let us not go there. Let us not go there. We do not want to start that type of tone.

We are going to move on. The next question, Minister, for you is from the Member from constituency 8.

Member.

QUESTION 1: UPDATE ON T. N. TATEM MIDDLE SCHOOL

Mr. N. H. Cole Simons: On the works and engineering side, my question to the Minister is this: A few weeks ago, the Premier indicated that renovations would cost approximately \$1 million. Now the Minister of Education said the renovation cost will like around \$3 million. Can he substantiate the difference?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I cannot speak for the Premier, who is not here. I believe what the Honourable Member is talking about was the Premier's Question Period, when he referenced T. N. Tatem. And I recall the information that I gave him, that the approximate cost was \$3 million. If he said \$1 million, that would have been a mistake.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Just a slip of the tongue.

The Speaker: Supplementary or a new question?

Mr. N. H. Cole Simons: Second question.

The Speaker: Second question.

QUESTION 2: UPDATE ON T. N. TATEM MIDDLE SCHOOL

Mr. N. H. Cole Simons: Given that T. N. Tatem Middle School will not be open in September, what plans does the Minister have in place for the teachers and the principal?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I would like to refer to my Statement, where I said, and I quote from the Statement, “moving forward, we are in the process of reallocating the students who would have been admitted to T. N. Tatem as M1 students for the next academic year, as well as talking to current parents of T. N. Tatem students about their current school placements.” That was contained in the Statement.

We are discussing with the parents about school placements. Once we know where our children will land, discussions will be had with the teachers about which schools they will be reallocated to. Those discussions have already started taking place with the teachers and the parents of the students.

The Speaker: Thank you.

That is it.

Supplementary? We have a supplementary from the Opposition Whip.

SUPPLEMENTARIES

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, please.

Given the school closure for a year, what assurances from the Works and Engineering perspective do we have that, after this building has been closed for a year for remediation, that we will not have further issues? What assurances do we have that there will not be another layer of maintenance issues after this set?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I am trying my best to understand the question. Because I do not have a crystal ball that can tell the future. However, what I did state is that we have a cost estimate of what needs to be done and a time [estimate] of what needs to be done. What will happen is, as I explained

earlier as we talk about the reformation of our school system and the phasing out of middle schools, it will be at that point a decision will be made on what will happen with T. N. Tatem. So, we are not at a point where we can say, *Yes, it's going to be repaired*, or we are going to do something else with the building.

The Speaker: Supplementary?

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Yes, supplementary.

The Speaker: Yes.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: So, if \$3 million is going to be invested in a building to do remediation—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Michael J. Scott: Just a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: It might be, it might be.

The Speaker: I do not think you can take a point of order on this. We will let the Member finish her question.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: So, if \$3 million *might be* invested in this building for remediation, and there is no assurance that we will not have further maintenance issues after this \$3 million is done, and then on top of it, after consultations, this building may not be used for educational purposes anymore, what would the building be used for if we have invested this money in it and we are not even sure that it is going to fully remediate the issue?

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Diallo V. S. Rabain: Mr. Speaker, I will reiterate and try and say it much more clearly. We will not invest any money in the school until we know what we are doing with the building. And until we get to that point, then we will have the conversations of what will be done, what will be invested in the building, what remediation, what rebuilding, what renovations. We will have that total conversation once we have reached that point of what we are going to do with the building as it relates to the entire school system.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Any further supplementaries?

No further supplementaries.

Minister, that is the last of the questions that were put for you this morning.

We now move on to the next Statement, brought by the Minister of Works.

Minister, there is a Member who would like to put a question to you regarding your Statement this morning. And that is the Opposition Leader.

Honourable Member, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: RAILWAY TRAIL AND GIBBETS ISLAND

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will start off by saying that this was actually quite good news. On page 2, I guess what I wanted to find out, the Minister speaks, "it is important that land access for the general public is provided." Many of us who have seen and driven by the beach do know that there are gates that are locked in many cases. Can the Minister give us an idea as to whether or not the technical officers have looked at what the public access might look like? Does that mean that maybe those gates, those heavy metal gates, will come down?

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, just clarification on that. I am trying to figure out where the access might be.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.
Minister.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, I believe the gates he is talking about are the traditional parks gates that go on Railway Trails. They will remain in place. What will come down are the Private Property signs. And if you are walking, you can gain access now. And that is what will occur immediately at the expiry of the lease. The current lease is across that entrance. And so, that has been the challenge so far. You have to cross private land in order to get on the Railway Trail itself. So, it made sense to not renew that lease. And the landowner who has that sliver of land at the entrance to the Railway Trail will still have access to their property via the Railway Trail just like anybody else does. But the public will also now be able to utilise that access and not be trespassing on private land.

The Speaker: Thank you.

No further questions? Minister, that closes the questions for yourself. We now move on to the third Statement from this morning, from the Minister of Cabinet.

Minister, you have two Members who have indicated that they have questions for you. The first is the Member from constituency 23.

Honourable Member, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE REPORT

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on page 2 of the Minister's Statement, just the pre-penultimate paragraph, he has indicated that \$8 million of unadjudicated stamps, of that [\$8 million], \$3.8 million has been received, and \$2.9 million has been billed but not yet collected. The question is, when will the additional \$1.189 million be billed? Or has it yet to be identified?

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: They are still working on it, to do the assessment.

The Speaker: Okay.
Supplementary or new question?

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: I have a new question.

The Speaker: Continue.

QUESTION 2: EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE REPORT

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: On page 3 of the Statement, when the Minister speaks of "about \$800,000 paid in credit card processing fees, which has historically been paid out of the Consolidated Fund," I wonder if the Minister is able to advise us, while this is specific to, presumably, things like social insurance, payroll tax and the like, are there any other . . . do these credit card processing fees being charged back to the public extend to any other Ministries?

The Speaker: Minister.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: This has only to do with payroll tax.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: Supplementary? Any further questions?

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: I guess just a supplementary, for clarity.

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: The Minister indicated that this has nothing to do with any payroll tax.

He just said the credit card processing fees . . . is this just specifically relating to stamp duty?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: No. This had to do with payroll tax. As you are aware, there are companies out there that pay their payroll tax by credit card. No, I said *payroll tax*.

Again, I did say payroll tax. So, the Government is recovering for the cost of individuals paying their payroll tax by credit cards.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Just a supplementary for clarity, Mr. Speaker. I am just confused. I just said, *Is this relating to payroll tax?* The Minister said, *I'm not talking about payroll tax.* But now he is saying he is talking about payroll tax.

If he could just clarify for me. This \$800,000 is going to be money that will be no longer charged to the Consolidated Fund, that will actually be recouped from people who are paying payroll tax by credit card? I just want to make sure that I am clear.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Mr. Speaker, as we all are aware—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: There are companies out there that pay their payroll tax by credit card. And the reason why, because you know you can get points on your card for traveling. The Government was losing between \$800,000 to \$1 million a year by individuals doing that. There is no problem with individuals—they can still transfer their money to the Office of the Tax Commissioner by wire transfer, or they can still use a credit card. But they have to cover the cost for that charge.

The Speaker: Thank you.
Supplementary or new question?

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Just a new question.

The Speaker: Yes.

QUESTION 3: EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE REPORT

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Is the Minister aware that people using credit cards are not necessarily [doing so] because they want to collect points, but rather that they may be experiencing cash flow issues?

And a credit card can be repaid on terms. So, it is not necessarily a negative thing. I wonder if the Minister can speak to whether he would anticipate more delinquencies in the payment of tax because people do not have the money and they may not want

to put the additional charges, or they may not want to pay the extra on credit fees? I am just curious.

The Speaker: Minister. Minister.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Mr. Speaker, most of these companies that were paying payroll tax by credit cards were large companies, millions of dollars of payroll tax, that is, on a yearly basis. They are large companies.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Supplementary.

The Speaker: Yes.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Were there only large companies paying payroll tax? Because, Mr. Speaker, I pay my payroll tax by credit card. Thank you.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Mr. Speaker, we are talking about mainly the large companies. But the Government will be recovering this payroll tax. The individual Member who just spoke just now, she could transfer by wire if she wants to and save an 18 per cent monthly credit card charge.

The Speaker: Supplementary? No. Okay.

Honourable Minister, the next Member who has a question for you is the Member from constituency 19.

Honourable Member, would you like to put your question?

QUESTION 1: EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE REPORT

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister: On page 3, the Minister refers to the outstanding accounts receivable for social insurance, which at November [2018] was \$44.8 million. And he indicated at which time \$28.9 million was over 120 days old. I just wondered if the Minister could indicate to us how much of that money is outstanding since 2017?

The Speaker: Honourable Minister.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Most of it.

The Speaker: Supplementary or new question?

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: I just want clarity so I can make sure that everybody heard that I said *since 2017*. So, that means that most of that has been out-

standing while the current Government was in the Government. Thank you.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: Current Government. Thank you.

[Crosstalk]

The Speaker: The question was, since 2017, which means it would be the current Government, if you said “most of it” as your answer?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Sorry. Let me correct myself, Mr. Speaker. Most of that money that is ageing comes from the former Government.

The Speaker: So, it would be before 2017. That was her question.

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: I will repeat my question so that the Minister can answer my question.

Could the Minister indicate to us how much of that 120 days is outstanding since 2017?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: I am not sure, Mr. Speaker, the exact amount. But I can tell you the very old amount of ageing is prior to 2017.

The Speaker: Next question?

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: Will the Minister undertake to get the information?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: The Efficiency Committee is finished. I am not the Minister of Finance.

[Laughter]

An Hon. Member: Supplementary—.

The Speaker: For clarity, the question was, *Will you undertake to get the information?* Are you denying getting it, or are you passing it on to the other Minister?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: No. I am saying the Efficiency Committee is finished. The Efficiency Committee is finished, and I do not have the right to that information, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Are you passing it on to the other Minister to get the information?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: All right.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Ah! Ah! Ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, ah!

An Hon. Member: She moved! She moved!

The Speaker: I do not think you want to be on that side of the House.

[Laughter]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I will undertake to get the information for the Honourable Member.

The Speaker: Thank you. Thank you.

Are you good, Member? Member, are you good? Are you good, Member? Are you good? Member, you asked the question. Are you good?

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Yes. I am good.

The Speaker: Okay.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: I have a third question.

The Speaker: Ask your third question.

SUPPLEMENTARY

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I have a third question.

And that is on page 4 of the Minister’s Statement, in which the Minister indicated that the cost to the taxpayer for the work of the Efficiency Committee was approximately \$130,000. The Minister did indicate that two individuals did extra work. But given that the majority of the committee members are government employees, could the Minister give us a breakdown of what constituted the \$130,000 cost that was paid out for the Efficiency Committee’s work?

The Speaker: Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: That is easy. I will also . . . I will also be giving a breakdown on the revenue, also. Interesting that you did not ask that question. But the breakdown of the \$130,000, there were members who received an amount of remuneration, I think it was \$2,000, per month. And the Chairman, which was myself, received \$5,000 per month.

An Hon. Member: Wow. Wow.

The Speaker: Thank you.
No further questions?

No further questions. That brings us to a close of the question-and-answer period this morning, and we will move on.

CONGRATULATORY AND/OR OBITUARY SPEECHES

The Speaker: Would any Member like to speak to that?

I recognise the Deputy Premier.
Deputy Premier, you have the floor.

Hon. Walter H. Roban: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I think it is fitting that we take note, and perhaps this will be for the Honourable House, and send a note of condolences from this Legislature to the Legislature of Jamaica, on the passing of Edward [Phillip George] Seaga, former fifth Prime Minister of Jamaica, longest-serving member in the history of the Jamaica Legislature and clearly a figure of some note in the regional politics. He died a few days ago, clearly a moment of some contemplation for the people of Jamaica.

And although we on this side did not share the same political ideologies or positioning of Mr. Seaga or his Jamaica Labour Party, of which he became the Leader in 1974, we certainly share respect for service to country, service to people, and respect for service to community. And irrespective of the political allegiances of Mr. Seaga, he was a leader of his people. He received the mandate of his people when he ran and when he led his party to victory.

And he is deserving of appropriate tribute from us who consider ourselves a part of the Caribbean family, as well, for his service. And certainly, this Legislature, in our view, should send the appropriate messages to the Legislature of Jamaica and to the Government and people of Jamaica in recognising the passing of clearly a very important political figure in the history of the Island, as he was also one of the architects of their constitutional movement in 1962. And so, clearly an important figure which we recognise for his service to his country, as the fifth Prime Minister and a leader in the Commonwealth and of the Caribbean. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy Premier.

I recognise the Opposition Leader. Honourable Member.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I wanted to give congrats to the Community, Culture and Sport Ministry over the May 24th holiday. I must say that it was a wonderful, wonderful celebration. I even had the opportunity to sit with Tinee and a few in an interview outside of Global House. It was a great occasion to celebrate Bermuda Heritage Day. And I just want to send congrats to them and all those who were involved in putting on such a fine event that

we could celebrate. I am sure others will go on to celebrate some of the . . . like [Lamont], who won the race.

What I wanted to talk about was one of the events over the weekend, on Saturday, the 25th, that I had the opportunity to attend. I believe I saw Minister Weeks [there]. I do not see him in the House right now. I did see the Premier, as well. And that was the football game. I am not talking about in Government, but certainly the Honourable Sylvan Richards was there, as well. It was a game between the Bermuda Select [football team] and the Azores Select Team. It was a fantastic match. Quite frankly, in the first half I thought that we were going to give in to about four or five goals. The Azores team had quite a commendable team there. But Bermuda held its own and wound up pulling out a victory there.

So, I just wanted to congratulate both select teams, and congratulate the Vasco da Gama [Club] and . . . I cannot recall the other committee that was involved with the Azores in putting that together. The Honourable Minister Foggo is not here at present; I know she is here in the House. But I just wanted to also commend her for ensuring that we had a wonderful event with that football game. There was a lot of cheering going on. But it was good to see that we could come together in such an event to enjoy a good game of football, and I just want to again congratulate all of those who were involved in ensuring that it was a safe match and that all had an opportunity to enjoy.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

I recognise the Honourable Member Tyrrell.
Honourable Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning, colleagues.

Mr. Speaker, I have two items I would like to give. The first one is on a sad note, the passing of one of my constituents, a Mrs. Ionie Webson, of Lusher Hill.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: I certainly know that she will be sadly missed by her husband, Everton, and children, Christopher and Topaz. Mrs. Webson went through a fairly long, lengthy bit of bad health, which obviously led to her demise. And I think she will be sadly missed, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, on a more upbeat note, I would ask that congratulations be sent to a young lady, Janae Armstrong, who recently graduated from Mount Saint Vincent University with a Bachelor of Business, concentrating in HR, Human Resource. And she got several write-ups in many outlets. And one of them that I read particularly described Ms. Armstrong as a "fearless female." She had this comment, Mr. Speak-

er, if you do not mind if I quote the comments, so I have her words.

The Speaker: Continue.

Mr. Neville S. Tyrrell: She said, "Meeting the requirements to graduate from university is a daunting task within itself. Imagine having to balance working a full-time job and being a single mother of four!" Ms. Armstrong really needs to be congratulated. As a mature student, having previously obtained an associate's degree from the Bermuda College, [she] did not feel that that was enough for her and applied for a Mature Student Award from the Ministry of Education to start her programme at Mount Saint Vincent. And she did it by virtual—she did virtual classes, which obviously is not easy in itself. So, basically, her comments—it was tough going for her, but certainly well deserved.

So, I personally congratulate her and again ask that congratulations be sent from this Honourable House. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

I now recognise the Honourable Member from constituency 23. Honourable Member, you have the floor.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I would ask that this Honourable House join me in sending congratulations to our Pool [players] team, who have just finished competing in the Valley National 8-Ball Championships in Las Vegas. And while they left here with the intent that they would finish in the main bracket, they actually ended up 33rd in the tournament, but at the top of the losers bracket, having come 33rd in the tournament out of a total of 300 teams.

I can just mention the names of the players: Gary Bascome, Kino Zuill, Matt Garrett, Clarkie Trott, and I declare an interest, my older son, Trevor Mouchette, who is actually the President of the Pool Association and has pushed to see excellence in our players in going over to compete at Valley National Championship.

Mr. Speaker, it was interesting that, in speaking with my son, he said, *I was locked out of the first two games with table runs.* And I said to him, *When somebody is playing pool against you and they run the table, there is nothing you can do. You don't get the opportunity to make a shot.*

An Hon. Member: You can sneeze.

[Laughter]

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: The Honourable Member says, *You can sneeze.* That is probably all you can do.

But I think that for our players to go over to Vegas on a very well-organised tournament and a very well-organised local involvement, to ensure that our players are up to marks with their preparation, I think that they acquitted themselves well. I certainly hope that in future they will come through the main draw and come back in the money. They did get some money for their efforts. But it was very interesting to be able to hear the level of competition against which they had to face and to know that they still held their own and acquitted themselves well and did Bermuda proud.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to speak?

We recognise the Honourable Member from constituency 2. Honourable Member Swan, you have the floor.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. And good morning.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to be associated with the condolences going to the Government and the people of Jamaica on the passing of Mr. Seaga, whom my family have connections with in Jamaica, and recognise that, outside of politics, he was very much involved in the music industry and had a very close connection with the evolution and development of ska music. And I would just like to be associated with the comments made by the Deputy Leader.

On a sad note also, [condolences to] the family of Joan Cooper Wade, a constituent from Wellington Lane. She leaves to mourn her son, Kim, my good friend. And the Honourable MP Renee Ming would like to be associated with that, and I am sure Minister Foggo, as well.

And also, Mr. Irvin Hayward, the long-time proprietor of the St. George's Esso Station and a former Corporation of St. George's alderman and many other committees.

Those two families are well-known families. The Swainson and Hayward families, and we will be mourning their passing.

Mr. Speaker, on May 24th, I want to commend the Minister and the department for putting on another good Bermuda Day. And I also join in in congratulating the winners. But I also want to recognise that it was the 40th anniversary of Bermuda Day, which was born out of the Pitt Report as a consequence of a very sad period in Bermuda's history that required the Pitt Report. And I thank a former director of that department and human affairs, Mr. Roger Robinson, who continues to write in the UK about the untold stories that impact the African community. And he actually

wrote a very important piece about this history of which he was prepared to call in and share on the radio.

And I am very grateful that, at his advanced age, he is still making a contribution to society on the issues that matter a great deal to him. So, thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to speak?

We recognise the Honourable Member from constituency 4. Honourable Member Furbert, you have the floor.

Mrs. Tinee Furbert: Yes. Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

I would just like to send out [condolences] to [the family of] one of my constituents, Mr. Junior "Pop" Swan, who has left us. Pop Swan was a resident of Easter Lily nursing facility, and he will be missed greatly. He was one who would often engage with the public, standing up for their rights. And he was often in talks with me. And so, Pops will be missed dearly.

I also just wanted to give congratulations. I believe someone has mentioned it already, but I join in congratulations for all of the Bermuda Day Half-Marathon Derby participants, as well as the winners, Lamont Marshall, and one of my fellow colleagues, occupational therapist, Rose-Anna Hoey, both who had won the Bermuda Half-Day Marathon. So, congratulations to them.

I also wanted to give congratulations to the organisers and executors of the Relay for Life programme that occurred a couple of Fridays ago. There is a lot of work that goes into planning that event. All the people who participated and the planners, including the Bermuda Cancer & Health Centre, congratulating them again for a job well done and going forth with a cause for promoting proper cancer care and detection. So, we would just like to continue to congratulate them and support them with their ongoing efforts for cancer care and awareness in Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to speak?

We recognise the Honourable Member from constituency 8. Honourable Member Simons.

Mr. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I rise this morning to send congratulatory remarks to Ms. Maude Bassett. She celebrated her 100th birthday. And I wish her all the best. I have a special affinity for her, being that my family is from Somerset and the fact that she is a retired teacher.

The Speaker: Yes. She is from Somerset. She is from Somerset originally.

Mr. N. H. Cole Simons: She was the Deputy Principal at Sandys Primary School, West End and Boaz Island.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. N. H. Cole Simons: She also taught in the UK. So, I would like to congratulate her for her 100th anniversary and salute her for her contributions to education.

While on education, I would like to also congratulate Shelly Grace of Warwick Academy. She has been teaching for 40 years. That is a monumental period to be in the profession. She teaches health and wellness, and that is important to our people.

[Timer beeps]

The Speaker: Oh! Not yours. Continue.

Mr. N. H. Cole Simons: I would like to also send condolences to the family of the late Robert Hedges. He was instrumental in forming a reinsurance brokerage company in the 1970s. He hired a number of Bermudians. He has two athletic sons, Trevor and . . . I forget his other son's name. But he made the reinsurance brokerage industry what it is today. He went about his work quietly. He was always a gentleman, and I wish his family my deepest thoughts and prayers, and especially to Jennifer, his wife. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Any further Members wish to give condolences or congratulations?

Member from constituency 1.

Mrs. Renee Ming: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I like that bright, bright colour you are wearing this morning.

Mrs. Renee Ming: Happy St. George's Day to you today.

The Speaker: Good morning to you, as well.

Mrs. Renee Ming: I rise today on my feet to, first of all, give happy birthday congratulations to Ms. Ida Alice Lodge. She celebrated her 100th birthday on Monday, May 27th. Ms. Lodge is from the Top Square area, which is where I moved to when I was 12. She is definitely one of the few—I call her Granny Lodge. Not a family member, but definitely I would say that she would be part of my family. She used to watch out for all of the children in my neighbourhood. I am really

good friends with her grandchildren. And so, we were happy that she was able to see, experience and live out her 100th birthday. I would like to associate MP Kim Swan with that, and also the Deputy Leader, who attended her birthday party with me, as well.

And also, just a big shout-out and a thank you to the RAA Seniors [Activity] Club. They hosted a seniors bingo a few weeks ago. And I could tell you that I learned a lot about bingo on that day. I even learned how serious bingo can be. And I would also like to give a special shout-out to Aunt Elsie Crane Shaw, who takes the time out, even at her tender young age, to make sure that there were loads and loads of prizes there and that the bingo games ran smoothly. Because she was not about to have any nonsense at the game. And I would like to associate MP Swan with that, as well.

I believe that events like this are critically important in our communities. And I look forward to attending many more. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: You are welcome.

We recognise now Minister Burch.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: Mr. Speaker, I would ask that the House send congratulations to the newly ordained Reverend Ralph David Stuart Trott II, who was ordained at St. Matthew AME Church last week Saturday in Philadelphia. Mr. Speaker, Reverend Ralph, as he has decided to title himself, is affiliated with St. Paul AME Church in Bermuda. A decade ago, he as a summer student worked in the Ministry of Public Works. And I think it is fair to say, Mr. Speaker, if you meet Ralph, you are never going to forget him. He is bigger, and his spirit is bigger than life. But it is a testament to his parents, as well, Mr. Speaker, because he happens to be the brother of one Carmen Trott—

The Speaker: Okay.

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: —who was honoured by this House last week. And I had the privilege of being in Philadelphia to attend the ordination, without his knowledge. That is called an ambush, Mr. Speaker, which I am pretty good at these days.

[Laughter]

Lt. Col. Hon. David A. Burch: And he just could not believe that I . . . well, I did not travel just for that. But I did find out where it was.

What is interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that his sister feels a little put out, too, because I got all of the information from her. And she did not realise that I was going to use it to my own advantage to not only ambush him, but also to participate in what was a glorious celebration last week Saturday in Philadelphia. So, I would ask that warmest congratulations be sent

to Reverend Ralph. I think that he is going to make a difference in our community, not only in St. Paul, but in the wider context, as well. And I would ask that MP Gordon-Pamplin be associated with those remarks.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

We recognise the Honourable Minister.

You have my attention.

Hon. Lovitta F. Foggo: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Good morning to the House, and good morning to my fellow Bermudians.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to just make—this being the last day of Heritage Month—to offer congrats for all of the hard work that has been done in celebration of Heritage Month. We had a great parade. We saw the discussion of the Pitt Report. We have seen many things happening this month, the derby, all of this to celebrate the theme of heritage, which was Bermudian excellence.

And so, it would be remiss of me if I did not say a hearty thank you to the Department of Community and Culture for their herculean efforts to ensure that this Heritage Month did not go by without paying tribute to all of those who are deserving of tribute, and for not recognising the excellence that was displayed in many of the activities that did take place. And so, I thought that I would get up and say a hearty congratulations for work well done. And I also want to say, as this is the last few days of the director's tenure in government, I want to wish her well as she goes on to do other things.

So, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Minister.

I now recognise the Honourable Member from constituency 11. Honourable Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Good morning, Mr. Speaker, and good morning, colleagues.

I want to give condolences to the family of my constituent, Mr. Hubert Franks. He used to be a bus driver years ago.

Also, I would like to give congratulations to the PTA and staff of Elliott School, Hermitage Road, Devonshire, who put on a wonderful spring fair a couple of weeks ago. I also want to associate with the congratulations given to Mr. Lamont Marshall, of Valley Heights, Devonshire, for sweeping the floor on Heritage Day. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Oh, Mr. Speaker, can I leave to go to my constituent's funeral?

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Thank you.

The Speaker: We will excuse you for a moment, momentarily. How is that? As long as you do not take all day.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Would any other Member wish to speak?

No other Member.

We will now move on.

Minister, do you have some comments you would like to make?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I sure do, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much.

The Speaker: You almost missed it.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I know that, because I saw you glance to the left. And I figured I would take the opportunity.

The Speaker: Minister, you have got your three minutes.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will not need that long.

I rise, Mr. Speaker, this morning. I would like to send out congratulations to our former Premier, the Honourable Dr. Ewart Brown, and his wife, Wanda Henton Brown, who celebrate their anniversary today. I would like [to send] a special congratulations to his wife for putting up with him all of these years.

Thank you very much.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: You associated the whole House with that?

[Laughter and crosstalk]

The Speaker: Real quickly, real quickly, real quickly. Premier, I see you are on your feet.

Hon. E. David Burt: Good morning, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, this morning I would like to ask that the Honourable House send condolences to the family and friends of my constituent, Mr. John Arthur Murray Kennedy, affectionately known as "Pilot," from 13 Table Rock Avenue. And I will associate the entire House with those condolences. I do hope, of course, that his loved ones find comfort, and may he rest in peace.

Mr. Speaker, I am sure that there were congratulations that were given not only for the events of Bermuda Day last [week], but also on the recent exploits of our National Football Team. And I just wanted to be associated with those particular remarks.

Mr. Speaker, finally, I may be associated as well, as I am unsure if this was given. But I do want to send a happy birthday wish and ask the House to send a happy birthday wish—it should not just be, I think, Her Majesty—for two lovely ladies who turned 100 this past week. And, of course, that is Ms. Maude Bassett and also Ms. Ida Lodge who celebrated their 100th birthdays. I am uncertain if they were recognised.

The Speaker: We will associate you with the earlier comments. Both have been done.

Hon. E. David Burt: But I would like to ask that I be associated with those particular remarks, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Is there any other Member who wants to rise to their feet at this last minute?

No other Members.

We will now move on to the next order on the [Order] Paper today.

MATTERS OF PRIVILEGE

The Speaker: There are none.

PERSONAL EXPLANATIONS

The Speaker: There are none.

NOTICE OF MOTIONS FOR THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE HOUSE ON MATTERS OF URGENT PUBLIC IMPORTANCE

The Speaker: There are none.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GOVERNMENT BILLS

The Speaker: There are two Bills to be introduced by Government Ministers this morning. The first is in the name of the Premier.

Premier.

FIRST READING

BERMUDA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION AMENDMENT ACT 2019

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am introducing the following Bill for its first reading so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: The Bermuda Economic Development Corporation Amendment Act 2019.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister of Finance, would you like to present the second Bill?

FIRST READING

GOVERNMENT LOANS AMENDMENT ACT 2019

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I am introducing the following Bill which, according to section 36(3) of the Bermuda Constitution, requires the Governor's recommendation, so that it may be placed on the Order Paper for the next day of meeting: Government Loans Amendment Act 2019.

The Speaker: Thank you.

OPPOSITION BILLS

The Speaker: There are none.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS

The Speaker: There are none.

NOTICES OF MOTIONS

The Speaker: There is one motion to be tabled this morning, in the name of the Minister for Cabinet. Minister.

MOTION

CONSOLIDATED OVERALL REPORT OF THE EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE, DATED APRIL 2019

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I give notice that I propose to move the following motion at the next day of meeting:

That this Honourable House take note of the Consolidated Overall Report of the Efficiency Committee, dated April 2019.

The Speaker: Thank you.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

The Speaker: Thank you.

Members, that now moves us on to the Orders of the Day. And I understand that the agreement is that we will do Order No. 3, and that is the second reading of the Premier, Ministers and Opposition

Leader Personal Staffs Act 2019, in the name of the Premier.

Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled the Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs Act 2019 be now read a second time.

The Speaker: Continue.

BILL

SECOND READING

PREMIER, MINISTERS AND OPPOSITION LEADER PERSONAL STAFF ACT 2019

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Bill before this Honourable House is the Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs Act 2019.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members will recall that when this Bill was tabled, I gave a Ministerial Statement to this Honourable House setting out the rationale for the Bill. Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members who have served as Ministers will know that there is very often a need to have the benefit of political or expert advice. The public service is an impartial entity serving Ministers and the Government of the day, and it is important that the impartiality of the public service be maintained.

The ability of Premiers and Opposition Leaders to appoint personal staff has been enshrined in law since 1983, while the advent of the Ministerial Code of Conduct after the 1998 general election has made provisions for Ministers to engage advisors and consultant experts. Though this permission has been in existence since after the 1998 election, it has not been subject to any legal underpinnings.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill of 2019 replaces the 1983 Act and now includes provisions modelled on the section 9.1 of the Ministerial Code of Conduct (advisors and consultants), to permit Ministers, subject to the written approval of the Premier, to appoint a personal staff consisting of one or two persons. Mr. Speaker, the Bill ensures that those appointments are not part of the public service, but affords them the appropriate scope to properly advise Ministers by providing access to confidential information.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note that this Bill will now require the Premier to make an annual report to the Legislature, specifying details of all persons appointed during the previous calendar year. This, of course, Mr. Speaker, will create a new level of transparency inside of this particular regard, removing, I would say, the *gotcha politics* of asking Parliamentary Questions on a regular basis. It will now be

for this House to learn on an annual basis who has been appointed to these particular roles.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to also advise Honourable Members that a code of conduct for special advisors has been prepared, and the final draft will be made available to the public.

Mr. Speaker, as I commend this Bill for consideration to the House, I close this overview of the Bill in terms similar to my Statement earlier this month. And I quote, Mr. Speaker, that “Bermuda is a complex society with a delicate economy, and is facing equally complex issues around economic diversification, social change and building a fairer society. We must ensure that Ministers . . . can call upon the expertise and support” (more importantly) “required to properly discharge their responsibilities as demanded by the modern era of public service.”

With that, Mr. Speaker, I look forward to the comments of other Members. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member, Mr. Premier.

Does any other Member wish to speak?

We recognise the Leader of the Opposition Leader. Honourable Member, you have the floor.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker. And thank you to the Premier for bringing this to the House and tabling this Bill..

I found it interesting as I went through the Bill, understanding that much of the procedure that is outlined already exists, outside of the annual reporting, per se, and maybe the 30 days of remuneration that we will talk about as we go through it here.

But at the end of the day, this is something that has been in place. This has been a code that Ministers and Premiers have lived by. I understand, as the Premier has stated, this kind of *gotcha* type of political banter that goes back and forth as to really who is being hired. And I also recall, just recently, with the last appointment by this Government with its consultants or personal staff (whatever you wish to call them), that it was important that we dispel . . . and I am attempting to be very clear here. It was important to dispel some of the rumours that were out there. You know, the minute that a Government, and not just to say this Government, but when we were Government, the minute that you hired someone, there is always someone who has something to say. There is always someone who is going to bring up or question the appointment.

And I felt that the appointments had been made, Mr. Speaker, without giving the qualifications. And giving those qualifications of these particular individuals would have gone a long way to dispelling many of the rumours. And so, hence, I understand why we want to do the reporting. I am a bit concerned, and I hope that we will get clarification as we go through this particular Bill in the committee that, with

this annual report, it does seem to be retro. In my estimation, I think that when we make these appointments, quite frankly, these appointments should be made in a statement to the public: *This is who we are bringing on at this particular time.*

I note with interest also that, you know, the Bill takes into consideration the Premier’s, the Ministers’ and the Opposition Leader’s personal staff. Maybe this might be a time—and [this might be] a bit cheeky—where we look for a little bit more money in the Opposition’s office, because certainly, with what we do have, it is difficult. And the Premier has been in that position in the Opposition office. Maybe it is time to start looking at the total allotment for the Opposition’s office.

I will say, Mr. Speaker, again, that I am still trying to understand exactly why this has to be a Bill, I mean, because the procedures are already in place. And I kind of think I heard the Premier give some sort of an answer as to why—because of the rumours. But that certainly, as I said already, could be dealt with by ensuring that when these appointments are made, that they are being given to the public at the time by the Minister or by the Premier or even by the Opposition office to announce that it has made this appointment.

Certainly, doing it at the end of the year will create all kinds of confusion and [will raise] questions as to the potential of bringing someone on and then they are gone within two months or gone within three months. And then you go and bring on someone else . . . all of that will be saved to the end of the year for questions, which I feel is probably not the best, prudent way to go about this.

Now, the Premier made the Statement in these Honourable Chambers (I do not have the date on here; I do have the Statement), entitled “A Revised Construct—Consultants and Advisors,” Mr. Speaker. But the second paragraph says, “Honourable Members will recall my reference to the recommendations of the SAGE Commission and the 2011 Civil Service Review which recommended the creation of a ministerial private office to ‘relieve Permanent Secretaries of the day-to-day tasks associated with Ministers’ . . .”

And, quite frankly, you know, I believe that these appointments are prudent. I believe that the premise behind having personal assistants or consultants to help with the day-to-day efficiencies of the Minister makes a lot of sense. The Premier can speak to the fact that, as myself, when we travel, especially to the UK, we go into a room with the Minister, and he has got several assistants in the room.

What I did find interesting was that many of those assistants—not all of them—were staffed from the civil service. And if we go to the recommendations that were made by the SAGE Commission on page 33, it was interesting because the Premier quotes the fact that the SAGE Commission says, “to relieve Permanent Secretaries of the day-to-day tasks associat-

ed with Ministers' . . ." to which we agree. I think we all agree to this here. I do not want the Premier to believe that we are saying, *No, this is not the route that we should go*. But what I do want to clarify is what the SAGE Commission meant when it talked about these appointments to, especially the Ministers. If I could read this, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Continue.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

And it says here, "A Ministerial Private Office should be created to relieve Permanent Secretaries of the day-to-day tasks associated with Ministers' needs." And, quite frankly, yes. I believe that some Ministers could use a little bit more help than others, quite frankly.

"To again quote the 2011 Civil Service Review . . ."

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Now, I was not necessarily talking about the Government itself, just governments, period. Some Ministers require a bit more assistance than others.

But then, the Civil Service Review says this, Mr. Speaker: "We believe that a Private Office would relieve the Permanent Secretary of the day-to-day managing of Ministers (tasks such as detailed briefing, speech writing, intelligent prioritisation of the Minister's diary, 'gate-keeping' . . . I can say first-hand that gate-keeping was always, and continues to be, a challenge for Ministers, and primarily the Premier and the Finance Minister, in particular, where gate-keeping is vital in order to keep our Ministers online.

But then it goes on to say this here, Mr. Speaker: "[S]uch a role close to a Minister would be a good one for Civil Servants who are judged to have the potential for rapid advancement." And, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has spoken in the past about looking out for those who are up and coming within the civil service regime, whereby, you know, promoting them and moving them along is something that he wishes to do. This Bill in no way, as you go through it, speaks to this here. And hopefully, the Premier can come back to us and say that he is actually looking at civil servants for this role.

But what we have seen thus far is that this is not the case, that the Premier has continued to allow appointments to this personal staff to be made, and there does not appear to be any consideration [given to] considering some of the civil servants who are up and coming who could assist greatly in the effectiveness of our Ministers, the Premier, the Opposition [Leader] as well, and the likes.

And so, with qualifying that, Mr. Speaker, it is important that we understand what the SAGE Com-

mission really was attempting to say, that this is a great opportunity. If we want to look at our up-and-coming bright people within the civil service, this is a great opportunity to do just that.

We do not see that [there] is a reference [to this] within the actual Bill itself. And so, I am hoping that the Premier will speak to this, after several people have spoken, to sum up to say that he will make it a priority of first looking at civil servants in this capacity. Because there are going to continue to be a whole lot of questions, particularly not necessarily around just the Premier, but particularly around Ministers and the kinds of appointments that are actually made.

And, you know, I mean, all you have to do is walk around town and listen to folks. Everybody is a political advisor. Everybody believes that they are a political expert. And they have got all kinds of things to say as to why they feel this should be done and that should be done. There is not anything in here that speaks to the qualifying of what a political expert is or what makes those qualifications of a political advisor. It would be nice to hear what the Premier is thinking concerning that because not just about anybody on the street who has something to say should be brought in as a personal assistant or political advisor. There should be some qualification which speaks to the fact that this person is coming from such-and-such, whether it be the PLP as the Government speaking to the many years that people have been involved in politics; I do not know. But we will go a long way if we give those qualifications and satisfy the fact that people feel comfortable that this is a good appointment, because, obviously, it is taxpayers' money that is going towards this here to take care of this here.

It would be good in an objective way to ensure that there are qualifications that are being given. This Bill does not speak to qualifications. It does speak to functions that should be told, but it does not say qualifications. And so, we will get back to that in Committee to see if we can get some clarification on some of these things.

The Bill will continue to talk about conflict of interest and the likes, Mr. Speaker. And we already see that we have an instance where an appointment has been made to a particular Ministry, and I do not know if it was a personal assistant or whether it was a political advisor. But whatever it was in this particular Ministry, we also see where this particular consultant who was brought on, a personal assistant or whatever we want to call them, goes and has an interview with the same department, Ministry, that he is a consultant to, on the radio station, which clearly is a conflict. And so, to avoid these kinds of things from happening and people getting upset, we need to ensure, just like in this House we have to declare our interest. If there is a member who is a consultant and they have a radio show, say, for instance, and they interview people, they should be declaring that interest, if they are inter-

viewing people, that they are a consultant for that Ministry. This is a clear conflict of interest.

And so, to avoid these kinds of things, I am hoping that the Premier will address these issues to ensure that they are not happening. Because, quite frankly, I feel like this Bill has come into place because of all of the noise. And we want to ensure that what we are doing here makes sense. It does make sense in some ways that we want to bring it to the Legislature. But the whole process, really, has already been in place. And really being transparent about the issue goes a long way, so that we probably would not have had to have even deliberate this here in the House as a piece of legislation.

But be that as it may, the Premier has found it fit to be able to go ahead and bring this to the House as a piece of legislation. We will go forward. We do agree, Mr. Speaker, that the outline that is here does make sense. But I think that there needs to be some more qualifications to some of these things. And as I said already, we will go through some of this stuff in Committee as we seek clarity on exactly what the Premier is looking to do.

At the end of the day, Mr. Speaker, the Premier did say that the issue really is that (and I am paraphrasing, basically, here) we want to do away with the bickering going back and forth or questions being asked. But that is not going to be resolved, Mr. Speaker, if we are going to be doing this in retro and announcing the folks who are to become consultants, personal assistants to these Ministers, the Premier and the Opposition, in retro. And I think that needs to be fixed because reporting it at the end of the year is not going to stop the questions. It is not going to stop us as an Opposition from bringing political questions to this House about these appointments.

So, what we want to see is that when these appointments are made, the Minister, the Premier, the Opposition makes that announcement in this House so that all are aware of these appointments.

So, with that in mind, we are supporting this here. There will probably be others who have a few questions considering this here. And I will leave my comments at that. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to speak?

We recognise the Honourable Member from constituency 23. Honourable Member Gordon-Pamplin, you have the floor.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Westminster system of parliamentary appropriateness and party politics dictates that to the victor go the spoils, which means that when we face a general election, at the end of which there is a result and the party that enjoys the majority gets

to form the Government. The one thing, Mr. Speaker . . . and again, Mr. Speaker, let me apologise for my voice because I am still a little hoarse and I am still recovering from my recent surgery.

The Speaker: I suggest you keep it short then. How's that?

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Continue on.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: I am so appreciative, Mr. Speaker, for the concern. I am so appreciative.

The Speaker: I am so concerned for your health, see? I am concerned for your health now.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: I am so appreciative, Mr. Speaker, of the concern of all of my colleagues for my well-being and my health.

However, I would be remiss in my responsibility to the constituents of this country if I failed to bring out what is an obvious truth within our system. That is, we have an apolitical civil service. Irrespective of what we may have, as individuals, thought about some of the personalities that occupy certain seats in certain areas, the idea of having a civil service is to be apolitical. When a Government is elected, they are elected for all of the people of Bermuda. They are not elected to decide what their politics are going to be in terms of having the public purse pay for their political consultants.

Political consultants, in my estimation, Mr. Speaker, should be paid for by the political party. We should not be expecting the public purse to come out and say, *Let me pay as a way to bring in people through the back door.* Now, let me say, as a Government, I was a Minister responsible for Health. So, I am going to declare this and put it up front. I brought on board a political consultant in the person of Mrs. Louise Jackson, which was done for a specific period for a specific purpose.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: And she was a party-political appointment. But it was so that we as the Ministers were able to get information.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Members! Members!

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Now, who paid for it? It was paid for out of the public purse. But, Mr.

Speaker, that individual did not have pension appended to that appointment. They did not have GEHI appended to that appointment. So, while we have a Bill coming very soon which talks about the costs to government, and what is happening here is that, through the back door, we are creating a separate level of civil service, it would appear to me, Mr. Speaker, a separate level of civil service that is costing the taxpayer.

So, if we were suggesting that people can be brought on for a specific period to do a specific job, and that the terms and conditions are defined, I do not have a problem with that, Mr. Speaker, because I can understand not just a necessity, but the wisdom of doing such. But when these people are coming on board, we heard certain Members in a previous debate (not that I wish to reflect, but just by way of quick reference, Mr. Speaker), people saying that they had no health insurance, and therefore they could not . . . you know.

So, now we see that you bring people on as a political consultant because they may not have a job. They may not have health insurance. We are now enabling people to come and feed at the public trough, Mr. Speaker. And I do not think that this is an appropriate use of public funds. I think that the civil service does a great job. I think political consultants need to be defined. I am not saying “eliminate.” I am saying “define.” And they should not be deemed to be civil servants by the back door.

I believe that if we did not have the information that caused us to ask the Parliamentary questions that effectively revealed the extent to which this Government has brought on people to assist them in this regard and to assist people who otherwise may not even have a job to be able to have some kind of revenue, this bothers me, Mr. Speaker. When I heard the Honourable Member indicate that he is being paid \$5,000 per month for a particular function that he was performing, things like this, I do not care if they collect \$12, \$90, \$100 million. When you are being paid as a Junior Minister in this House, Mr. Speaker, out of the public funds for the job that you are doing, \$5,000 on top of that seems to me to be a little bit over the top. But that is my opinion. As I said, to the victor go the spoils. The Government has a 25-to-11 majority, and they can do with that majority whatever they will.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Members!

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: And what they have chosen to do with that majority, Mr. Speaker, is to utilise the public purse to their advantage to ensure that they are, in certain instances, bypassing the civil service.

Now, I understand the Premier, in introducing this Bill, indicating that the civil service should be specific, and they have work to do. And that there are

Ministers, as I heard my Leader say, there are Ministers who need a little more help than others. I think I tried to correct him, and he ignored me. But I am going to say it. There are Ministers who need a *lot* more help than some others, Mr. Speaker. Some are proficient, and some can use additional assistance in specific areas, Mr. Speaker. That is a known fact.

I can look at a Minister opposite me and I can say if he had nobody to assist him, it will be fine because he will be okay. But there are others who perhaps do not have that degree of . . . I would not say “aptitude”; that is not the correct word . . . who do not have that degree of confidence in the job that they are required to do, that they are able to do it unilaterally without this political consultant.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that unless we are asking people, we are now saying that we want to have somebody that, when they leave, they get an extra 30 days of pay. So, it is really a job for them. It is the terms and conditions under which the civil service operates, Mr. Speaker. We are saying that they are entitled to GEHI. Perhaps GEHI will go on in perpetuity after they leave the civil service. They are entitled to pensions for which the Government has to put in its contributing factors.

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Member, if will you yield for a point of order.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Absolutely.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. E. David Burt: The Honourable Member has raised the pensions issue twice. There is nothing inside of this Bill that speaks to pensions. The only thing in here is social insurance, which is required. There is a difference between pensions and social insurance. The Honourable Member knows that.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Sorry. Yes.

The Speaker: Thank you for the clarification.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: And I accept the clarification, Mr. Speaker, because I do not wish to misspeak or to mislead, and I did say “pensions.” And I did mean to indicate “social insurance.” I look at social insurance because I get this little pension cheque every month that comes out of social insurance. It is very little. It is very little, Mr. Speaker, not even sufficient to pay my health insurance for what I get, Mr. Speaker. So, I do apologise. And I certainly do not wish to mislead.

But when you have social insurance contributions, 50 per cent are being paid by the employee and 50 per cent are being paid by the employer. When you

have GEHI, presumably, 50 per cent of the premium is paid by the employee, 50 per cent of the premium is paid by the employer. So, effectively, we are bringing people into the system, causing them to add additional charges to the public purse, Mr. Speaker. And none of that is going through the system of vetting and controls that are normally afforded to people who are coming in to work for the civil service.

The civil service members have to go through an inordinate level of scrutiny in order to qualify for the positions they hold. Mr. Speaker, if anybody can be brought in to say, *Come on in! You don't have a job. Come on over here. I'll make sure that you get your insurance. I'll make sure that your social insurance is paid. We're going to make sure that . . .* It does not matter that it is costing the taxpayer more money. That, to me, is a political job. A political job as a political advisor should be paid for by the political party.

An advisor for a specific function, for a specific period, it is appropriate for that to come out of the public purse. But for this to go on? There is no term limit other than if the Minister leaves, the staff member coming on board, the advisor coming on board is peculiar to that particular Minister while he holds that position. There is nothing . . . we have got people who will now be on the public payroll, having failed to have to undergo the scrutiny of hiring that is necessary for people who have jobs in the public service. And we are expecting the taxpayer to pay for it.

Mr. Speaker, I would not have wanted for Members opposite to pay for my personal advisors if they were there in perpetuity. For a specific six-month period of time, that this is your monthly pay and you know exactly up front what you can budget for, Mr. Speaker, and how much it is going to cost so that the public is aware of what their liability is with respect to these people coming on board. That I can understand.

But, Mr. Speaker, to say that we are going to allow almost open-ended, and this could be up to two people per Minister, I would be curious to know whether the Minister who has no real portfolio also has the ability to have assistants, political assistants when you are a Minister with nothing else to do other than sweep. What else do you need additional—

The Speaker: I think their responsibility takes on a little bit more than that.

[Laughter]

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: I do not mean sweep the floors. I am sorry. I do not wish to be pejorative at all. I do not mean sweep the floors. I mean sweep the Ministers in terms of, if this Minister is absent, you come in and you fill in. If somebody else is unable to do something, somebody else comes and fills in . . . Minister without portfolio, somebody who does not have specific responsibilities. That is what I intended to say.

The Speaker: I can see the cartoon now of the Minister with a broom in his hand. I just wanted you to clarify that.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: I just want you to clear it up.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Well, I will not make any comments further on that, Mr. Speaker. We will just leave that to the imagination.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: But with that said, Mr. Speaker, I just think that we must recognise that the Government is the Government for all of the people of Bermuda. That their political consultants, who are now becoming employees of the public purse, I believe it is an inappropriate use of public funds. I believe that we can achieve the ends to which the Premier is attempting to go by utilising a slightly different model. But as I said, the Opposition will have its say; the Government will have its way. By virtue of their numbers they will bring on board whomever they choose to. They will buffer their income however they choose to. And they will allow them to be there however long they want.

There are people whose children are out here, Mr. Speaker, and they cannot get jobs! But because they may not be politically affiliated with Members of the Government, your kids, who have come back from college, do not have a job, are not going to get one! Because the preference in this scenario, Mr. Speaker, is going to go to those friends and family of Members of the political party who will be able—

[Inaudible interjections]

[Gavel]

The Speaker: Sergeant! Sergeant, will you deal with that, please?

Continue on, Member. Keep going.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Oh, sorry, sorry, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: No, you continue.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Sorry. I thought I had a problem.

But that is the situation.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I said, having recognised and admitted publicly and acknowledged that I had a political person, a person who was politically affiliated with my party as a consultant for a specific period of

time for a specific job that they had to do, and it was paid for out of the Consolidated Fund, I have no problem with that specific. But to give all the perks and benefits that go along with an employee of the civil service I believe is entirely, entirely inappropriate.

Mr. Speaker, the other point that I would like to raise would be the point that my Leader raised. And that is in respect of the annual report. It is fine to come *ex post facto* with information. But I believe if you wish to really be transparent, it would be better to approach it up front to say, *Today I hired Louise Jackson for a period of six months. Her salary for that period of time is going to be "X." And at the end of it, that appointment will be finished.* Or, as the Government has now allowed for within this legislation, to say, *I can bring on my favourite individual to come and be my political consultant.* We have not seen what the outline of criteria is, but that is going to be up to the Ministers. And the Premier has to sign off on it. So, if he believes that any particular individual is appropriate to fulfil the position, then they will be able to do so.

But it would be good to see the code of conduct for advisors that the Premier said was coming afterward. You know, sometimes it is nice to see the package that we are signing on for. If the Premier were able to bring to us, in conjunction with this Bill, the code of conduct for advisors, then perhaps some of the unsettling attitudes may be able to be alleviated, because the information would be there. At the moment, we do not have that information. It is coming, I have no doubt. And I do not know when.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that as we consider how we wish to run our country and deviate from the norms of what is appropriate, in my estimation, Mr. Speaker, I think we should think very carefully that there are young people who do not have the ability to get a job and are not going to get one because these particular positions are being filled by people who are handpicked because of their affiliation, political advisors.

And I will end where I started, Mr. Speaker. Political advisors should be paid for by the political party and should not be a burden on the public purse.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to speak? No other Honourable Member?

I recognise the Honourable Member from constituency 19. Honourable Member, you have the floor.

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Obviously, this particular Bill does some things which regularises some things that have been done in the past and adds some new things. And I think, for me the thing which is of interest is not so much the fact that it is talking about the personal staff. But when I read it, it indicates in [clause] 3 that "the

Premier and the Opposition Leader may each, if he so wishes, have a personal staff to assist him and may, by instrument in writing, appoint such number of persons as he deems fit to constitute his personal staff."

Now, I am hoping I am reading correctly, because when I read that, that to me said that the Opposition Leader could have more than one person. So, and that is when I read it.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: You want to give me a point of order?

The Speaker: Would you like a point of clarification?

Hon. E. David Burt: If the Honourable Member would yield, just so she is aware—

The Speaker: Yes.

POINT OF CLARIFICATION

Hon. E. David Burt: The language, of which you have read, Honourable Member, is no different than what exists in the 1983 Act, just so we are clear. So, that is the same language that existed in the 1983 Act. That language has not changed.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: Regardless of what existed in the 1983 Act, what I am hoping is that our Opposition Leader will look at the Bill and start to raise the question as to whether the Opposition Leader can have more than one person in their office. Because this is what it says. It says, "such number of persons as he deems fit . . ." And if that is the case, recognising that the Opposition needs to be viable and that the Opposition needs to be able to represent the people, then it will be good. Because then, recognising that if the Premier provides the budget . . . because, remember, all of these things go through the budget. Nothing happens relating to this unless budgeted monies have been allocated. So, I am just putting the marker down that any Opposition Leader should recognise that this provides a question that you can ask.

Now, whether the Premier of the day decides to find the funds, at least be aware that the Bill seems to indicate that you can have more than one person.

Now, the second thing that it relates to . . . and this goes down to the financial provisions. I am mindful of the fact that if we are going to have this, it is very important that people know where to look for the staffing. And I am a firm believer that it is important for us to know when people are brought on board at the time they are brought on board. Because then it means you know what they are doing; you can look at what they are doing as they do it to see whether the

expertise is appropriate, whether the delivery on what they are supposed to do [shows] results. And then, at the end of the year, I totally agree that at that point in time the Premier should indicate what has been spent during the year.

But I think you need to do it at the time so that you can evaluate, because at the end of the year if you suddenly realise all of the people who have been brought on board . . . you have no way of reflecting back to say, *Did that person deliver on what they said they were going to do?* And also, that is not the time to talk about whether the expertise was there to justify their appointment. So, I would like to think that the Premier, in terms of some of the other things that he said with respect to being transparent and providing information, would take on board that it would be good if the appointments were given to the public at the time they are made, and the rest of it, which talks about the expertise in the areas, given at that point in time. And that would supplement what the Bill already says, which is to give the information as to what they have been paid and what they did.

Now, I also believe that this then ties into what I think is important (and it does not say it here, but I would like to think that the Premier would consider it), that in order to be able to clarify who has been brought on as personal staff, it would be good if that information was all together. Right now, the Opposition Leader's and the Premier's staff are in a budget. And I think it would be appropriate if everybody's money was there. Because then you could look and you could actually see the money. And if the Premier has already told [the public] at the time [these consultants] are brought on board, you could see the budget. You could see who is there. And at the end of the year, you could find out (1) whether the money has been spent, and (2) whether it was an over-budgeting.

Then you can truly assess what happened with respect to that category—not have to try and figure out, if it is stuck in the various ministries, what happened? How much was spent? What they did, and whatever else. If you really want to talk about saying that this is a way of being transparent, this is a way of saying this is a necessary function and the people should know about it, then put it all together so that the public and the House would know what is actually happening.

I must admit I really do believe that . . . and I am looking forward to the code of conduct for the special advisors, because I think that when this happens, as I said, this will mean that people will understand what people are doing, and then you can assess whether it is money well spent. Now, I recognise that each person, each party makes a decision on whether it is money well spent. But recognising that it is coming out of the public purse, it is important to be able to say whether there has been either a delivery of information or a delivery of performance which says that it

justifies the special nature of their functions, whether it is the expertise or whatever else.

So, that is why I think the code of conduct is good, because you do not want people to inadvertently, in their desire to be able to support their party who has appointed them—whether it be the Premier or the Opposition—do something which causes them to either breach something in their enthusiasm to deliver on something or to make sure that they get a point of view out there, because there still has to be what I call an appropriate conduct. And I do not think that anybody wants to go over, above and beyond, inadvertently, not realising that the code of conduct is not a code of conduct that would normally be occurring.

It is just like here in the House. You have to remind us now and then when, in our enthusiasm, we say and do something which goes outside of the bounds to rein us back in. And that is why I think you have to make sure that this code of conduct does something, too, because sometimes, enthusiastic people can go outside of the bounds.

As I said, I have already talked about reporting at the end of the year because, as I say, this retro is something that I just think flies in the face of what we want to do. I do realise, and maybe people do not appreciate the fact that although you have a civil service whose job is to carry out the policies of the Government of the day—and I am reminding everybody that the civil servant's job is to carry out the policies of the Government of the day—sometimes you can get people with a dilemma, where they find themselves having to do things which their job requires, things which they might find difficult to do.

Whether it be the Government or the Opposition, this will make it easier for them to get the person whom they need to either write a statement or do something according to what their policy is, and their goals and objectives, and not create what I call a dilemma, where someone feels that they are between a rock and a hard place, because their job actually says that they are supposed to give the best, deliver the best information, deliver the best report, et cetera.

So, I think that, whether we like it or not, the reality is that in an island this size it is important for us to have the ability to be able to have your particular person appointed so that they know what they have to do.

I think those were generally the concerns that I had. And I would just hope that, as we go forward, as I say, the leader, our Leader, will take advantage of what I think is an opportunity. And in the meantime, I think my colleagues have covered the other concerns with respect to making sure that people have the expertise. I am very pleased that there is this thing about the conflict of interest. But as I say, if you have the code of conduct, that should make it easier for people not to do things which create a conflict of interest, because it should be very clear in terms of what people do. But also, I think it should make it easier for Minis-

ters not to appoint people into areas where they might find themselves having a conflict of interest, because it is drawing everybody's attention to what things should and should not occur.

So, with those comments, Mr. Speaker, I will take my seat.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to speak?

We recognise the Honourable Member Simons. Honourable Member, you have the floor.

Mr. N. H. Cole Simons: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be very brief.

Generally, I think the legislation has merit. My colleagues have addressed most of the issues, but my question evolves around remuneration packages. The question that I have, obviously, you know, we could have different types of consultants. We could have a communications consultant. We could have like a research advisor. We could have a chief of staff. And all of those consultants have various degrees of technical skills and abilities.

So, my question to the Premier is, How are they classified in regard to . . . in government you have the salary grades. Will that salary grade apply to these special employees, or consultants, so that there is some framework in place to ensure that the salaries are adequate, that they fall within a reasonable guideline, and that the Government gets value for money?

I would suspect that, you know, a chief of staff may make more than a research analyst who will be engaged by the Opposition Leader. So, can the [Premier] speak to how he arrives at the salaries or at the fees charged for the consultants, and if they are in line with other guidelines that exist that are similar to the salary grades within government?

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member wish to speak?

We recognise the Opposition Whip. Honourable Member, you have the floor.

Ms. Susan E. Jackson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I am cautiously optimistic with the implementation of this Bill. My focus today is really to dig a little deeper into the actual functioning of the personal staff. So, in a perfect world we would have very clear guidelines and a very clear framework on the responsibilities of our various subject-matter experts within the civil service. And as we are beginning to build out the framework and structure around the higher levels of office, such as the Premier's personal staff, the Ministers' personal staff, this is an opportunity for us to be very transparent and very structured in our approach.

In my understanding, the personal staff, whether they are political advisors or policy analysts, are really there to provide the direction and accounta-

bility for not only the political strategy of the government, but also for the implementation of policy and making sure that what a Minister or a Premier may put in place as a policy is actually carried out and that it is reported back to the Premier.

So, if we are going to go down that road, then I am highly supportive of the implementation of this Bill today, because I do believe that it is important for the higher office to have political advisors who will make sure that the Premier and the Ministers are staying on direction, that whatever their strategies and their mandates are, that they are being carried out. I mean, it is what it is. Other governments do it. This is not unusual. But the important part is not to have political advisors or policy analysts who are going to come in and not have the subject-matter expertise or the qualifications to be able to carry out those duties, because they are, oftentimes, going to be difficult. Sometimes, the policy analysts might be in a position where they have access to something like a Cabinet paper, and they may be the ones who are actually coming up with suggested policies to be presented to the Premier, who may then take them to Cabinet.

So, it is a very high-functioning position. If you are going to go that route, the qualifications of the people who have those roles need to match the level of seniority and responsibility of the task at hand.

Now, in my research I notice that there has been, with the hiring of consultants . . . and in particular I am looking at a very recent advertisement, the [request] for a consultant for Education. There was an in-depth article that was made public on not only the qualifications of the consultant or consultancy, but also the terms under which they would be employed, what they would be tasked to carry out and a time frame by which to get it done. And it is that kind of transparency and level of understanding that I believe helps the taxpayer to understand the value-add for this kind of investment.

And if we are able to produce some sort of . . . you know, it would be nice, rather than retrospect, if it were before an analyst or a personal staff were hired that there would be some level of explanation and some sharing of the qualifications of that applicant in order to provide us with the information that we need, so, as taxpayers, there is a level of comfort that the job will be done. And if the job is getting done, then whatever Government happens to be in power at the time, we know that there is somebody there who is guiding it along and that the policies and the platforms which that particular governing political party won the [election] on, that those things will be carried out and will not just kind of wallow about and not sort of progress.

And a perfect example of this, whether it was the former Government or the sitting Government, you know, when you have a situation like the T. N. Tatem Middle School, if there is a policy that is being put in place by a Minister, by a Government, and that policy,

if there is no one there to check, if there is no one there to identify reports, if there is no one there to follow through, if there is no one there to push through the Government's mandate, then we are going to run into these kinds of stalemates on a regular basis.

And so, it is going to be our job as parliamentarians to have a level of oversight to say, you know, if Education decides to hire a policy analyst or a policy advisor, then we would expect that when the Government says they are going to do something, that there is somebody there who is going to see it through, who is going to make sure that whatever policy was established is actually going to happen. And we are not going to find ourselves in a situation where nobody can find the report, nobody knew who was supposed to do what, we do not know how much . . . whatever the stumbling blocks and the hurdles may be, that we are not running into a lot of challenges in the future and that we see policies implemented on a smooth and consistent basis. And then we can start to see some real results.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to speak?

We recognise the Honourable Member from constituency 22. Honourable Member Pearman, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I just really have two high-level points. I will make some comments in Committee, but I have two high-level points to make about the Bill. The first relates to the issue of good governance, and the second to the issue of financial expenditure.

As to the first, the Deputy Premier earlier this week gave a speech to a gathering of ombudsmen from the Caribbean, in which he reaffirmed the PLP Government's commitment to good governance, transparency, and allowing the public to know what is happening. And I commend him for that speech, and I hope that this Bill will be modified to take into account that pledge made by the Deputy Premier earlier this week, or reaffirmed.

This Bill is about really how government works. And one of the benefits of the Westminster-type system and British and Commonwealth Governments is that we have an independent civil service. And yes, there are political appointees, and we see that in other jurisdictions. This does happen, and it is what I would describe as a necessary evil. But when you have political appointees, the thinking behind that, or the justification for that is because they stand next to the civil servants, and there is a difference between the independent civil servant and the non-independent political appointee, when that person is standing there, or in this case, persons (because the Bill envisages up to two for each Minister), it is supposed to be

this person providing some level of particular expertise to the Minister or to the Premier. It is not supposed to be an opportunity to appoint people to salaries paid by the public purse simply because they happen to be friends or family or political cronies of the particular political party in power at the time.

So, it is a necessary evil, but we do need to be careful about surrounding Ministers with political advisors who are paid by the taxpayer and who can have a detrimental effect on the other independent civil servants who are trying to do their job properly and with independence. So, with that warning, and if I could also adopt a comment made by the Honourable Member Jeanne Atherden earlier, which is that it would be beneficial, if we are really pursuing good governance, to see a code of conduct produced for these individuals. And there is no reason why that should not be so. If anything, these political consultants, political appointees, may well have more influence over the relevant Minister than the independent civil servant professional. So why should they not have a code of conduct that applies to them?

Turning to the second point, Mr. Speaker, the financial consideration. With respect, and I recognise the motivation behind the Bill, but is this really the best time to be using the people's money to expand the entourage of the Premier? Is this really the best time to be using the people's money to be giving paid political consultancy roles, one or two, presumably, for each of the 10 ministries? I respectfully suggest that it is not the best time, and I think it is a bold move by the current Government to bring this Bill. But on the head, be it.

Other than that, Mr. Speaker, I will speak in Committee. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Member wish to speak?

I recognise the Honourable Member from constituency 9. Honourable Member Moniz, you have the floor.

Hon. Trevor G. Moniz: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will start off where that Honourable Member finished up. I do not think that the public has a very high regard for the political class. And that certainly includes OBA supporters; it also includes PLP supporters.

And the people assume—

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. Trevor G. Moniz: The Member says he does not think that is true.

The Speaker: Speak to the Chair. Just speak to the Chair, and that will keep you out of trouble.

Hon. Trevor G. Moniz: I think he had better read his mail.

[Laughter]

Hon. Trevor G. Moniz: He was mentioned at *Dispatchers* recently in a very humorous blog post. But I think they are out of touch if they do not realise that the public is not in favour of spending on large entourages for politicians. And I know that, you know, as the Member who spoke before me said, the Honourable and Learned Member, the public do not support politicians having larger and larger entourages. This country is in economic trouble. We all know that. We have got a huge national debt. We are paying interest on the national debt that is over \$100 million per year. We are in trouble. We have seen 12 months of declining retail sales, month after month after month after month after month.

Need I really tell anyone that, Mr. Speaker? We have seen a severe loss of business confidence. We have seen a severe loss of consumer confidence. Consumer confidence you can see is down just from people not buying cars anymore. Car sales have plummeted—

An Hon. Member: Thank God.

Hon. Trevor G. Moniz: —because people are saying that they are not going to spend that amount of money.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Members! Members!

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Members!

Hon. Trevor G. Moniz: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable and Learned Member Michael Scott can get up and speak any time he wants.

The Speaker: Members!

Hon. Trevor G. Moniz: Now, those retail sales are down. We have seen job losses, major job losses in the international business market. We have seen it through mergers. I think we saw it through RenaissanceRe and Tokio Millennium. Some 60 people lost their jobs. We have seen several others with about 30 people who lost their jobs. And those jobs are both expat and Bermudian, guest workers and Bermudians. And they are both a big hit to our economy. We obviously do not need more Bermudians out of jobs. And when guest workers lose their jobs, that is somebody with an empty apartment out there who is not earning any income.

And we know the land tax has gone up. All the taxes are going up. Everybody is getting hit, and everyone is having to pull in the reins of their purse at home and spend less money. And we are saying, *Has Government got the message?* The answer is no! This Government has not got any message! You have seen the great echo of silence on that side, a little bit of chirping, but that it is. Members do not want to get up and speak about this. They know they are severely embarrassed by the nepotism that has been shown out there, with Ministers' wives being hired, with Ministers' children being hired.

The Speaker: Stick to the point. Stick to the point.

Hon. Trevor G. Moniz: The problem is that people have seen through it. They have seen through it. And they have seen abuses by this system which the people might put up with in politicians, but not at a time of this sort of economic hardship, when people do not have jobs! The man in the street sees these politicians, *There they go. They have got their snouts in the trough again.* That is the view of the person in the street.

Government should be pulling in its horns. And what the person in the street sees this as, and you just go on the blogs and see it—and this is PLP supporters—they see this as a rear-guard action to paper over the cracks, to put some sort of respectability on the abuses that are taking place. And everybody knows that from the person-in-the-street point of view it looks like the “friends and family” plan is back in place.

So, the Premier is saying, *Well, how can we paper over the cracks and look like what we're doing is above board?* But people are not going to accept that. People are hurting out there. People are hurting out there. This Government is not producing. And we know the litany of those things. They cannot keep the buses running. They cannot collect the trash. It goes on. They cannot keep the schools running. I mean, one after the other, we have disaster after disaster after disaster.

We should be talking about the education system here today. We should not be sitting here talking about how Ministers can fatten themselves by having a larger entourage! That is not what we should be doing in this House! We need to address the needs of the people, not fattening politicians.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to speak?

We recognise the Honourable Member from constituency 7. Honourable Member Richards, you have the floor.

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to follow on from the comments by my honourable colleague. You know, it is interesting being a Member of Parliament and also working in the private sector. And I always view things through the lens of, *what happens outside of the realms of politics?* And we live in a time, Mr. Speaker, where businesses and companies are looking for increased efficiencies. *How can we reduce costs? How can we become more efficient?* And I have to give credit to the Government for putting together this Efficiency Committee to look at how they can do the basic things such as collect the taxes that are sitting out there uncollected, and how they can streamline processes and whatnot. That is good.

But where this Government is falling down, Mr. Speaker, is when it comes to staffing levels. Okay? All I have seen since I have been here, since this Government has been elected, is that they are increasing staffing levels hand over fist. And that goes against what happens in the real world. In the real world people are being asked to do more with less. Okay? Everybody is tightening their belts. The Government lives in this ultimate reality where they do the exact opposite. And it is baffling to me. It truly, truly is. I do not see the logic in it. I do not see the necessity in it.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I was a Minister. And when I was made a Minister, I was told by my PS, first day, *You know, Minister, you can hire a consultant. You can hire two consultants. You can do this and do that and do the other.* And, Mr. Speaker, my personal view was like, *If I need somebody to come in and assist me other than my Permanent Secretary and a whole room full of civil servants who are out there, something is wrong with this process.* And I said, *I don't need a consultant.*

It is the same reason why I did not drive a GP car. I never drove a GP car. And it is a little thing, but it is a big thing to the people of Bermuda who, like my honourable colleague said, have a very tarnished, terrible opinion of all politicians. We are all being labelled as fat cats who do not care about the small guy, who lie, who are hypocrites, who backtrack on what they say. We all know that is what is out there!

And I heard one Honourable Member say that is what they say about me. That is what they say about all of us. And you know it to be true! You read the blogs just like I do. We have to do better as politicians!

So, when I see a Bill before us that is not new, it is not doing anything but formalising a process that is already in place that is being abused, this is called backfilling. Okay? The Progressive Labour Party got caught out because of what was revealed about their consultants and people whom they are hiring and people whom they are rewarding because they are supporters of the Progressive Labour Party. They are

mouthpieces for the Progressive Labour Party, and they are being rewarded financially.

So, I have questions with this legislation. It has already shown that sitting Members of Parliament are going to be employed as consultants and paid extra. So, you are going to use this to bolster the pay of an MP who probably feels that he is not paid enough. And I know that there is a sentiment over there where MPs, particularly on the backbenches are: *We want more money. We're not paid enough. So, how can we do this and make it look clean?* It is ridiculous!

It is a ridiculous situation. And that is why it is quiet over on that side.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to speak?

Premier, it is now three minutes before 12:30. Would you like to take a break, or would you like to start now?

Hon. E. David Burt: I will start now, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Continue.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of the Members Opposite. There are some persons who are speaking from positions of being misinformed, and there are some persons who are trying to make a meal out of something where a political meal does not have to be made. And if Members were so interested in hearing what I actually had to say, I would not think that they would get up and leave, especially as they finish speaking.

But, Mr. Speaker, let me just help Honourable Members opposite, because what we are doing here is not creating and/or changing anything. Let us just be clear. So, what exists currently right now is a ministerial code of conduct. The things which will transpose from the ministerial code of conduct will now go from a policy into set and established law. That is the first thing.

The second thing is, Mr. Speaker, that just as in the ministerial code of conduct, all positions need to be budgeted for. This is now stated inside of law. It is similar to the law of which existed when it only applied to the Premier and the Opposition Leader, Mr. Speaker. So, the comments from the former Attorney General, who, of course, threw his bombs and left, says that there are increasing entourages. There are no increasing entourages. Let us be clear on what this lays and sets out, Mr. Speaker. This is putting a structure around a particular process.

But here is something when there is a question and an issue of fairness, Mr. Speaker, because it

seems as though persons opposite do not understand, even though they should understand, as they were in these roles recently. There are different dimensions to political advice and/or consultants which exist. There are full-time consultants. There are part-time consultants. There are limited-term consultants. There are persons who are open-ended, who may be persons who are working with Ministers on a day-to-day basis or working with the Opposition Leader on a day-to-day basis. There are differing dimensions to this. So, in order for persons to try to throw it all into one box and say that this is the case . . . it is not.

Regarding a comment, I would say, from the Opposition Leader, there are a few things. Number one, there is a general term which has been said by the Members opposite about the question of things being done retroactively. The thing is, Mr. Speaker, that we set out in all of our legislation timing of where reports are made to this Legislature and the timing when these reports are made to the Legislature on the budgetary process. If Members want to ask questions or other things, otherwise, then they are welcome to do so. But we felt that it would make the most sense to lay it all out in one document on an annual basis. And that is the decision of which we have come to.

What I think is also interesting, Mr. Speaker, is that we spoke about, and the Opposition Leader spoke about, the recommendations of the SAGE [Report] and the civil service reform. Well, yes, Mr. Speaker, those recommendations were stated there. But I think it is very important that we recognise what the dimension of a private office should be. Private offices are not just . . . Private offices are not just . . . I would say private offices are not just the person assisting the Minister directly, or the Premier. But there could be multiple dimensions to that. So, there was a suggestion that, you know—

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: —there are public officers who should be used—

The Speaker: Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: —inside of these particular issues.

The Speaker: Let me assist you with the time right now.

Hon. E. David Burt: Oh. You do not want me to just finish, Mr. Speaker? Because I will be about two more minutes.

The Speaker: I was about to ask you. Are you going to be short? Or would you like to move into Committee before lunch?

Hon. E. David Burt: I am going to be short. I would if I could, Mr. Speaker. I will be two more minutes.

The Speaker: Okay. Well, we will let you continue. You move us to Committee before lunch.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, because there was a discussion about, you know, whether or not civil servants should be involved inside of this, as well. But here is the thing, Mr. Speaker. So, in *my* office, I have a public officer who is assisting me, because there was a public officer who was found who was very good and could assist. But just to be clear, Mr. Speaker, even that was criticised by the other side. So, a public officer is used in support of the office—that is criticised. When a public officer is not used in support of the office—that is criticised.

Here is the challenge, Mr. Speaker. The challenge, Mr. Speaker, is what is important is that Government function and function well so that we can deliver. There will be persons who believe that Ministers themselves should . . . one of the challenges is that Ministers get sucked into the minutia. And we know what the “minutia” is, because I see the Honourable former Premier nodding his head. We know what minutia is. The minutia is great, whereas there are the issues of overarching policy which sometimes get missed, Mr. Speaker.

And so, for this, I think it is important to recognise that inside of—inside of—what it is that we are doing here, Mr. Speaker, there is very little change except for formalising a process and putting it into law. Now, there is one distinction, Mr. Speaker, which is important. And that one distinction is for full-time officers who serve Ministers, for those ones who are appointed under the existing Act, the Premier and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs Act, they have access to health care and social insurance contributions to be made on their behalf. Currently, persons who are not appointed under the Premier and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs Act are not given those benefits.

One of the things which we said, Mr. Speaker, across the board, in fairness, and some Members have indicated to me, is that there may still be places inside of the public service where there are persons who have been serving for long periods who do not have access to health insurance. What I will say, Mr. Speaker, as a matter of fairness as a labour Government, that what we do not want [to have] is persons who are employed for long periods of service without access to benefits. And that is the difference and the challenge.

As was stated in my Ministerial Statement in March, all contracts that currently exist will be re-

viewed in line with the fact that the benefits package may or may not be changing. And when this Act is brought into force, we will be able to publish those particular items. We want to set it out so that there is not a question in discrepancy on this, because here is the thing, Mr. Speaker. It is an important part of Government to function, that Ministers be able to have access to the services and support which they need and that the public service be made to be impartial, Mr. Speaker. That is a key point. And it is a very important balance to strike. And that is why these provisions which have been put here in law are similar to provisions which exist in other jurisdictions, such as the United Kingdom and Canada.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I will wrap up my remarks there. And I will ask that the Bill be now committed.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.
Deputy.

House in Committee at 12:34 pm

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

PREMIER, MINISTERS AND OPPOSITION LEADER PERSONAL STAFFS ACT 2019

The Chairman: Mr. Premier, it is at that time. Do you want to move that we adjourn for lunch?

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
Mr. Chairman, I move that the Committee do now adjourn for lunch.

The Chairman: We will return at two o'clock and go into full Committee. House adjourned.

Proceedings suspended at 12:34 pm

Proceedings resumed at 2:00 pm

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Chairman]

COMMITTEE ON BILL

PREMIER, MINISTERS AND OPPOSITION LEADER PERSONAL STAFFS ACT 2019

The Chairman: Good afternoon Members. We are now in Committee of the whole [House] for further consideration of the Bill entitled [Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs Act 2019](#).

Mr. Premier, you have the floor.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, also I would like to note that I have asked the staff at the House to print the original Bill—the Premier and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs Act 1983—just for sharing with Members, as during the general debate there were lots of conversations on particular provisions which were lifted exactly from the existing Act and I think that will help at least inform Members as we are in Committee of the whole [House].

Mr. Chairman, if I may, I would like to move all clauses.

The Chairman: Yes, you may.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, clause 1 is the standard citation clause and is self-explanatory.

Clause 2 defines “personal staff.” And I think it is identical to the existing Act.

Clause 3, Mr. Chairman, provides for both the Premier and the Opposition Leader to appoint such number of persons as he deems fit to constitute his personal staff.

Clause 4, subsection (1), provides for each Minister, subject to the written approval of the Premier, to appoint a personal staff consisting of one or two persons. Subsection (2) specifies that these persons shall be either experts in their professional field or political advisers. Subsection (3) requires that before making an appointment, the Minister must ensure there will be no conflict of interest between the matters on which the person will be providing advice and assistance and his private or professional concerns. This section is modelled on section 9.1 of the existing Ministerial Code of Conduct as it deals with advisers or consultants. And this is a new clause to the specific Bill.

Clause 5 provides that the terms of appointment of a member of a personal staff shall be specified in the instrument of his appointment. And this is broadly similar to the 1983 Act, section 4(2).

Clause 6 caps the total remuneration of whatever kind payable to the personal staff of the Premier, a Minister or the Opposition Leader out of public funds to the amount provided for that purpose by the Legislature. And Members would note that this clause 6 mirrors the original 1983 Act section 4(3).

Clause 7 clarifies that the personal staffs do not form part of the public service of Bermuda, and persons on those staffs shall not be public officers of Bermuda, for any purpose. However, subsection (2) provides for their access to confidential information, and subsection (3) deems members of the personal staffs to be Government employees for the purposes of contributory pension (or better known as social insurance), payroll tax, and health insurance.

And, Mr. Chairman, I just want to make it very clear here on this particular issue, as I had mentioned

during the general debate that there was a discrepancy between personal staffs that worked for the Opposition Leader and myself, and then personal staffs who worked for other Ministers. And the fact is that, out of those persons, there was a disparate level of benefits. So persons who were in the employ of the Opposition Leader and myself did have access to health care, contributory pension and payroll tax, and those persons who were not, were paying all of those fees themselves.

Now, in some instances and cases that is fine, because for persons who are on a short-term consultancy basis, et cetera, that is just the regular part of the contract. And there have been some of those persons who have had short-term consultancies overall. Then there are others who are on longer term and engage in more of a support capacity for Ministers and in that particular instance is where this provision is here. That is one of the larger things that this is actually changing . . . that is the biggest impact or effect that this particular change would have.

The one other thing which . . . sorry. I will go on to clause 8, if I may, Mr. Chairman?

The Chairman: Yes, you can.

Hon. E. David Burt: And clause 8 references the 1983 Act, section 6 of the original Act.

Clause 8 provides that a personal staff constituted by a particular Premier, Minister or Opposition Leader shall cease to exist as soon as he himself leaves that office, but persons will be entitled to continue to receive remuneration for a period of 30 days. Subsection (3) deems a Minister whose portfolio is amended to have left office for these purposes.

Now, Mr. Chairman, in particular, regarding clause 8, subsections (1) or (2), are a direct reference to section 6 of the original Act. Of course, because there are now Ministers being brought into the fold underneath the provisions of this particular Act, clause 8(3) is new and just lays out the issue. But clearly, for persons that are inside of these positions, these staffs have always been personal to their appointers and so the same conditions which have existed currently are immediately the same transposed on clauses 8(1) and 8(2), for the avoidance of doubt, as there was some conversation in the general debate that there were some new provisions being inserted in regarding the notice period, I think, the 30 days.

Clause 9 is new and requires the Premier to make an annual report to the Legislature specifying details of all persons appointed to the personal staffs during the previous calendar year, Mr. Chairman. And that is self-explanatory in and of itself.

I do recognise that there was some conversation during the general debate on whether or not that was sufficient. The Government believes that it is the most efficient manner in which to do this, to ensure that every year a declaration will be made and that

declaration will be made so there can be no ambiguity on these particular things. There was some suggestion that it should be every single time there are different appointments and all the rest. And I think that it is also important to note that this is just for persons that are appointed underneath this particular Act.

The fact is that these “consultants” (as they are termed) or “contractors” or “temporary employees” or whatever way they are [described], there are those that are appointed underneath this particular Act, but there are also many others who work inside of the Government on many short-term or longer-term projects through many various departments and this is just counting for the ones inside of this particular Act.

One of the things we want to make sure we do is not to cause additional reporting burden, so we felt that this is the quickest and simplest way, so it will be done once a year.

Clause 10, subsection (1), repeals the Premier and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs Act 1983. Subsection (2) provides that the repeal does not affect the appointment of any person who, immediately before commencement, is a member of the personal staffs of the Premier or the Opposition Leader. Of course, that is a transitional provision.

Clause 11 provides for commencement.

And just for Members’ information, the commencement of this Act will be brought into place following items which I have said which were done previously. And those are: (1) the Code of Conduct; and (2) the revisions of the contracts which currently exist. Because there are contracts which currently exist for persons who are not getting health insurance or are responsible for their employer portions of their payroll tax and their full contribution to social insurance, those types of changes will be modelled and adjusted accordingly.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, that is the end of the clauses. I await comments from colleagues.

The Chairman: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

Any further speakers?

The Chair recognises the Honourable Member Mr. Pearman.

Mr. Pearman, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Premier, my first question is on clause 3 of the Bill. You quite rightly drew a contrast between the previous Act and the Bill, and you quite rightly acknowledged that one of the new elements appears in [clause] 3 where the Premier may “appoint such number of persons as he deems fit . . .” So there is no restriction for your appointment.

Are you able to share with the House whether you possibly intend to appoint more people to your current staff level? And if you do plan to appoint more people, is that going to increase your current budget for your team?

Hon. E. David Burt: The question is a little bit odd but, Mr. Chairman, I am happy to answer. At this point in time there is no such desire. And I guess I am confused as to the basis of the question because I am not sure that there is much difference than what exists inside of the current Act. The current Act said: "Subject to this Act, each of the Premier and the Opposition Leader may, if he so wishes, have a personal staff to assist him" and defines "personal staff."

So I am a little bit confused as to the basis of the question, but to answer it, not at this point in time, but things may change.

The Chairman: Mr. Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Chairman.

Premier, I am grateful for the response.

The next question I have is at clause 4 of the proposed Bill. Again, this is a clause that you rightly pointed out is new and not contained in the previous Act. This provides (and I will paraphrase) that the Ministers can provide either one or two persons. We know the Attorney General's political consultant is receiving \$104,000 a year because that was said to this House during the Budget Debate. Have there been any projections on budgeted costs for these, if we assume . . . you rightly pointed out in the debate previously about full-time and part-time. If we assume full-time people and two persons per Minister, have you budgeted out what that looks like for this clause addition . . . this additional clause?

Hon. E. David Burt: I would say that there are probably a few incorrect things, and I want to make sure that Ms. Renee's staff gets it right. I do not believe that the Attorney General's person (or the Minister of Legal Affairs) is being remunerated at \$104,000. I do not believe that is correct. I believe that this person . . . I am just letting you know—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. E. David Burt: No, no, no, the House was not told that. There was an assumption that was made. It was reported of the hourly rate and it was the assumption that was made that the individual was full-time and [it was] extrapolated. So let me just be very clear, as was stated previously, so I just wanted that to be known for the record. I am happy to go back to the questions and answers which were provided previously on those particular topics.

As for the budgetary constraints which exist, right now those things are captured inside of the Cabinet Office budget and also inside of the Opposition Leader's budget. Going forward, as I have stated previously in this House, I support the SAGE Commission's recommendation . . . sorry, the Sage Commission which was echoing what was laid down in the civil service review of 2011 for the creation of ministe-

rial private offices. Some private offices require a political dimension, others do not.

However, Mr. Chairman, I find it a little bit offensive, this term as we have heard throughout the general debate of talking "friends and family" and all of the rest. The fact is that Ministers have to trust the person who is their personal staff. These are individuals . . . so I know the way that my personal staff and many other personal staffs are, that personal staffs have access to the Minister's email account. And so from the perspective of us actually thinking that, you know, that someone is going to, I do not know, hire someone that they do not know, to give them access to their own email accounts kind of flies in the face of what this is.

And I do not want us to make this any more than what it is. This is providing a legal construct and [clause] 4 is transposing precisely what was inside of the Ministerial Code of Conduct that is here. Ministers have to: (1) have budget for this; and (2) make sure that it actually is justified and makes sense and is, therefore, approved by myself.

And, Mr. Chairman, I am happy, as I will have to on an annual basis defend what is done or what I have approved to constitute personal staffs for various Ministers. But to go back and to say that there is . . . and I will repeat, there is no intention at this present point in time to expand. There are some Ministers that do not have a personal staff, and I have actually implored them to look to take someone on because I want Ministers of Government focused on the transformational initiatives and I do not want Ministers of the Government focused on day-to-day management and responses to emails from queries here or other persons on small matters that do not necessarily require the Minister's immediate attention.

The Chairman: Any further speakers?

Mr. Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Premier, with respect, the question I asked was a very simple one, and it was just whether the new clause 4 had been costed, speculating that there are potentially 20 new full-time political advisors.

Hon. E. David Burt: Point of order.

The Chairman: What is your point of order, Mr. Premier?

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. E. David Burt: The Honourable Member is deliberately trying to mislead the House. I have tried my best to answer. The whole issue about stating that, *Oh, all of a sudden the Government is creating 20*

new full-time employees is not correct. Let us be very clear as to where this is. We all know—

Mr. Scott Pearman: Potentially—

[Gavel]

Hon. E. David Burt: —just to be clear, it could—

The Chairman: Let us, let us—

Hon. E. David Burt: —be potentially now underneath the existing Ministerial Code of Conduct.

Can we . . . so, let us just make sure that we are actually debating the facts here. The former Premier, who sits across from his Opposition Leader, the former Premier who sits over in the corner, also had access underneath this Bill. All Ministers of the Government, under the Ministerial Code of Conduct, were permitted to hire up to two persons—consultants and/or advisors—subject to budget. That has not changed. And I want that to be clear. Instead of that being contained specifically inside of the Ministerial Code of Conduct, it is now here.

However, it is also important to note that you have to refer to [clause] 6 and [clause] 6 says: “total remuneration of whatever kind payable to the personal staff of the Premier, a Minister or the Opposition Leader out of public funds shall not exceed the amount provided for that purpose by the Legislature.”

And in that conversation or discussion during the drafting of this it was noted that these budget line items and allocations are not currently inside of ministerial budgets and they will need to be added through the future budgeting process, so we will see.

But no, there is not an intent to hire 20 new persons to fill these roles. This is already what exists. We are formalising the process and making sure that long-term persons have access to benefits, which is fair, which mirrors what we have done in other positions inside of Government where people have been working for a long time without benefits, because it is fair to do that in the public service, just like it is fair to do that inside of the private service.

The Chairman: Any further speakers?
Mr. Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I do not accept that I was misleading the House in asking my question. I will just pose it one more time, Mr. Chairman, and then move on—

The Chairman: No, no, hang on, we are not going to pose that again.

The thing is, in the legislation . . . that comment you had, that question, is for the debate. We are in the Committee of the whole [House]. It says nothing in this legislation that they are going to hire 20 people.

Now, you could have asked that question before this debate, we are in Committee now.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Mr. Chairman, the question that I posed was whether or not this new clause in this new Bill has been costed. And I used my words very carefully—I did say “costed.”

The Chairman: Yes, yes, I am sorry.

Mr. Scott Pearman: And I do not think I have had an answer to that question. And I am happy to move on if the Chair directs, but that was my question, and if that could be answered, I would be grateful.

The Chairman: Mr. Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: There is no costing particularly required as there is no view to increase what already exists. Remember, these are costs that are not transitional. In some instances, as the contracts are reviewed, there may be a saving of money. That is the . . . so let us be clear here, when the contracts are reviewed and revised. But I think we need to be careful as to the specific point here, and the specific point here is what we are addressing. And the implication that we have to cost and budget something because all of a sudden Ministers are going to hire two per . . . is not fitting in with reality.

The Chairman: Any . . . Mr. Pearman, you have the floor again.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, and my question was answered. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I would now direct a question in relation to clause 8 of the Bill, and specifically [clause] 8(2): “A person holding an appointment on a personal staff immediately before the date on which the Premier, the Minister or the Opposition Leader who appointed him left that office shall be entitled to receive, for the period of 30 days commencing on that date, the remuneration provided for in his instrument of appointment.”

The question I have is this, it is just what this language is intended to achieve. As I read it, I think what it says is, if there is a political advisor appointed by a Minister, and that appointment ceases, the political advisor then receives a further one month’s or 30 days’ compensation. And that is how I have understood that clause to read.

The Chairman: Mr. Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Chairman, I will read to the Honourable Member from the 1983 Act.

The 1983 Act states: “[6] Personal staffs personal to appointors. A personal staff constituted by a particular Premier or Opposition Leader shall cease to exist as soon as he himself leaves that office; but a

person holding an appointment on such a staff immediately before the date on which the Premier or the Opposition Leader who appointed him left that office shall be entitled to receive, for the period of 30 days commencing on that date, the remuneration arranged for in his instrument of appointment." Which is precisely the same item which we have inside of this Bill.

However, the exception is that it adds "Minister" as we are expanding the remit of this particular piece of legislation. It is the exact same provision that was in the existing Act and that is what it is intended to achieve here. And I am certain the Learned Member understands what is being achieved here.

The Chairman: Mr. Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The defect that I think exists in the original legislation, and is maintained in [clause] 8(2), is that someone who is no longer serving as a political advisor to Minister A is collecting salary thereafter, but they, nonetheless, [are] appointed to be a political advisor to Minister B and would, therefore, be paid twice by this language.

Would the Premier consider adding a caveat where that person would not continue to receive payment if he was appointed, or she was appointed, to another political position?

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Chairman, I do consider that the Honourable and Learned Member is trying to stretch this very carefully. But what I will just let him know, and it is very clear, because he is a Learned Member, I am not going to take his trying to find this type of situation here.

Here is what I can say, and what I can say is that the situation which he mentioned happening is very unlikely to happen. And I think that when we talk about public officers who are (what is the best way I can say it?) responsible for the expenditure of public money, in this particular instance, that I think that they would make sure that someone is collecting redundancy from one place while serving in another aspect—that would defeat the spirit of this.

And given that these persons have to be approved by myself, I would make sure that this provision would not happen. And if there was a case where someone went to go work for someone else, if they were still being paid, then they would either not be paid or there would be a different arrangement. And I am happy to make sure that as part of any type of code of conduct that those types of things are reflected in that, just to make sure that particular provision does not happen.

The Chairman: Mr. Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just to that point, I mean, obviously, this subsection in this Bill is creating a statutory right. You as Premier, or indeed anyone else, would not have the ability to override that statutory right. And, therefore, what I am respectfully suggesting, given what I see as a problem with it, is just to add a caveat to the end that makes clear that payment would not be made where that person was appointed as political advisor during that same period. And I would think that you would welcome that change to clarify the situation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Any further speakers?

Mr. Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Chairman, I am just going to not . . . I am going to just say this to . . . I know the Honourable Member is new. I am going to learn him up a little bit.

If you have . . . if you have an amendment that you wish to bring during the Committee, the Standing Orders require that said amendment to be typed and done. And if there was a thought or a process—as we have had this Bill for quite some time—that there were some suggestions for changes, then that could have been done at that particular point in time to fine tune the language.

So I am sure that as we move forward on other Bills, the Honourable Member may submit those types of items. As it is written here and constructed, we do not necessarily believe that what he is suggesting is necessary, but we will be mindful of the . . . the . . . the possibility of this taking place. And I am certain that the person who will administer this particular Act, whether it is reflected in the Code of Conduct or otherwise, will make sure that it is carried out properly.

The Chairman: Any further speakers?

Mr. Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: My last comment, Mr. Chairman.

As the Premier has very kindly offered to "learn me up," I would respectfully suggest that it is the duty of all Members of this House to pass the best possible legislation. And if we, having had a Bill for only 14 days, identify something that is potentially flawed, it is my duty to raise it and, indeed, your duty to consider it.

But I make no further comment, Mr. Chairman.

The Chairman: Ms. Gordon-Pamplin.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I just wish to refer to clause 4(2)(b). And as was discussed before in the debate in the whole [House], the question was, Is there necessari-

ty for political advisors to be brought into this Bill as opposed to engaging consultants?

The difference between the two being that consultants will have their specific terms of reference and not be an additional strain on the public purse, where the individual has not been vetted for appropriateness by the process.

The Chairman: So the question for [clause] 4(2)(b), again, if you can repeat that?

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: As to [subsection] (2)(b) political advisors, is it not more appropriate to eliminate “political advisors” and just leave it at that such that we can include consultants so that Ministers can have the benefit of a consultant with defined terms of employment as opposed to being an ongoing charge to the public purse?

The Chairman: Mr. Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: I will try to answer in the best way I can, the Honourable Member’s question.

The fact is that these things are flexible because needs may be different in each particular time. As I have said, there have been instances in the last year . . . or not the last year, in the last two years or so, where there have been expert political advisors which have come on to work for Ministers for a short term and then they are done. So it is not an open-ended thing; it is a short-term arrangement.

But I do believe that the part where it says “political advisors” is lifting from the Ministerial Code [of Conduct]. This has been in existence for a very long time. This is not something that is particularly new. It is something that is putting put here, that is being codified in law, understanding these particular things, so we know going forward that if there is any type of change to these provisions they have to come here first in order to be blessed by the Parliament.

But I think it is very clear that we have to recognise the example which I gave earlier. There is an importance to protect the impartiality of the public service. And I can give no better example than in the situation inside of my office where I have persons who are public officers and persons who fall underneath this existing Act. And persons who are public officers do not get involved in the things that are inherently political. And that does not mean doing party stuff inside of government coffers—that is forbidden. That means, whether you are dealing with political advice that has to be given to Ministers, whether or not you are dealing with responding to persons inside of this House or others, making sure that the questions and queries which people have are addressed, or questions and different things that may come from constituents, which may require you to speak to other Ministers at other levels and get that type of intelligence.

And that is the reason why this separation is something that has occurred.

It is something that I have become more cognisant of the longer that I have been in this position—the importance of protecting the impartiality of the public service.

And so, in my office, I know that there are public officers who do certain things and then there are others who are not public officers, who are allowed to touch other things. And that is the way to make sure you preserve the impartiality of the public service.

The Chairman: Any further questions?
Ms. Gordon-Pamplin.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, in the absence of the Code of Conduct for advisors I would hope that—

The Chairman: What . . . what clause are you speaking on?

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: [Clause] 4(2)(b) “political advisors.”

The Chairman: Okay, right.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: I am saying the Premier had indicated that we would have a code of conduct relating to the operation of political advisors or a code of conduct that would cover what they can and cannot do. I am just wondering if the Premier can give us some indication as to when to expect the Code of Conduct relating to the political advisors so that this whole area can be clarified.

The Chairman: Mr. Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: I thank you very much. I thank the Honourable Member for her question. I know that I have a draft copy here; I know that it has not been finalised. It is largely finished and when it is done—which I would not expect to be any later than the end of June—I will be happy to table it inside of this House. But I am happy to show the Member, after the debate, the draft if she wants to take a peek at it.

The Chairman: Any further questions?

The Chair recognises the Honourable Member Pat Gordon-Pamplin.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Yes, I just have one question, and let me just get the proper clause. And it is with respect to the social insurance . . . the contributory pension, so this is clause 7(3)(a) and [clause] 7(3)(b). It is clear that a consultant working

with the government is not entitled to be on the Contributory Pensions [Act] or Payroll Tax Act or for GEHI.

So the question that I have is: If we do not have advisors, but rather have consultants (this is going back to [clause] 4(2)(b)) . . . if we have advisors rather than consultants, we will actually end up saving that money which could be built into the terms of their consulting agreement.

So my question is: Is the Premier concerned that under [clauses] 7(3)(a) and 7(3)(b) we are visiting on the public purse additional costs that really ought to be borne by the political advisors? As I said, in the absence of the terms of reference under [clause] 4(2)(b) there is no clarity. But under [clause] 4(2)(a) if somebody were an expert in their professional field then, clearly, the terms and conditions of a consulting contract could be easily defined and very clear. But under section 4(2)(b) this is literally anybody who can be picked up as the Premier decides.

Now, I am not looking so much, and this is not intended to suggest anything pejorative about the existing Premier, but any person holding that position . . . this is legislation that does not cover Premier David Burt, this is legislation that covers the office of the Premier. And while I have no doubt that the Premier himself may enforce certain vigilance in terms of what he signs off on, I do not know that this is appropriate to assume for anybody else coming and taking the office. So the question begs, Can we not focus on consultants rather than political advisors?

The Chairman: Mr. Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much.

The only thing I will say to the Honourable Member is that it is officially broad, but the fact is . . . and as I said during the general debate, there are always different types and constructs. So underneath this particular Act there may be a short-term consultant appointed for . . . who may also be doing other matters, you know, on a fixed-term contract, 15 hours per week, this type of work, until doing this where social insurance and GEHI may not be. And then you have the difference where you have persons who like to serve the Opposition Leader, who like to serve myself, who are constantly with Ministers, especially the busy Ministers, to make sure that all the various items which they have outside of their ministries, their private offices, you know, speech writing, tackling different things, appearances, calendars, gate-keeping, that all those types of particular items are also handled as well.

So as I said, there are different constructs and I think we have to be careful in trying to over specify the different constructs.

And I want to repeat, again, because, as you said, it is not personal to my office, but the office here, and it must be recognised and understood that any Premier or leader of the Government could appoint

consultants at any point in time, whether it is under this or outside of this. This Bill deals with persons who are under the Ministerial Code, specifically. But they can appoint someone else at any point in time and that happens—outside of this particular construct—and we need to be clear on that.

What I am saying is that for these items where persons may be of a political nature or something, to make sure that there are clear boundaries around it, and that is the reason why this is here. But I do not want you to think that, you know, when you were the Minister of Health or the Minister of Works and you might have had a consultant here doing that, that it may not fall under this particular Act, but it was handled a certain way. That right still remains and exists.

The Chairman: Any further speakers?

The Chair recognises the Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Cannonier, you have the floor.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Clause 9 speaks to the fact that the Premier will make a report to the Legislature specifying details of all persons appointed to a personal staff. And I guess what I wanted to . . . and that is commendable. In fact, I am glad to see that this will happen as we go forward. But I did speak concerning this during the general debate that, you know, there is potential for conflict of interest and the likes. And I am wondering if the Premier can let us know that, as a policy, will he allow the Ministers, himself, Opposition, myself, in this capacity, that, as a policy, we will announce if we make new appointments?

And the reason I say that is if the civil service has a job to fill, it is put out in the public notice what that salary might be, the position that they are looking for. And here we are now not covering that specific area with this clause here. So we may hire someone, but will not find out about it until the end of the year. As a policy could we agree to—when those appointments are made—that we would announce them in this House?

Obviously, you know, they could make a statement; I could make a statement, to the effect. So, I am just wondering if he would consider that to avoid some of the conflict and the rumours and the rhetoric that goes on that we both have experienced as governments.

The Chairman: Mr. Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: I thank the Honourable Opposition Leader, as we both experienced this as a Government, because I remember when I was sitting over there.

Here is the thing I will say, Mr. Chairman. I will say I welcome what the Opposition Leader has said. I am not going to commit the Government to that

course of action or policy. I believe what has been stated here inside of this Bill, which adds new transparency—an annual reporting of these particular topics—is far and above where we have been previously. Before it would always be the obligatory question that was asked . . . during our time, last time in Opposition, we asked the question only twice. We did go back and look. The question was asked twice. This will provide for an annual reporting of those particular things and I think it lays it out very well.

And so I do not believe I am going to commit the Government to any particular policy. But I understand what the Opposition Leader is saying, and I will certainly take it under advisement. I think that it is important for us to recognise that if the Government—any Government—is going to make sure that it has the ability to deliver on the actual changes that matter to the people of this country, then we need to make sure that the Government and requisite Ministers have the support which is necessary in order to support that delivery.

The Chairman: Any further speakers?

The Chair recognises the Honourable Member Mr. Pearman.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Also on clause 9, I support the Premier's indication that he wants to make the House aware of what is going on. However, what is going to be tabled in the House every year is only those people appointed during the previous calendar listing. Would it not make more sense to table a list of all political consultants each year?

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: Just so I am clear, clause 9 states that each person employed in that calendar year who has been appointed underneath this particular Act will be reported to the House. I am trying to figure out what shortage there may be.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Well, the obligation under clause 9 is only to table the name of anyone appointed in the last 12 months. If someone was appointed 13 months ago, you would not have their name tabled. If someone was appointed in the previous year, you would not have their name tabled. Would it not make sense, or more sense, just to table the names of all political advisors, as per clause 4(2)(b), and experts in their professional field as to [clause] 4(2)(a)? I mean, just an annual tabling of the political consultants.

The Chairman: Mr. Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: I . . . again, we are not talking about political consultants. But let us just roll this back.

On each year they are published. So in March of 2020, the list will be published and it will cover the period and point in time during the fiscal year. And given that a Parliamentary Question was asked by yourselves, I think that will fill the gap. And then we will . . . it is going to be a new process. So this is new and every year the item will be announced. If the Honourable Member feels that we may have appointed someone between the last question that was asked on this and the beginning of the last fiscal year in April, I believe I have it on authority, given I am the one who approves those, that we have not.

The Chairman: Any further speakers?

The Chair recognises the Honourable Member Ms. Gordon-Pamplin.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, just for clarity, if someone was appointed in the prior year . . . let us say somebody comes on board in January of 2019, as of March 31 they would not have been appointed within this calendar year. Therefore, the report that will come out on March 31 of 2020 would not include those people appointed between, say, January and March of 2019, because it is not within the calendar year. I believe it is important . . . and this is under clause 9. I think it is important that the public is aware of who is still serving.

So I believe the question that my honourable colleague had is that if we have somebody who was appointed, notwithstanding that they may have been . . . we may have known about it because of a Parliamentary Question, what would be the harm in saying at March 31 of next year, *These are the people who are still on board. A, B, C, D persons were appointed prior, and F to J or L people were appointed within this calendar year?* That way we will know whether there is continuity, whether there is somebody who was there before . . . because it does not say that we will speak to the people who have ceased to hold positions during that period. It only says the people who were appointed during that period.

So if somebody ceases their appointment, we will not be able to capture that if we do not know . . . if you were appointed in January you might have stopped in March or April—in April, let us say. You were not appointed during this period of time, but it does not show up. So, if you have somebody who was appointed last January [and] they are still there next March 31, this legislation would not list them.

So, the question is: Is there any way that we can see who is still current as political consultants or . . . what's the other name . . . experts in their professional field?

The Chairman: Mr. Premier.

Hon. E. David Burt: I thank the Member for her question and her point. I would see it a completely different way. But I will state the undertaking which I will give. And given that the Hansard is recording this . . . on each and every time that this report is given it will show the persons who were hired under this Act under that calendar year, whether or not they were appointed that year or appointed the year before and all the rest. I am not going to, all of a sudden, not report someone who was being paid out of the public purse.

So, on an annual basis it requires inside of the previous calendar year. So it may be as early as February, or, if the House decides, in January. It may come that soon where the persons who serve underneath this particular Act would be reported to the House. Not whether or not they were actually appointed, but persons who were appointed underneath this particular Act.

The Chairman: Any further speakers?

There appear to be none.

Mr. Premier, do you want to move these clauses?

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I move that clauses 1 through 11 be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that clauses 1 through 11 be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Approved.

[Motion carried: Clauses 1 through 11 passed.]

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I move that the preamble be approved.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the preamble be approved.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

Approved.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I move that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

The Chairman: It has been moved that the Bill be reported to the House as printed.

Are there any objections to that?

There appear to be none.

The Bill will be reported to the House as printed.

[Motion carried: The Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs Act 2019 was considered by a Committee of the whole House and passed without amendment.]

House resumed at 2:43 pm

[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., Speaker, in the Chair]

REPORT OF COMMITTEE

PREMIER, MINISTERS AND OPPOSITION LEADER PERSONAL STAFFS ACT 2019

The Speaker: Good afternoon, Members.

Are there any objections to the reporting to the House of the Bill entitled the Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs Act 2019 as printed?

There are none.

So moved.

We will now move on to the next Order, I believe . . . We are actually bidding time for a few minutes just to do a little housekeeping here, and then while the housekeeping is being done, we will just move on with that matter at that moment.

And the next Order is actually a motion, and that motion is in the name of the Honourable Premier.

Premier, I was going to read your motion out, but it is very lengthy, so I will let you read out your motion, how is that?

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes.

MOTION

REVISIONS TO MANDATORY PUBLIC SERVICE RETIREMENT AGE

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now take under consideration the following motion, notice of which was given on May 10th, 2019.

Mr. Speaker, the Motion reads as follows:

“WHEREAS the Government undertook in the 2018 Speech from the Throne to ‘revise the mandatory retirement age to take account of a longer lifespan, the necessity to add additional stability to pension funds and to promote greater choice among the working population about when one retires from full-time employment’;

“AND WHEREAS the Government undertook to cause the Legislature ‘to discuss options for such revisions to the age of mandatory retirement from the Public Service, which will preserve the right to retire at sixty-five but permit a post holder to work beyond that age without the requirement for permission to do so’;

“BE IT RESOLVED THAT this Honourable House supports the recommendations of the Subcommittee of the Labour Advisory Committee as contained in the Report ‘Reviewing the Retirement Age.’”

The Speaker: All Members heard that. Premier, you can proceed.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the concept of retirement is a relatively modern one. For centuries working men and women continued in their trade, field or profession until their health forced them to stop or at least slow down. The modern era of pensions and retirement was introduced in Germany in the 1880s as a means to stave off the growing movement towards socialism. Throughout history the implementation of pensions has been tried with varying degrees of success.

In 2013, in an article for the *Seattle Times* there was a short history of retirement that paints the background for the path pensions and retirement benefits have taken. And if you will give me permission, Mr. Speaker, I will quote from that.

The Speaker: Yes, continue.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

It reads:

“In 13 B.C., the Roman Emperor Augustus began paying pensions to Roman Legionnaires who had served 20 years. The troops’ pensions were financed at first by regular taxes, then by a 5 percent inheritance tax, according to a 2009 history by Frank Eich, an economist now with the International Monetary Fund.

“In the 16th century, Britain and several European countries offered pensions to their troops, starting with officers and gradually expanding to enlisted men. The first civilian public servant known to have received a pension was an official with the London port authority. In 1684, he was paid half his working income—deducted from the pay of his replacement.

“Thomas Paine, the Revolutionary War firebrand famous for his essay *Common Sense*, called for a 10 percent inheritance tax. Part of the tax was to be used to pay benefits to everyone age 50 and older to ‘guard against poverty in old age,’ according to a history by the Social Security Administration.

“The idea went nowhere.”

Mr. Speaker, here at home the mandatory retirement age of 65 has its origins as far back as the 1950s when it was a set age at which it was likely higher than the average life expectancy. The age has remained unchanged since that time and this, in spite of actuarial advice over several years, is driving the issue surrounding the health of pension plans today.

Mr. Speaker, history will record that it was the Bermuda Progressive Labour Party and the Bermuda Industrial Union that forged the path towards the insti-

tution of pensions for working people in this country. Part of Dr. E. F. Gordon’s landmark petition to the British Government in 1946, then as part of the Bermuda Workers’ Association, the forerunner of the BIU, was the lack of social security or pensions for workers.

It is no coincidence, Mr. Speaker, that the legislation around pensions first came into being in 1968—a year of significant global change. One of the key issues at stake in the 1972 construction strike was the demand for joint contributory pensions on behalf of working people in the skilled labour force.

And so, Mr. Speaker, we come to the present circumstances where, today, we have an opportunity to signal our support for an overdue change in how we approach our working lives. Honourable Members will recall that in last year’s Throne Speech this Government promised to, and I quote:

“Revise the mandatory retirement age to take account of our longer lifespan, the necessity to add additional stability to pension funds and to promote greater choice among the working population about when one retires from full-time employment.”

Mr. Speaker, it is almost trite now to state that we are living longer. The average life expectancy for Bermuda is now 81.3 years. In 1970, the year we introduced compulsory medical coverage for working people, it was 71 years. The retirement age, however, has been unchanged in that time frame.

Mr. Speaker, Honourable Members and the public will be aware of the various reports that speak to the health of the publicly administered pension funds that are designed to support people after retirement. The Contributory Pension Fund, funded by private sector workers and employers, is underfunded, and increases to the rate of contributions alone will not compensate for the perfect storm of an ageing population and the declining birth rate.

Similarly, Mr. Speaker, the Public Service Superannuation Fund, which is to benefit public sector workers, has an unfunded liability. But as my colleague, the Minister of Finance, indicated earlier this year as part of the Pre-Budget Report, the policy of increasing contribution rates by 2.5 per cent above the rate of pension increases has allowed a significant level of funds to build up and, thus, the plan is partially funded, which provides further security benefits.

Mr. Speaker, let me pause and say at this point that those who simply say that we need more people living and working in Bermuda is to do a disservice to that argument when they fail to include those men and women in this community aged 65 and over who can and want to continue working. They, too, will continue to contribute to the economic activity in Bermuda and it is a limited view to suggest that the only lever to be pulled in support of economic growth is that of immigration.

We have other tools to employ in the growth strategy, Mr. Speaker, and this debate must be viewed as one of them.

The last element of that 2018 Throne Speech promise, Mr. Speaker, is that of choice. Personal circumstances may dictate that a working person can retire comfortably at the age of 65. Within the public service to start, that choice will be retained. That leads the second portion of the Throne Speech promise, Mr. Speaker, which also forms part of the motion before this Honourable House (which I read earlier) and that is to invite the Legislature “to discuss options for such revisions to the age of mandatory retirement from the public service, which will preserve the right to retire at 65 but permit a post holder to work beyond that age without the requirement for permission to do so.”

Mr. Speaker, the retention of the choice of the retirement age at 65 is important for those currently in the public service and I wish to make it clear that it is the Bermuda Constitution, section 91(1), which prevents the imposition of any pension term less favourable than those under which a post holder was engaged.

Now, Mr. Speaker, moving on to the report.

Mr. Speaker, having provided the context and background for this debate, I turn now to deal with some of the more significant features of the report of the Sub-committee of the Labour Advisory Committee, [entitled] *Reviewing the Retirement Age*.

Mr. Speaker, the report comprehensively sets out the issues for the consideration of this Honourable House and the wider public. And I am grateful to members of the committee—Senator Jason Hayward, Dr. Claudette Fleming, Lindell Foster, Donald Lottimore, Lauren Smith, Peter Sousa, and Stephen Todd—for the methodology they have applied and the diagnosis of the problem, which extends beyond the natural process of ageing.

In particular, Mr. Speaker, at page 4 of the report in the section headed, *What is the problem?*, the committee states:

“Retirement has become a problem in Bermuda primarily because many persons are not financially prepared to retire. As a result of:

- The lack of access to appropriate pension plans and savings products;
- The lack of opportunity to begin savings at an earlier age; and
- The low levels of financial literacy to make sound financial decisions.”

Mr. Speaker, if we accept the premise of those points it speaks to a systemic flaw in our personal economies exacerbated by the systemic flaws in the general economy. Living longer—and certainly beyond the age of 65—is a demographic reality that must now be married with economic reality. As legislators and representatives of the people, this is an area ripe for our intervention on so many levels. It is a fresh challenge to us to change the paradigm of how we educate our people around financial decisions, investing and money management. More than long life we must want a quality of life for our citizens that can only

be achieved if we are prepared to challenge some of the systemic approaches to finances and personal economic growth in Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, Bermuda is, to some extent, catching up to a number of other democracies. Honourable Members will note on pages 9 and 10 of the report there is a retirement age comparison which sets out how other countries have approached this issue. In some cases, there has been an abolition of mandatory retirement on the basis that it discriminates. Elsewhere minimum retirement ages have been instituted as part of pension reform or to reflect stark declines in the birth rate. In a familiar geographic representation, page 6 of the report draws on the 2016 Census data to reflect Bermuda’s ageing population. Honourable Members will note that between 2010 and 2016 the number of persons aged 65 and over increased by 3 per cent, resulting in the median age of the population increasing from 41 to 44 years.

Additionally, Mr. Speaker, as at Census day 2016, 49 per cent of the population is over the age of 45, an increase from the 44 per cent recorded in 2010.

Now, Mr. Speaker, on to the options and recommendations that are contained inside of the report.

Mr. Speaker, the motion now under consideration invites this Honourable House to support the recommendations of the committee as set out in the report. I would invite Honourable Members’ attention to pages 11 through 15 of the report, which canvass these matters.

Option 1—that the status quo should continue, is untenable and, in my opinion, should be dismissed out of hand.

Mr. Speaker, Options 2 through 5 all have merit and will be further examined as we determine how best to effect the implementation of the revision of the retirement age within the public service.

I must highlight, Mr. Speaker, that the options presented are either cost neutral, or present no cost to the Government in their adoption.

Mr. Speaker, I can advise this Honourable House that the committee’s recommendations have been subject to other discussion in Cabinet and that in addition to the views of the Honourable Members in this debate, my expectation is that we will introduce amendments to the Public Service Superannuation Act to give effect to the Government’s policy, which will see an increase in the mandatory retirement age of public officers while preserving the right to retire at the age of 65.

Mr. Speaker, a constant theme that binds the findings of the report is the view that mandatory retirement provisions in our current construct, whether applicable to the public service or as adopted by the private sector, constitutes a form of age discrimination.

Mr. Speaker, the demographic realities of Bermuda mean that there is some force in this argu-

ment. Therefore, I can advise Honourable Members that I have asked the Minister for the Cabinet Office, the Minister responsible for the Human Rights Commission, to advance consultation in conjunction with commissions on the best means by which to further strengthen provisions that deal with age discrimination ensuring, in the words of the report, equality in “recruitment, hiring, compensation, benefits, training, working conditions, and career development.”

And, Mr. Speaker, before I move on with my prepared remarks on this particular matter—and I think it is an important part of the discussion in this debate on this Motion today—and I am looking forward to hearing the contributions of various Members, because, obviously, Mr. Speaker, there certainly is a challenge. Age discrimination is real in Bermuda. It is real and it is something which we experience on the doorsteps.

And the challenge that we see right now with age discrimination, Mr. Speaker, is that it is not just for those persons who may reach the age of 65 and then wish to retire. It is for those persons who are in their 50s who may have been let go from a previous job and who want to work, who may be qualified, but are not given the job because of their age . . . because they are 55, or close to retirement, and for other reasons et cetera, as opposed to someone who may have had longer terms, Mr. Speaker. It is an acute challenge. And I want the persons in the public who are listening to recognise that Government understands that particular challenge. It is more than the conversation of those persons who are over the age of 65. It is also, when dealing with the question of age discrimination, those persons who are close to retirement who still have challenges working.

And the painful stories of those persons who are in their 60s, who may have been let go from a particular job, who literally cannot find work because persons say they are too close to retirement . . . that has to come to an end, Mr. Speaker. And I give the commitment to the persons who are in those particular circumstances that we will deal with that particular issue as it has been dealt with in a lot of other countries. Because it is unfair for persons in that particular circumstance that they are denied the right or opportunity to work just because of their age and their closeness to retirement. I will go on with my prepared remarks, Mr. Speaker.

Likewise, Mr. Speaker, we must address with urgency the financial awareness of our population. So often we work hard and become consumed with meeting the demands of today that the future seems distant. The ability to work longer must be accompanied by the knowledge that enables us to work smarter. We must promise people more than a longer working life, but longer lives of financial security and quality of living.

In the first instance, the Policy and Strategy section within the Cabinet Office will work with the

committee, unions, churches and sports clubs and other key constituencies to implement the recommendation of a financial and retirement planning toolkit, which was recommended inside of the report.

Mr. Speaker, as I commend this motion for the further consideration of the House and the recommendations for the support of its Honourable Members, it is important that I add additional context around the discussion.

All of the dialogue in health care, financial assistance, employment, and now retirement age, may seem as if it is to the exclusion of young people in Bermuda. I wish to make it clear, Mr. Speaker, addressing these issues today will make for a lessened burden on younger, healthier Bermudians today and tomorrow. There is a balance to be struck in the development of any policy, and this Government is keenly aware that we must ensure that Bermuda is open to its young men and women who [on the] whole, and as we have seen, have longer lives ahead of them. This Government is determined to strike that balance.

And while the subject of this debate confines us to targeting a population of over 65s, young people form a key foundation for the growth and diversification of this economy and the cultural nexus of this community. The financial and retirement planning starts with those who are closer to my age than to 65, and the change in the systemic flaws, to which I referred earlier, begins with those who we now support in full-time education and who have long careers ahead of them.

Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to now commend this motion for the consideration of Honourable Members, and I look forward to the hopeful unanimous support of this Honourable House from the recommendations that have been set out in this report.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

Does any other Member wish to speak?

We recognise the Leader of the Opposition.
Honourable Member, you have the floor.

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Yes, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I will follow where the Premier left off to say that, yes, in fact, we spent some time [considering] this in years in the past and in this current period of time, and we do believe that this is a very well justified move that the Government is taking.

Certainly, I have had the opportunity to read through this report that was provided by the Labour Advisory Committee and I will take just a little time just to go through some of the highlights, as the Premier did, because many in the public have probably not had the opportunity to read this. But it is a great read and the committee did a great job at dispelling some of the myths that are out there about seniors and the fact that we certainly do have a challenge in some

instances where seniors are being overlooked, and those who are not seniors who, as the Premier said, in their 50s, are being overlooked for potential jobs.

What I will say is this: In my working experience I have noticed a continuing trend that many of the 65-year-olds can run circles around some of the 30-year-olds that are in the workplace. And what I have found in my experience, quite frankly, is that the more senior members in the workforce are by far more dependable and accountable in the workforce. Now, that is not to say that young people are not accountable and dependable. But it is becoming more and more apparent that the experience that a 65-year-old has and the vitality and youth that they have has lent themselves to being able to bring a whole lot to the dinner table.

And to have a position whereby it is compulsory for you to retire at 65, quite frankly, goes against the grain of one of the biggest challenges that Bermuda has. And that is a limited number of people—a limited number of people that are paying into the health plan, a limited number of people that are paying into the pension plan.

And I believe that the motion lays out clearly the three approaches to increasing the age of retirement. And that is to take into account the longer lifespan of Bermudians, those in the working field; and to add some stability to the pension fund, which we know we need. And it also offers greater choice, greater choice to Bermudians who own businesses to be able to look at a field of people that cross the spectrum, whether it be . . . in the field of age, per se, which is what we are talking about.

I go back to the fact that . . . and I have said this many times in the House before, Bermuda's birth rate is extremely low. In fact, I have gone as far as to say that it is almost in the negative levels, that we certainly are not providing a next generation after the previous generation—enough of us—in order to be able to pay into the pension funds and the health insurance and the likes to sustain us. And it is one of the reasons why I have pressed and pressed and pressed on the issue of immigration and how we need to get more people into the working field, because we certainly are not having enough Bermudians that we are feeding into the system.

And so I have even jokingly said that we are going to have to ask some people to come out of retirement and have some more kids in order to get our birth rate to a positive level. But it is a major concern.

And one of the ways of being able to address this . . . I believe that the Government is addressing this, and has come to the conclusion that if we do increase the retirement age . . . you know, I am looking at my friend over in the corner there. Cousin, you know there is still availability for a job for you, man, after politics.

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: And I am extremely concerned about the numbers of those in the working force in Bermuda. We need to start doing something about it immediately. This is one of the ways that we can address it—by extending the age of retirement to 70.

I still was not quite sure, specifically, the recommendation that the Premier is going with. As I read through the report, there were several options that are there. And at the very end of the report it does clearly state what it recommends to Government. And I will go through that as I speak just briefly here.

I also recognise that since 2006 the report states . . . and let me just go to it to quote it exactly, on page 4. It states that “the population aged 65 and over grew by 23 per cent . . .” I think that is a typo, so hopefully whoever is in charge within Government will take a look at that. I think it should be 3 per cent. If you look at the graphs, I believe it should be 3 per cent. But please just check that. I think it is just . . . it is just a typo, I believe. But to have our senior population grow so quickly—in six years—by 3 per cent is quite incredible, and it speaks to the longevity and the health of our older and ageing population in Bermuda. And, certainly, we have some of our challenges when it comes to health, but we are certainly living a lot longer and doing a lot more at a more senior age.

It was highlighted also that if we do not . . . if the problem . . . on page 4 it says, “If the problem is left unaddressed, the financial stress on individuals, pension plans and the Bermuda Government will [continue to] grow.” So I do say and recommend and support this direction that we are going in. I kind of cheekily said to my wife, *Well, you know, you're not going to be able to retire at 65.* Which is, quite frankly . . . well, I should not give her age, but it is literally with—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Not even close to that, man. On one hand, less than half of one of my hands, incredibly.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: But that . . . she may have to wait a couple of years. I must say, she started throwing things around.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: No, I am just teasing there.

But one of the challenges I have recognised is that too many think of a retirement plan far too late in Bermuda. And maybe that is because, you know, Bermuda has done so well financially over the past years . . . decades. That is not the case now, and we are seeing more and more and more where our sen-

iors are finding it far more difficult to survive in the economic environment that we are in. We also recognise that employers are having difficulty—those of us who own our own businesses—in being able to maintain Bermudian staff. And so we need to be able to know that we have an option, and this provides one of those options for us.

But, again, there are far too many of us . . . we need to get (which is addressed in this report) to getting the information out there. And I am glad to see that the recommendation in here says that the Government needs to get more information out there about the options and how to start that planning early on in age, and even at a later age, that you should be taking this into consideration. Because all of us, you know, I guess at some point in time we feel like we have been drinking from the fountain of youth and pretty soon age does catch up with us, and so we do need to be planning.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: Speak for myself, yes.

[Laughter]

Hon. L. Craig Cannonier: We do need to start planning so that we can continue to have a healthy workforce at a later age.

Now, I wanted to go over to page . . . if you do not mind, Mr. Speaker. Let me just find it here very quickly. Again, I will just say hopefully that we can get that typo fixed so that the public, if they do get a hold of this report, can actually get the right numbers.

On age discrimination, on page 8, it states that during the same period (talking about from 2000 to 2030) it is expected that the 65-plus will go from 11 per cent to 22 per cent. I mean, that is not too far from now, when you think about it, and that is a tremendous number of members of the 65-and-over age [group] that will be in that bracket.

And many companies, as we heard the Premier speaking to this here, were using the justification that if one senior goes out then that provides an opportunity for another young person to come in. And I get that kind of thinking; I understand that. But one of the things that is challenging is it still does not fit within the challenges that we are having here in Bermuda.

Now, certainly, there will be job categories where it would be adverse to have seniors—maybe which require more physical-type work—in those particular positions. But I do believe that we need to come up with a plan. We need to come up with a policy that addresses this issue which is fair to everyone, because certainly young people might start saying that this is age discrimination as well. And so it is going to be important that this Government, as they move forward with this motion, comes up with something that addresses all the needs. When we start talk-

ing about age discrimination, it may not just be a case of seniors; it could be a case of those younger as well complaining about this here. But I do believe that we can strike that balance in Bermuda, knowing that we have a limited number of people that are working within that workforce.

Now, when it comes over to the recommendations that were made by this report, I must say that some great detail has gone in to come up with . . . not creative, but just some very logical approaches to what it is that we need to be doing. And I take note that on the very last . . . on page 15, Mr. Speaker, I will read this out because it is important for us to be very clear on the recommendation for the Government. So it will be interesting to see what the Premier comes back with, but the recommendation number one says that this committee recommends:

“Create a single piece of legislation that sets a retirement age, a pensionable age and allows for re-employment provisions. The aims of the legislation will:” (Bullet point one) “Gradually increase the retirement and pensionable age simultaneously from 65 to 70 over a 10-year period, with the retirement age moving to 68 within a 5-year period.”

And then, of course, that second half period moving it to 70, and this makes sense. I see the logic in that. It gives people the opportunity to prepare. It gives anyone within the private sector who wishes to do this also to move in that direction. We do understand that this has to do with the civil service, the public service, and not private business itself. But this is setting a precedent for others to be able to follow. And, again, I want to be sure that the public is aware that this motion refers to civil service, the public service of Bermuda, and not to the private sector. But, certainly, we want our Government to be leading the way when it comes to this.

And the second bullet point says to “Allow for annual re-employment contracts to be utilised for five years after the prescribed retirement age.” And I kind of like that one because you can allow someone to retire, Mr. Speaker, at 65 with this recommendation that is being made and it gives the employer the opportunity to bring them back as a consultant. It is kind of like the employee having his cake and eating it too. He gets to retire, is receiving his pension, but at the same time he can be brought back as a consultant for the company and this allows the company to be able to do this and reduce its costs at the same time. Because one of the challenges that we have, as Bermudian business owners, is the increased cost in running a business in Bermuda, and it is becoming increasingly—increasingly—difficult to survive in the environment that we are in. And by doing this recommendation it helps aid in the overall running of a company—and I am talking about Bermuda businesses—running of Bermuda businesses so that they can survive in the environment, the challenging environment, that is there.

It continues on to say, “Ensure early retirement provisions are in place for workplace pensions and CPF payments.” I mean, these bullet points, they have gone into great detail to have options that are creative, but at the same time are hitting home at what really needs to be done.

It also goes on to a second point: “Create new legislation or utilise existing legislation to [avoid] age discrimination.” I do not know how far this administration is going to go with that, but certainly starting out from the blocks, what we do want to see is a single piece of legislation coming forward—they will have a policy in place, obviously, for civil service which will move it from 65 to 70 over a 10-year period which, again, as I say, really does make some sense. I do not know if that is the case. I did not hear the Premier say that specifically, so it will be interesting to see whether or not he is making that commitment now or he is going to be coming back after having gone through this report.

I do want to say thank you to those who put this report together. I would encourage all Members of Parliament, if they have not had the opportunity, it is a fairly easy read, it is about 15 pages, but it does lay out clearly where we are as an Island, the challenges that we are having, and it does seek to address those challenges when it comes to the increasing [number] of those who are of retirement age.

And so I will say this, Mr. Speaker, we do support the addressing of this issue. We thank the Labour Advisory Committee for going through the process of seeking out solutions to this challenging situation that we have, and it will be interesting to see how the public responds to this here as well as we move forward. But I do believe that the seniors of Bermuda have a great amount of resources, information, experience, that is invaluable to us. I certainly would love to see more of our seniors in the school system, *per se*. They may not have gotten the educational certificate to teach, but certainly through life’s experiences and the history of Bermuda they have a whole lot to offer to our young people in understanding what it means to be a good citizen of Bermuda.

And so with that in mind, Mr. Speaker, I will leave others to comment to this here and we welcome this Motion.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member . . . we recognise the Deputy Speaker.

Deputy, you have the floor.

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is good to hear that the Opposition Leader is supporting this motion and hopefully the legislation will follow very, very, shortly in removing this discrimination based on age.

Some folks think that age discrimination only happens to older people. It happens also to young people, as the Opposition Leader alluded to, but mostly to the older folks, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, what puzzles me is that when the age of retirement was set in the 1950s . . . that is what? It was over 80 years ago, almost, . . . 70 years ago, I should say. No adjustments have been made since then. And one must ask, why not? It could be a personal conflict of interest because I think the actuarial fraternity should have been the ones who should have been addressing this to keep it up to date, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, in Bermuda the government has a policy that you can work until 70, but you have to write a letter indicating that you want to do it, and then the decision is made by one person. And, Mr. Speaker, with the 5,000-odd workers that the government has, there are only 14 people working past the age of 65 in government—four of them are permanent. That is ridiculous! It is shameful, it is embarrassing. To have a policy just for show . . . that is what I am going to call it. It is just for show because the way that we have treated seniors in this country is criminal. Those are my words—it is criminal, Mr. Speaker. All the good work that they have done, come at 65, you send them home. You are competent at 64, but you come 65, all of a sudden you become incompetent.

You know, Mr. Speaker, you have reports from the OCED [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development] and the United Nations, and what they are saying to countries is to expedite the eradication of this age discrimination in the workplace. That is the report from them. So I know we are on the right track, even though we are late, we are on the right track, and I am happy that we are on that track, Mr. Speaker.

Now, why should these funds, particularly the fund, be adjusted every so often? Because, Mr. Speaker, when you are on a defined benefit plan, you have to adjust those funds according to the demographics as they change. If not, we are going to be, as we are now, we are millions and millions, almost a billion dollars underfunded.

And, Mr. Speaker, some folks have got it . . . they are probably misunderstanding because if you work in government and you retire, you can retire on up to 60 per cent of your salary. But that is provided you worked the maximum 40 years. If you worked 40 years, you can retire at 60 per cent of your fund. Now, if you worked less than that you get less. So I want to make it clear to folks that you do not retire on 60 per cent of your fund—that is the maximum you can retire on under the defined benefit plan—you can only do that if you worked 40 years.

And, Mr. Speaker, for the social insurance, in order to get maximum benefits from the social insurance you must work, you must contribute, 2,178

weeks. That is 40 . . . just under 42 years of contributions in order to get the maximum.

Well, Mr. Speaker, now let me say this, also . . . I must mention the Bermuda Hospitals Board. They have a policy that . . . just prior to 65 you write in for an extension. You can stay to 70 providing you provide the necessary requirements every year of a doctor's certificate to say you are healthy and so on. But, Mr. Speaker, they too have just got a policy, [but they are] playing with it, because I do know of, just recently, two nurses, Bermudian nurses . . . a world shortage of nurses and they let [them] go. And, in fact, they start the process of replacing them when they are 64 because they advertise for the job. So the policy they have is a fallacy. They have no intention of keeping anybody on at 65-plus, particularly with nurses, where there is a worldwide shortage, they let these people go. So they have got their own policy they are not adhering to, Mr. Speaker.

Now, what makes a fallacy out of all of this here [is that] teachers and judges can stay to 70 providing (and this is under legislation) the same criteria, they write in. And let us say a judge stays until 70 and he has to retire from the bench, but he can be called to be a judge on the Privy Council, the Court of Appeal.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Yes, until . . . ever. That makes no sense. You are telling judges, *You can stay until ever, but Miss Smith, you've got to go home at 65, you may be able to stay until 70.* It makes no sense.

In fact, down at the hospital, you are telling nurses and others they have got to go home at 65, but you have got doctors in surgery at 70. It makes no sense. It makes a mockery of the whole system. And that really annoys me.

Mr. Speaker, we have one hotel in Bermuda that has a policy that you can stay until 70. But what they actually will do at 65 is ask that you resign. And then they take you back on for a period. And each year you have to apply again. And all your seniority starts over from zero, Mr. Speaker. But do you know what makes a mockery of this, the policy they have at this hotel? The person administering this policy is 74.

An Hon. Member: Seriously? No!

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: You know it makes no sense. This is what annoys me, Mr. Speaker, how they are treating seniors.

In fact, a government worker, if you will permit me to read these few lines, Mr. Speaker, this person says, *I can no longer work in my present job in the Bermuda Government. I am an able-bodied person*

that received an excellent report from my doctor stating that I am quite able to continue in my present position. But I have been told that my extension request has not been approved. The appraisal process was completed early this year along with my FJP and I have received nothing but excellent reports. And this person has to go home.

I really do not think those that have the authority to approve these extensions really know the trauma that they are causing to these folks. You see, blacks and poor whites only just started getting pensions, and it is not that much that they get. They do not have the excess funds via investments to supplement any pensions that they may be getting, so they have to work.

And when you send them home and they have got the bills, one thing that goes up automatically is their health insurance. That is another discrimination, where insurance companies, if you want to continue . . . now, some companies are very good. Some companies will keep their people on at a reduced rate. I know one person, they have kept this lady on, they made her redundant at about 62, and they kept her on their insurance policy until she leaves this earth and does not pay a dime—that is an exempt company. And so some [companies] treat their people good, but some . . . and you do not have to because they cannot afford it or do not keep you, that does not mean the company is bad, but they have to get an insurance policy.

And really, the insurance companies really do not want you after you go 65 because, I guess, they figure you are digging into their profits—and that is a no-no for them, Mr. Speaker. And the policies, if they do not go on FutureCare or HIP, if you get a policy . . . I am sure at least one of the seniors in this House can tell you what they pay for health insurance is more than paying rent. And that is not right. And we should not be allowing insurance companies to discriminate against seniors who have, as the song would say, *I built this city . . . and now this is the way you're treating me?* It is not right to treat our seniors like that, Mr. Speaker. They just send them home.

Mr. Speaker, the retirement age . . . in fact, in an OECD report it says that the life expectancy of a 65-year-old has increased five years over the average. But they said that over the period of 2010 to 2020 a 65-year-old woman could expect to live at least 22 more years on average. That is 87, and that is great.

Our people are living longer, times have changed, and in 20 years' time we will have many centenarians living in this country. When I think of my good friend, Mr. Place, who I think is 103 or 104, he has got more hair than most of us up here. He drives. He goes to church on Sundays, and he walks every day. Great! And I think last week Friday, it was Dismont Knight, and he was dancing in the streets. You know, this is good stuff!

And you tell those people who have gone 65 who come to work despite any pains they may have . . . they are reliable. They know what they are doing. I know there is a lady (I am not going to call her name) who works in this law firm, she does not have a law degree, but none of the lawyers can tell her about conveyance, she does all of the conveyances. She knows it. And hopefully they will not send . . . I think she has gone 65 and she is still working. So I guess the company understands that this is a great person that is working there so they keep her, Mr. Speaker.

But setting a mandatory retirement age . . . that is not the answer. You should take retirement based on a case-by-case basis. That is how you should take retirement, because some people at 40, [they] should retire. You have them, right? So let us not think because some are 65 you should retire these folks, that is not so. We should not be treating our seniors like that, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, in Bermuda . . . well, in the UK in a report that was done, they said by 2020 a third of the workers in the UK will be people over 50 years old. Well, in Bermuda, by 2020 just over 50 per cent of the workers in this country, will be over 50 years old, Mr. Speaker.

And, Mr. Speaker, I think I have said it before, when the baby boom crowd matures very shortly to that age 65, they will be asking people to come back to work.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Well, in fact, in Canada . . . well, in fact, Switzerland has the highest percentage of seniors in the workforce. And in Canada there is a labour shortage of people in the health industry, education, and construction and they are trying . . . they are encouraging people to come back out to work, Mr. Speaker. And this will happen because we have produced fewer babies.

And, Mr. Speaker, the fund, the pension fund . . . many countries are doing reform on their pension funds because they are all . . . most of the pension funds are not sustainable based on the defined benefit plan. Now, you will find that most companies—a lot of companies, private companies—will have a defined contribution plan. And the pension is based on how well the fund has done. So they cannot tell you whether you can get . . . they will not tell you if you are getting 60 per cent, 20 per cent, or 70 per cent in returns for your contributions. But what they do is, once you retire, they give you the money and you have to buy an annuity and that is where you get your pension.

But that is . . . and the value of that pension that you get from them is based on how well the fund has done. Not so with defined benefit plans and that is why they are so underfunded. And that is why, whatever the legislation that we write, we need to treat the

fund as we treat the census, it has got to be visited every five years to see . . . in order to sustain the fund's health.

In fact, in France they have just done that and they have done it where the fund will be able . . . it is improved, [it will] probably sustain itself (I did not see the report, I am just reading it) up until 2040 when they will do another one. But what they have done in France is they have increased, starting in 2020, how many years you put into the fund, how many contributions you put into the fund. That will determine what you get. And I think the objective in France is to have you . . . before you can get the maximum pension that you contribute for 43 years.

And in Switzerland what they do to supplement their fund, they use some revenues from the VAT to supplement it. And so we have a very serious problem here. We have obviously got to make some adjustments. We cannot continue the way we are going with fewer people in the workforce and, certainly, our birth rates are not outnumbering our deaths. And we hope they would . . . if we can stop the deaths, but I guess we cannot stop that until Jesus comes, Mr. Speaker.

But here in Bermuda what we are doing . . . we are breaking the law. What we are doing in this country would be unlawful in other countries. You know, in Canada and in the United Kingdom, when you advertise for a job you cannot mention anything about age. If you had it in your advert, *Come join this nice young dynamic team*, that is discrimination. You cannot mention that. In fact, in the job interview you cannot ask them their age. The only time you can ask them their age is when you are offering them a job. You cannot do that. You cannot ask a lawyer in Canada how many years they have . . . what year they were called to the Bar because you are trying to indicate their age. When you are ready to offer a job, then you can go there.

And what we are doing in Bermuda [is] sending people out to pasture and [we] really do not know the effect that we are having on our people. And we must stop that, and we must stop it immediately! Hospitals, sports must stop it! The government must stop it immediately because I can tell you there is not a day that I walk the streets of Hamilton . . . and I do not like to come to Hamilton, it is not the best place in Bermuda, you know where the best place is, in the Holy Land down in Hamilton Parish, but—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: But many of our folks ask me about this retirement age, you know, because they cannot afford to go home. And so they are concerned about it because once they go home, their life certainly will change in terms of the income and we cannot have that, Mr. Speaker, not in this little Island like Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, you know, in Bermuda once somebody goes 55 they probably do not even send them for training. That is discrimination. That is against the law in Canada, it is against the law in the UK, and even in the United States—that is against the law. You cannot pass up somebody because they are 55 or 60 and you are not going to send them for training. You cannot not recruit people gone 55 or not recruit them because of age. That is against the law. But we do it in Bermuda. We do it every day.

But I was reading . . . I do not normally read the . . . whatever the thing [is] that comes out every day, but yesterday I was somewhere and I saw a piece of it and I was reading the classified and they had “Help Wanted” and one of the companies was an exempt company and they said, *We do not discriminate*. And their advert was on time and their discrimination is . . . no discrimination on age or anything. I will not name the company. Maybe I should, but I am not going to do that. So we do have some folks in Bermuda that are doing the right thing, Mr. Speaker.

So, Mr. Speaker, what I am asking again, because some people are concerned, yes, if you . . . the intent of the Government [is] if you want to retire at 65, you can. But the intent is to take it to, in the first instance, 68. I would go right to 70, but 68, that is fine. And so you will not get your pension at 65, but when you get your pension at 68, you will get a larger pension because you are putting more into it. So you do not lose out; in fact, you gain. You cannot get your pension and expect to stay on the job and get your full wages. That is not going to happen.

So there will be some adjustments there, but the Government is not saying that you cannot go at 65. Some people can afford to go at 65, and that is fine, let them go.

But those that cannot go at 65, we need to keep them on and let them continue because what you have today in a lot of places, particularly in government, we are promoting people before their time and they really do not have it together yet. It is not their fault; it is their age. But if they stayed there along with that senior who can mentor them, the mistakes that Pat made when she was 20, she can tell that younger person, *No, no, don't do it that way, I made that mistake*. So that person will not have to go through that. They will be that [much] further ahead. And so my message to young folks [is], you need to treasure the seniors around you, they have got a lot to give, and you can learn a lot from them. There is a lot of wisdom there. These are some of the best employees you can find today—people who are 65 years old.

So, Mr. Speaker, in the interest of the fund, the sustainability of the fund, and the interests of the financial health of our workers, I certainly support this. I have been supporting this for many, many, years. And I just pray that the legislation will come here within 14 days so we can pass that before Cup Match.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Deputy.

Does any other Member wish to speak?

I recognise the Honourable Member from constituency 23. Honourable Member Gordon-Pamplin, you have the floor.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, the Premier included in his remarks about the 1947 petition that was taken to London by the late Dr. E. F. Gordon. And you will know—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: The Honourable Deputy Speaker said, *That is my sister's daddy*. He is also my daddy. So you will know, Mr. Speaker, that when one grows up in an environment where that sort of attitude permeates the home, even before I was born—1947—before I was born—

The Speaker: You were born in 1947?

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: I said *before* I was born.

An Hon. Member: Yes, yes, she was born in 1947.

[Laughter]

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: No, I . . . you can certainly understand, Mr. Speaker, that the concern for seniors is something that is ingrained in my DNA. It is who I am.

Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member who just took his seat spoke to the idea of people being pensioned off and remaining on the job. If you get your pension, you cannot expect to receive a full pension and stay working in the workforce. Well, let me say that I took that, not just to heart, but literally, because you will know that we have a social insurance plan that is in place. And because I was still working in the workforce, I was unaware—and that is because of how woefully inadequate the systems are, that I was unaware—that because I was still working I was entitled to have the pension that comes out of the social insurance at the age of 65. So I was still working. A year later, making some inquiries for my CEO, I realised that I was actually entitled to get that pension on a monthly basis from a year before—a year and three months before, truth be told.

So because I was unaware of it, I have had a mandate—a personal mandate, subsequent to that—to make sure that everybody is aware that just before you turn 65, you call up the social insurance office, you make sure you fill out the necessary paperwork, so that you are not done out of a years' worth of contributions, which has been my experience. I made the

appeal, the appeal did not matter. It was like, no, you should have known.

The Speaker: It is need-based.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Well, and it is not even need-based, Mr. Speaker, because I do not believe that there is any one of us who serves in this Honourable House . . . I would not say *none of us*, but, certainly, very few of us in this Honourable House have an independent wealth whereby whatever the amount was (it was something like \$1,200 per month) it would be unimportant to receive that money. That money stayed in the government coffers.

I believe that in the absence of the department advising people that you are entitled to A, B, C, that this money is there and you should be able to get it. As opposed to somebody deciding that, *Oh, I'll look at your case and I'll give you three months back pay, but I won't give you any more than that.* It was my money. It is there, it is in the system, give me my money. With that said, I am trying to ensure that nobody else suffers that fate, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, we seem to have an attitude toward our seniors which is tantamount to the teaching that I had when I was studying accountancy and doing inventory. In inventory you had what was called a LIFO or a FIFO—LIFO being last in, first out and FIFO being first in, first out. And Mr. Speaker, we treat our seniors like the FIFO. They are first in the system, they have got to be first out the other side, without paying homage to the value that they bring to the equation for the experience that they have in their industry.

Now, I look at the report on page 4 and it speaks to the problem having “lack of access to appropriate pension plans and savings products; lack of opportunity to begin savings at an earlier age; and the low levels of financial literacy to make sound financial decisions.”

Mr. Speaker, it is important to understand that this is getting better with time. Now, we did not have in place from way back when in the 1930s and 1940s and 1950s what we actually ended up putting in place . . . I believe it was in the late 1990s, in terms of the contributory pension and . . . or the occupational pension requirement of 5 per cent of your pay. So that is something that has come up that has been relatively new. Therefore, people who had been working prior to that had not had that mandatory setting aside of funds out of their occupational pension money in order to build up money on which they can afford to retire when they hit the age of 65 or whatever age was going to be deemed to be appropriate.

So obviously one of the challenges that comes as a result of that is that we have lots of people who are now forced to go home because they have reached that magic age—whatever that magic age happens to be—and they do not have the means, they

do not have the income to support the expenditure that they had, as the Honourable Member said, yesterday. They had to pay the rent. Next month, when the first of the month comes, the rent still has to be paid, but there is no revenue coming in, there is no pay cheque coming in to be able to support them carrying on.

So, clearly, if one has the ability to be able to work and carry on and be able to continue to have an income, especially in the absence of new people coming into our workforce, you know, we cannot look at the first in, first out. If we had a one for one, if we had a plethora of new people coming into the system, maybe my attitude might be a little bit different in terms of how I would address the problem, but I would certainly never say that somebody, just because they hit a certain chronological milestone, that they are deemed to have to be put out to pasture. That is definitely inappropriate.

Now I know that the recommendations of the Committee were to the extent that they think that Government ought to be able to implement certain policies and that they cannot enforce within the private sector those things that the Government ought to do. But I can say that there is certain legislation that we have that does delve into the private industry and I think that there are times when we should be looking at things like this.

Let me say there are things such as health insurance, Mr. Speaker, you have people you retire . . . and I am going to . . . I may have mentioned this situation in Parliament before and I am happy to mention it again. When people retire from work, they may have been carried on their company's insurance up until the date of retirement. You retire and now you find yourself out—no revenue coming in from a pay cheque, and no insurance coverage because you are terminated from the company.

Now the question begs, why can we not, as the Government, mandate that companies carry their seniors after retirement? Now that can be done in a myriad of ways. They can say we will carry that senior, or retirees, we will carry them on our company policy, but you pay the premium. That is fine. You can say, as the Honourable Member said, they can carry the retirees on their pension . . . I mean, sorry, on their insurance, and they pay the premium, if they are a good company, or some combination of the two in varying degrees of contribution. But to drop somebody coldly and to say, *Sorry, you don't work here anymore and we don't want to keep you on.* And what is the reason, Mr. Speaker? *Because we don't want you now as a senior (who is likely to have more health challenges) which is going to end up pushing up the premium rates for the rest of the employees who are young and healthy and are not going to have the claims experience that you might have as a senior. So, go figure it out.*

So one can go (as I have seen happen) from paying \$1,100 per month for an insurance premium for health insurance to almost \$1,700 a month for health insurance, with that differential coming at a time when there is no revenue coming in from a salary perspective. That cannot be right. There is no reason why we cannot mandate that coverage to carry on, because companies, when they incorporate in Bermuda, have certain civic responsibilities. And in those civic responsibilities we can dictate the things that they should and at the very least they should be able to do.

And I do not see that because companies, just by their nature, have the ability to negotiate better rates . . . because if one could pay \$1,100 this month and next month one is not insured, I mean you are not working, and next month you pay \$1,600 . . . it is the same employee, the same circumstances, the same claims experience. There is no reason why an individual could not stay on that plan. The company should be made to do that. And they may have certain criteria.

As an example, let us say if an employee has been employed for over, let us say, five years—pick a number, I do not care what the number is—but to say that at least if you have worked for a company for “X” number of years, then you will qualify so that you do not find . . . you know, a company does not pick up somebody and six months later they find that they are encumbered for the rest of that person’s natural life to hold them on their insurance policy. There is certain give and take. So I am not prescribing specifically the terms and conditions that must be employed, but certainly something that the Government can step in to do to say that this is what is fair, if you are really looking out for the workforce.

Because we do have a new phenomenon within the health industry, Mr. Speaker, in which people are just living longer. So you are finding people who are 80 . . . I think in the past week we have seen a couple of centenarians who have celebrated their 100th or 100-plus birthdays and the like. These people still have to be looked after. They have health issues, they have housing issues, some of them, if they are blessed enough to have their own homes and what have you. Then maybe they have got halfway decent children who will make sure that momma keeps a roof over her head.

But we also look at the discrimination that happens, from a seniors’ perspective, when they have children who do not particularly care to look out for whether momma and daddy are okay. That mom and dad have worked for their house and for some reason (and I call them) a worthless child is going to say that, *Oh, you know what? Momma needs to move out so that I can move in.* These are things that we have to look out for. We have to protect our seniors and in so doing, to the extent that they can remain in the workforce, they remain vital, the creative juices continue to

flow and they do not stay home and vegetate. That is what we need to do.

Now, I want to speak for a moment on the occupational pension funds. Because what happens, Mr. Speaker . . . the legislation dictates public and private sector. The legislation dictates that a person must contribute to the occupational pension fund. The pension legislation dictates that when a person reaches the age of 65 and they retire . . . and this is not taking away the ability of anybody to retire, based on the recommendations, but if one retires after 65, one can claim from their contributory pension balance 7 per cent of the amount that is outstanding at the end of the prior financial year. So in 2019 they figure out what your balance was at the 31 December 2018, and you can take 7 per cent of that money and you can do that on an annual basis until you reach the age of 70. When you get to the age of 70, they allow you to take 10 per cent of the balance that existed at the end of December of the year before.

Now, while that might look on the face of it like it is okay, when you stop to think about it, those pension funds are subjected to the vagaries of the markets. Those pension funds are invested by pension administrators, and there is nothing to say that an investment would not go south. So you might find that, you know, last year end your pension value might have been, let us say, \$200,000 or \$300,000, and you get to the end of next year and because the markets have tanked that same pension is only valued at maybe \$100,000 or \$150,000. There is nothing you can do about it because you cannot go down to the pension company and say, *I want my money out*, because you are prescribed by law that you can only take 7 per cent out.

But here is what is very interesting about that, Mr. Speaker. If one should die, once one becomes deceased, their beneficiaries of their estate get *all* the rest of it all at one time. So you can work really your whole life. Let us say, you have saved up and you have got \$100,000 in your pension account. You managed to get 7 per cent out of it last year. The current year going the money has built up again because the markets have been favourable, and then you get to the end of that year and you take out another 7 per cent, and then you drop dead. So you have effectively got very nearly \$100,000 that you could not get that you children can come and say, *Oh well, momma’s dead, momma’s gone—*

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: One hundred per cent after death—100 per cent.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Oh, I do not know, it might work differently on government.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Parliamentarians, well, they treat us like the forgotten stepchildren so, we do not count—

[Laughter]

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: —and I think that is important to recognise, that we are not . . . we are talking about real people, in the real environment, in a real workforce. That is what I am referring to. That is what the law prescribes.

So I say that to say that we have some people who have mortgages when they retire, but they cannot go and say, *I want a lump sum out of my pension to pay my mortgage money so that way I do not have that stress month after month after month.* There have to be hardship reasons and only twice in a lifetime that one can go and take all of their pension funds.

Now I would like, while we are looking at hardships on seniors, for consideration to be made that maybe a senior, or seniors . . . there can be an availability for a senior to go and say, *I don't care if I pay a penalty for early withdrawal of my money—take 2 per cent of the balance—and give me my money and let me do it now.* However, if I have it, I will make myself ineligible to sign up for government assistance for “X” period of time. And I think that something like that is fair because people will take their money out, they will do with it what they think they must do with it, they will pay their mortgage, they will pay their bills, and they will be able to manage it and manage it well. And that can be elective, so it does not necessarily have to be prescribed, but certainly the capacity for it to be elective might be worth considering.

Now, we have also looked at the report in which the committee has spoken to reducing the financial stress on government's pension plans and their financial assistance programme. I am not going to speak to FAP, but certainly the pension plans, because from a government employee's perspective the PSSF [Public Service Superannuation Fund] and other pension plans are a defined benefit plan. In most civilised environments and jurisdictions, they have moved away from defined benefit to a defined contribution.

While defined benefits may be more appealing than defined contributions, certainly, knowing that it is difficult . . . I think when we looked at the chart, the committee had decided that there was almost a billion dollars of unfunded liability in the Public Service Superannuation Fund, or \$848 million. That is a significant [amount] of money, which will never be made up. So as long as we have these defined benefits, it is going to get worse.

So how do we arrest that negative trend? In order to arrest that, we have to change the system. Now, you do not necessarily change the system for

people who are already in. What you could do is say to anyone coming into the civil service as of a certain date: *You know you are coming in under different terms and conditions than what existed before because we cannot afford it.* Now, we are going to move from a defined benefit to a defined contribution methodology so that we can afford to pay people. Because the way this is going, you are going to get some people that are not going to get any money when it is time for them be paid off. There is not going to be anything there for them.

An Hon. Member: Jesus might come before then.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: And Jesus might come before then, as the Honourable Member says. And I accept that because tomorrow is not promised to anybody. But I think to the extent that we have the ability to show how we can make recommendations to make sure that things work out for people, then we have a responsibility to do that.

Mr. Speaker, I am mindful of the criticisms that I have gotten since this motion has been tabled, that we have people saying that, you know, their parents have educated them, they have come home from school, they cannot find jobs, and now you are saying that these older people should stay in the workforce and preclude [these young people] from getting a job. Well, we have already seen, albeit we have not been given any empirical evidence, or even statistical evidence at this point to say that there is not a one-out, one-in kind of environment going on. I think that we still have to look at . . . we have to explain to young people that, *You also have to play your part. We want to make sure that we embrace you.* As a Government, we have to ensure that we are providing an environment in which job creation is rife, such that our young people coming in from school have something else to look forward to and not necessarily at the expense of seniors who are already on the job.

So those seniors have a value as the Honourable Member from [constituency] 5 indicated that people can learn from others' experiences. I would not even say mistakes. You can learn from others' experiences. So to the extent that you can have somebody who has done a job in a certain way, even though there are new and innovative methodologies by which those jobs can change, the person who has the depth of experience and knowledge in what the corporation requires, in what the government requires, they can assist somebody coming into the workforce to be able to help to train them.

I can remember not too long ago, I cannot remember the exact year, but in any case a particular senior civil servant had reached the age of 65, had made the mandatory application for extension, had good reviews, had been deemed to be a well-qualified individual, but was told by whoever was the final arbiter of the situation, *Sorry, the answer is no.* So you

have somebody who is vital, who is healthy, who is alert, who is educated, who is intelligent, who has all of the attributes that a senior may need to have . . . and, interestingly enough, I laud the praises of the individual because that individual actually has a birthday which is the same day as my dad. So I can live to that, I can speak to that. But [this person] was basically told, *Sorry, no; go home*. But the Honourable Member indicated that this was predicated on a decision that was made by one individual. And I think that we have to start to look at that.

So we cannot pay lip service to situations where we consider it to be serious enough that we have to protect our seniors. We have to protect the intellect that they have developed. We have to protect what they have put into our community, and what their circumstances are, that we cannot just throw people out to pasture just because they have hit a chronological sequence of age. So, I just wanted to support what the committee has written and have the Government actually consider how they can change that pension, especially the Public Service Superannuation Fund from a defined benefit to a defined contribution so that we do maintain a level of stability and sustainability within the Public Service Superannuation Fund.

I also, Mr. Speaker, want to underscore that when somebody else dictates whether you can or cannot afford to eat or sleep or drink or have a roof over your head, then, that is not a healthy thing. So I think that our seniors have to have a certain level of input and that input has to be respected and taken account of when decisions are being made. Notwithstanding this report was done and it was done with great intentions, I do not think that this report is the be-all, end-all. I think that this report, or this situation needs to have broader input from the community. I think we should be doing much more and going further and having far more town hall meetings and getting input from people who found themselves in a situation where they feel as though they may have been discriminated against.

Some people do not even want to speak up because somehow when you speak up that kind of goes as a strike against you. But I just want to make sure that whatever we do, that we consider that there is value in our seniors and that we respect them for what they have contributed to our economy and to our country.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member wish to speak?

We recognise the Honourable Member from constituency 21. Member Commissiong, you have the floor.

Mr. Rolfe Commissiong: Mr. Speaker, thank you. It is great to be here today.

I think that this is a very important conversation. I think there are few seminal issues which will have as much of a profound impact on our economy, more broadly, and more specifically in the areas of health care, our pensions, [and] our labour market. I could go down the list. There are few issues that are going to have such a profound impact on our lives than this issue that we are talking about here. And I am not just specifically talking about age discrimination. I am not specifically talking about the increase in retirement age. Those are reactions to this underlying trend of a rapidly ageing population.

I remember reading a book . . . I forget the title now, going back about 12 to 15 years ago. And I am happy to have amongst us Ms. Claudette Fleming, if I may say so, Mr. Speaker. She has been a champion of our seniors for going on two decades and she needs to be commended for the work that she has done, not only on behalf directly of our seniors, but in raising awareness around this issue over those last two decades. And I remember . . . I still have this book. I still have it at home, I think. It was written by a very noted demographer. And the thing that stood out to me, he talked about when those populations enter into what he described, a very powerful metaphor, as *demographic winter*. When an ageing population within their respective country reaches a certain point, that is what it is.

And I can tell you right now, along with Japan and a few others who may be far more down the road than we are, it may not be that far actually, we are right there and probably in the top five or six countries of having an ageing population. And that is what has brought us to these public policy considerations such as raising the retirement age and some of the other things from the work of this excellent committee.

And I want to commend this committee as well, Mr. Speaker, from the Labour Advisory Committee. That subcommittee, and the names have been read already, and I just want to reiterate them: Senator Jason Hayward, President of Bermuda trade in Congress; Claudette Fleming (we made mention of her) Executive Director of Age Concern in Bermuda; Lindell Foster, Bermuda Employers' Council; Donald Lottimore, First Vice President of Bermuda Trade Union in Congress; Lauren Smith, Labour Relations Officer, Governmental Labour Relations; Peter Sousa, Chief Executive Officer, Pension Commission; and Stephen Todd, Chief Executive Officer, Bermuda Hotel Association.

They have done some excellent work. Because, Mr. Speaker, when you get to a point where 49 per cent of your population is over the age of 45, then you know you have a major challenge. And I might just add that I gave a list of the more specific impacts on the issue of immigration. That is going to be another one; let us be honest about it. Let me just [get] down to the brass tacks here. This issue is going to transform Bermuda in a way that many of us can

hardly imagine over the next 25 years, the way Bermuda looks, its racial and ethnic composition, it is all inevitable.

Back in the mid-1980s is where Bermuda began to go underwater in terms of fertility and birth rates. I think it was around 1983, 1984, 1985, or 1986. Forgive me for not having the precise date, but it was around that time. And that trend, particularly on fertility rates, has only continued. So now I believe we are just about hovering around 1.5, which is well below the reproduction rate that will see an increase in the population. You would need to be around 2.1 or 2.01 (and again, I [stand] to be corrected) to see a positive increase in your population over time. So we are well underwater here, and it will have profound impacts.

I just want to also commend the Member from constituency 5, Mr. Derrick Burgess, the MP, who has been a long-time advocate on behalf of our seniors, an advocate on behalf of those who have been saying that we need to tackle the growing incidences of age discrimination. And so I thank him for his work. One thing about Mr. Burgess is, we often hear about Mr. Chris Furbert and his brilliance around numbers. Well, I think that Mr. Burgess can give Mr. Chris Furbert, when it comes to numbers, a run for his money.

So we have an ageing population, we have public policy choices to make and what will those choices be? That is the question we have to ask ourselves. I think we will have, at least, a population . . . at least 20 per cent of our population by 2020 that will be over 65 years of age, Mr. Speaker. I mean, think about that. Twenty per cent of your population will be over 65 years of age. Already when it comes around to our health care system, that is now being addressed. The ageing population makes the “fixing” (if I can use that term) of this system even more of a challenge.

So, for example, we had the census that came out in figures the other day (and when I say the other day, about eight or nine months ago) that revealed that a significant [increase] in the amount of people who go without health insurance in the country, and that substantially increased by almost 100 per cent within five years. So, for example, you had in 2010 at the time what I call that “half census” being undertaken. It did not cover the whole decade, but a half of a decade, from 2010 to 2015/16. In 2010, over 2,000 persons, black Bermudians, did not have health insurance coverage. That also included some children. And I have said this before on the floor of this House, Mr. Speaker, over 2,000. In only five-plus, six years, that figure had roughly doubled to over 4,000 and it did include children.

The corresponding figure for white Bermudians was at 200-odd persons—200, not 2,000—in 2010, and just over 400 by 2015/16. Now, already that is like three years ago—three years ago. So we know the trend has continued. I would like to know what that figure will be in 2020, next year, if we can get those

types of numbers. I suspect that it will have only been exacerbated.

Of course, the Members are right. We talked about the health insurance impact here, issues around unemployment with persons 65 years and over who cannot afford to retire, needing to maintain having a household income. In many respects, being forced to work in a situation where you are living in a country with the highest cost of living, arguably in the known universe—not just the world, the known universe. And accompanying that, of course, is living in the country with the highest, or near-highest, levels of income inequality.

So that is an issue. How can we [accommodate] the legitimate needs of persons who are over 65 and who, frankly, need to be able to work? And that is why you get around to the issue of raising the retirement age. I will get more to that in a second. Then, we have the issue about those who are in the working population. And we find, as per the data that came out of this report that “In 2016,” (and I quote, Mr. Speaker, with your indulgence), “the working population aged 65 and over increased to 2,530 persons, up from the 2,382 persons recorded in [only] 2010.”

I might just add that there was a stat[istic] that came out about eight or nine months ago as well from the Government that indicated that the number of civil servants who were ageing out of the service was phenomenal (my word). I believe we were talking about maybe 500 over the next . . . that period, maybe 2019/20. And it will only increase as persons of my generation, what I call the younger cohort, what they would refer to in the US as the baby boomer population, begin to by the current set of rules age out of the system.

I went 62 a few weeks ago (unbelievable still to myself, I might add) and I know that we are probably, as it says here, the biggest bulge in the population in Bermuda.

I have to marvel when, Mr. Speaker, we often hear some of our younger persons who want to get involved in politics, or younger people in our party, and they always keep emphasising about the young people and the youth vote and all the rest. Well, I am not saying that we should not focus on the youth vote. But, believe me, it is a diminishing percentage of our overall population. We will be concerned with the senior vote, the older vote, over the next three, four, five, six election cycles easy, as they will become an even bigger portion of the overall electorate, so much for the youth vote.

Financial assistance. Again, living in a country with such a high level in terms of the cost of living. It is phenomenal. It places an inordinate burden on persons, particularly those who are coming from low income, lower to middle income status [and] worked hard all their lives. We have right now in 2017, 993 seniors receiving financial assistance—993. And of course, replete through all of this are very pronounced

racial disparities. And, of course, I think about maybe a third of my listeners now just turned off the radio, but nonetheless, it has to be said. That is the reality of Bermuda. That statist[istic], which we do not like to face straight on, is snaking through all of these statistics. And it is my job as a public officer, if you will, to point them out.

Everyone talked about the threat to the pensions, particularly the Public Service Superannuation Fund. Mr. Burgess, from constituency 5, says that it is very much underwater, just under a billion dollars that we need to deal with.

The National Pension Scheme, the Contributory Pension Fund. You know, it is just sad that . . . I always thought it was . . . well, it was like a sign of the times, going back a quarter century when you had growing moves, not just in Bermuda, but throughout the west, to move away from defined benefits in terms of the pension schemes to contributory pensions. We know that over at BELCO, where my mother worked for probably going on four decades, they had a very good pension plan over there. Now, by way of court action, or I believe it was a civil case that was adjudged, they have sort of grandfathered in now a generation that is probably over 40 who will, thankfully, be getting those same benefits. But the newer workers coming in, they will have to face a new reality. They will not be enjoying defined benefits in terms of the nature of the plan and they are now locked into the contributory-style pensions.

And we know that coming out of the 1930s and 1940s, as a response to the Great Recession and moving into the post-World War II era, in America that became the norm. It has proven to be unsustainable. When persons had a life expectancy of mid-to-late 50s, early 60s, it was sustainable. But we have seen persons living longer, and that has been one of the key factors in why it is deemed not to be sustainable now.

Well, Mr. Speaker, just moving on, I am just going through the report here. I think this is interesting, too, in terms . . . let's get down to what are our options here. And we have in the report on page 9, Mr. Speaker, what is called, *Retirement Age Comparison*. And it says, "Countries where mandatory retirement is not permitted at any age." And I was not aware of this, so there is going to be some very important information here. Now those countries . . . and I do not know if this is the extensive list, but it says that USA, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia are countries [where] a mandatory retirement age is not permitted at any age.

Then you have another list of countries where mandatory retirement is permitted, with a minimum permitted mandatory retirement age set by legislation, and that includes Japan (again, it is one of the older ageing countries in the world) France [and] Sweden. And then we have Ireland which has no minimum age set by legislation. Countries in which mandatory re-

tirement is legal, with no minimum age set by legislation. And Ireland is the only country cited. Then it moves onto cost of living for seniors and I touched a little bit on that, but I think that it bears repeating here.

For example, as it states here, "the . . . Household Expenditure Report suggests that the average senior spends \$647.45 per week or \$33,667.35 per year on housing and healthcare, representing 44% . . . of seniors' expenditure. The expenditure figures exceed the average pension benefits received by our seniors. In contrast, working, seniors have a median annual income of \$39,227 which will allow them to cover the cost of average expenditures."

I might just add that this \$39,227 figure, Members, would not even, I think, amount to a living wage, for example, calculated on a per annum basis.

Now, what are the options? We have talked about this. They have come back (this fine report here) in saying, which is the obvious option, to increase the retirement age beyond 65 years of age. They are positive that that range, probably initially, should be somewhere between 66 and 70 years of age. And the Government will make that final determination. I think perhaps we could start it at 67, which I think will mirror what has been reflected in some of the other countries that are on the same glide path as us in respect to this issue. And it makes the analysis on what will be the cost impact on Government and what would be the legislative and policy support required in order for us to do that.

There are a lot of complexities around these issues and, Mr. Speaker, you know, on so many of these issues now, because . . . and I think I have said this before. There are no easy options left for Bermuda on a number of key issues or key matters that in some degree are even existential as to Bermuda's future and its position geopolitically in the world. And again, this is one of them.

The complexity around these issues can be phenomenal. I do think that Bermudians would do well to keep up with the debate and endeavour to get as much information as they can to inform themselves, so they can readily understand as to what the Government is actually about to do on this and so many issues because, like I said, there are no easy options.

Again, back to the issue of immigration, for example, we will have to have more immigration into the country. The question is, What will be the nature of that immigration? To me, it's the only good question. Certainly, we do not want to have what took place in the 1960s and 1970s, Mr. Speaker, when we had racialised immigration that favoured the importation of just whites into the country from Western Europe and Canada, primarily. We should not go down that road again.

But we have to be open to the idea that we need a re-think, a profound one, on our immigration policy because the bottom line is that these trends indicate that the birth rates that we are seeing, the

fertility rates, are not going to turn around any time soon. And so it is going to be somewhat of an economic imperative. But we can do this the smart way, and I think we can do it in a way that helps us to transcend the very, very, even in some cases, bigger debates that have revolved around this issue. So I am hoping that we can accomplish that.

So, finally, Mr. Speaker, I am going to just wrap up here by saying that this is a very important discussion. I support the rise in the retirement age. I am viscerally opposed to age discrimination. And just to put it into context, when we were in demographic summer, when I was a little boy in 1965, 1966, or 1967, that was demographic summer. We are in demographic winter now. But when we were in demographic summer, [oh], we had burgeoning, youthful populations in my neighbourhood at Spanish Point, and the same thing for Mr. Cannonier. If you had a neighbourhood that consisted of 20 households, there were at least two to four children in each household. Ok? Now, if you go into these neighbourhoods you can hear the crickets sing, or whatever. It is that quiet because there are not that many children. So, we need to ensure—

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Rolfe Commissiong: No, it's true. It's true, it's true.

An Hon. Member: Crickets?

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Rolfe Commissiong: Yes, or you hear the birds singing, or whatever.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Rolfe Commissiong: Yes, exactly.

So, let's have this debate and then on the issue on age discrimination I, again, I just want to thank, if I may, if I may, I just want to thank again Brother Burgess, the Member from constituency 6 *[sic]*—

An Hon. Member: [Constituency] 5.

Mr. Rolfe Commissiong: [Constituency] 5, (I keep getting it wrong) for his advocacy around age discrimination. I know that he, and persons like Dr. Eva Hodgson over the last five or six years have been very keen on this issue being addressed. And it looks like that we are rapidly working our way to address it.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to speak?

We recognise the Honourable Member from constituency 1 *[sic]*, Honourable Member Swan.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Two.

The Speaker: Two, rather.

Honourable Member Swan, you have the floor.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

Ever so briefly on this occasion, I would like to lend my support to this motion, Mr. Speaker, and join the cause of those who are advocating on behalf of, particularly, our seniors. But discrimination towards those of any age is something that we must deplore, eradicate, and do all that we can to eliminate.

I am minded of a verse in scripture, of which I think we have been somewhat short of in our country. Genesis [chapter] 1, [verse] 28: "Be fruitful and multiply."

"Be fruitful and multiply."

We do have an ageing population. I am minded of many of my friends, some of whom worked for me, who, when they went 70 years of age were still out there trying their best to find work, some [of them] doing security jobs and the like. Some participated in the Bermuda dream: Own a piece of the rock. Particularly, in the black community that was what was encouraged, mainly.

Many of our seniors today are land rich and cash poor. Many did not diversify their portfolios. As we have heard, many people are living older. But living older does not always come with increased quality of life when the expense of living far outstrips that of which your pension may have been. And the difficulty of living older is that companies, as we are seeing, in Bermuda and globally, are doing all they can to reposition themselves to carry less of a burden. And what do I mean by that?

If a company may have been around in the 1980s and 1990s or up into the early 2000s, and doing very well some twenty years later, that company would be ageing. It could very well be that this company does what people call "diversify," or they might have been bought out and all of a sudden, the packages that people carry into retirement get changed.

Or, people nearing retirement age become more burdensome to those persons who are running those companies and you would see repositioning, which certainly takes them out of the equation.

I am reminded of when this particular item was mooted in real terms last year. First thing, I received a call from a constituent. And I hurriedly went to see them. Their concern was they were amongst those who had actually planned for retirement. Not everyone doesn't plan for retirement. We have persons who are going to find the going tough when they reach that age, because not everybody thought at one point in time that they would live to have grey hair and

no hair and not be as agile as they once were when they were in their 30s and 40s, and the like. But there were those and there are those who plan for their retirement.

I remember the conversation that went like this: *Mr. Swan, please assure me that the plans that my wife and I have made to reach 65 doesn't make it mandatory that we must stay longer, because we are prepared for that. We have made plans for that and we are looking forward to that. It is not that far away.*

And I made those calls on their behalf, and I could assure them that no one is going to tie you up and make you stay longer. And they were appreciative of that. And that is what we need to encourage persons to do, to plan better for the future as those good persons in my constituency have done.

I am also mindful that this particular topic goes hand in hand with a subject that is talked often. It was on the television last night carried by the Minister of Health, and the like. And it forms into a theme of the importance of, you know, healthier living and the like. They all are intertwined, of which the Government is very much focused on ensuring that we encourage our people to be more mindful of. And as I started off with that scripture from Genesis 1:28: "Be fruitful and multiply." One of the problems that we have in fulfilling that obligation is the exodus that took place in this country around 2009 with the downturn of the global recession. It was not a Bermuda-made recession. It was a global recession [that] caused many Bermudians to take a hike out of this country!

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And that concerns me because they are the ones that I hope that we can repatriate to encourage to *Go ye into this Island and multiply*, to help us have the type of sustainability to make the contributions. That is something that we need to have an earnest look at! I do not think anyone in this country does not accept the fact that, whilst we will not admit it or not, we are very much like the Jamaican motto, "Out of many, one."

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: We are! We had a football game last weekend, Bermuda versus the Azores. We cannot deny it! Out of Bermuda, there are many different versions of us. Some of us have a little bit of this and a little bit of that, and something of the other too. And something that we do not even know we got!

[Laughter]

An Hon. Member: You might be going too far now.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: No, I am not. It is true! I can speak that! I know it better than any! A little bit of

this and a little bit of that and a little bit of something else that I ain't too sure about. You know, it is part of the diaspora that has made us the good, the bad, the ugly. But as we recognise that we need more contributors to fund the pension, which is calculated at about 2049 as that date . . . about 30 years from now. But, you know, I do not want them walking up to me, because I plan to stay a lot fitter. I am starting to hit the ball every day a little bit, to get the turn coming—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —get the turn, you know, I am signed up for a yoga class.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I have been talking to a Pilates instructor. I need that turn! Now, I don't want to be out on the golf course at 90, shooting in the 70s, and somebody come up to me and say, *Hey, Swan! It is because of you that . . . you know, you got your pension put in last, you know, 27, but you, you burnt it up for us!*

[Laughter]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: No, no, I don't want to be in that boat. I plan to be around, Mr. Speaker, and I know you do too.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And you know what? We will be the *byes* that are going down or going up . . . whatever it is called in 30 years' time, having a little bit of lunch, and guys saying, *Well, you know, we guys are still good and spry because we made a conscious decision—I, a little sooner than Swan. He caught the light a little later than me, but you know, we are still around today.*

I want them to say, to come and pat us on the back, and say, *Thank you for what you have done.*

The Speaker: Uh-huh.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: *Thank you.* And maybe those persons that are patting us on the back are the ones who were out in Birmingham and Nottingham and other places that are "hams," that have "ham" at the end of the name and decided to come home because we showed them that we would like *them* to be a part of those who could help to boost her up, our economic needs.

An Hon. Member: That's right.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: So, in closing, Mr. Speaker, let me say this: Our seniors today, our

emerging seniors of today are faced with a set of circumstances where they must be able to work to make ends meet. They must. I have not found an insurance policy available to anybody in this country under \$400 per month. And for a senior, that is a significant portion of that pension that they would receive. I have not found too many seniors who do not need the benefit of some type of medication to be able to make it through the day and night. And the cost of it is the choice between purchasing something to eat or getting that medication. These are the things that we are challenged with in this country.

Steps such as this, notwithstanding targeted [steps] just at the public servants, need to be taken in further context in the wider spectrum of a thought process in Bermuda. Looking at the value that a senior holds, I have seen in my recent . . . I teach. I am around a lot of people. I have seen companies that have come here that show value for seniors. I am not talking about Bermuda seniors either. I know companies who value that mind trust in the boardroom. There is no reason why that mind trust could not be extended to include the black community in Bermuda in greater measure. That is a great mind trust. I know there are persons out there driving taxis in the country who are . . . Bermuda has the most educated working class, I would say, in the world.

Now, that is anecdotal. But I would urge an academic to look at it. Because I know there are taxi drivers who are engineers, who are doctors. I know there are security guards who have more degrees than I, more qualifications than I, and are disproportionately black people in Bermuda. It is not a matter of not getting the opportunity. It is worse than that.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And I do not want to be in a position with you, Mr. Speaker, in another 25 to 30 years when we are having that lunch down at Angeline's and he has got a Chelsea sign up on his wall instead of the Manchester because the new proprietor is a Chelsea fan, God bless him. The Europa league champions.

An Hon. Member: Please!

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And, Mr. Speaker, I want us to have the opportunity to look back on this period more favourably. And the way in which we can do it is to cause the right decisions to be made in this country. We have a talent pool that exists, because I often hear, and I often hear it in the political realm, persons who just want to look at the young person. I was young once. I was at one stage in my life the youngest political candidate on record in 1983. And you come to a country and you understand far more when you get older, when people do not want to then value what you have.

And so, part of the way out of the problem is to embrace some of the people who have been overlooked along the way, and many of them are seniors in our community today, or emerging seniors in our community today, and they are here because they love this country as much as each and every one of us in this House. Because each and every one of us in this House loves this country and has a different view of how we need to move it forward. But you cannot overlook those who have been disenfranchised and are disproportionately impacted by what we are talking about here today.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: You cannot deny it! It is a serious social impediment that needs to be addressed. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to speak? We recognise the Honourable Member from constituency 11. Honourable Member—

Mr. Christopher Famous: Good evening . . . sorry, good afternoon, Mr. Speaker, colleagues, and Bermuda.

The Speaker: Yes, good afternoon.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I am going to be very short, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I will hold you to that.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I am going to read off some names.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Nancy Pelosi. Anyone know her?

An Hon. Member: Yes.

The Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Age 79.
Bernie Sanders.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Anyone know him? Age 77.
Joe Biden. Age 76.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Hillary Clinton. Age 71.

Now, these are persons who are way past the age of 65, but no one questions their competence to be a leader. I mean, they have enemies; but for the most part people know that they are competent leaders. So, age, as we know, Mr. Speaker, does not prevent someone from being a competent leader in public service.

I am going to read off some other names, Mr. Speaker. Honourable Derrick Burgess.

The Speaker: Hmm.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Age unknown.

[Laughter]

An Hon. Member: Oh! Forty-three! Forty-three.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Tuckers Town Hole.

[Laughter]

An Hon. Member: That is classic!

Mr. Christopher Famous: Honourable Neville Tyrrell. Age unknown.

Honourable Michael Scott. Age unknown.

An Hon. Member: Really unknown!

Mr. Christopher Famous: Lt. Colonel David Burch. Age unknown. I mean, I could google their age, but—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Anyway, I got to deal with them on Wednesday. My point, Mr. Speaker is—

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Christopher Famous: —whether in America or Bermuda, we have persons over the age of 65 who are competent to lead their countries. That should transcend not just in the higher echelons of politics but in the civil service as well, because as we know, it is truly the civil service that runs the country.

Mr. Speaker, all of us here, all 36 of us have a growing number of constituents that are over 65. And these persons, the same as these leaders I just spoke about, are extremely competent mentally and physically to carry out their duties. Many of these persons are the chief breadwinners in their family, for whatever reasons. Unfortunately, for some, they rely on a steady pay cheque to pay their mortgage, put their child through school or their grandchild through school, or whatever the reason may be. And when the prospect of retirement comes up, they look at their pension and are saying, *I can't quite make it.*

The Speaker: Hmm.

Mr. Christopher Famous: I have a lady in my constituency, a very nice lady. Two years ago, I knocked on her door. She said, *Come in.* She said, *By this date, I am going to be 65. I am raising my grandson and paying my mortgage and if I have to retire, I am either going to not be able to put my grandson through college, or I may lose my house.* She is a government worker, has been there for years. And because of the pay scale that she is on, her pension is not going to be all that favourable. Every six months without fail, this lady calls me—

The Speaker: Hmm.

Mr. Christopher Famous: *Famous, what is happening?*

I say, *Well, I talked to Bishop Burgess (age unknown), and he is on it.*

Today, I was able to text that lady and say, *Tune in to 105.1 because what you asked for is going to be delivered.*

Now, am I saying that every person over 65 should stay on? Obviously not, because as a gentleman said earlier, *What about the young people that need to work? Companies are not just going to keep [those] over 65 years old and hire people just out of college.* It's not going to . . . everybody has a finite number.

What we do have to do, Mr. Speaker, as a country is educate ourselves [and] educate our people about financial education. How to save money, how to invest money. Yes, we all like to put money in our house. But sometimes we have got to put it in stocks, right, Scott?

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: We have to educate ourselves, Mr. Speaker, because as we see, people are not going to die as fast as they used to.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Sure. That is a reality. That is a good thing!

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Well, you know . . . you know what I meant.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: You all know. [Age] 83 is now the life expectancy. Many people are even living past that, especially if you are a lady. Go to a Seniors

Tea, it is 90 per cent women. You say, *Well, where are the guys?*

They all say, *We outlived them. We outlived them.*

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher Famous: My point, Mr. Speaker, as I close up, I work for BELCO. I have been there for 26 years. Most people I work with have been there for 25, 30 years. BELCO recently changed their policy to allow persons to work after 65, if they choose to.

The Speaker: Hmm.

Mr. Christopher Famous: This year a gentleman, one of my constituents, Mr. Cornell Dunkley, is going to retire after 50—not Michael Dunkley, Cornell Dunkley.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Okay. I did not want you to get confused, now.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I am old, but I can hear.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Okay, all right.

After 50, 5-0, 50 years at BELCO. I looked at him and said, *Well, when did you start? At age 10? [Weren't there] some child employment laws?*

He was like, *No, but I just keep fit.*

My point, Mr. Speaker, is that if someone is able mentally and physically to carry out their duties, they should be allowed to within reasonable age. And so, I say to Bishop Burgess, I want to thank you on behalf of my constituent. I want to thank you on behalf of a lady who called me yesterday and said, *Famous—a different lady altogether, Famous, I am too young to retire.* She is a secretary at a school. She has seen generations come through there for 40 years.

An Hon. Member: Hmm.

Mr. Christopher Famous: If you saw her, you would be like, *Nah, you shouldn't retire.*

So, I want to thank you on behalf of those ladies because we know on Wednesdays you have been the biggest advocate for this. So, I say to all those who have spoken up about it, yes, we know that there are parameters, but let's continue to educate ourselves and let's continue to be empathetic toward ourselves, because eventually, Mr. Speaker, you will reach 65 and I think you should stay in that Chair, because I want to look at your face when I have got that Cup! Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: It will be a long time before that happens, but I won't be here that long! Thank you, Member.

Does any other Member wish to speak?

I recognise the Honourable Member from constituency 19. You have the floor.

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and we will both be looking at him when we have that Cup.

The Speaker: For a long time.

An Hon. Member: Ooh!

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: Mr. Speaker, I think when we talk about this, I have to remind myself of, you know what is that expression? *You have come a long way, Baby.*

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: You have to stop and think because . . . do you remember, and some of us who are older can remember, that there was such a thing as early retirement at age 55? And at age 55 you could decide that you had worked long enough, you had that financial stability and you looked forward to saying, *I am going to retire now at 55, and I am going to go off and I am going to do something else,* and you would feel really happy about yourself.

And when I look at what we are doing now, I think to myself, *This is the modern version of early retirement.* Because if I am reading what the Premier is saying, what is going to end up happening now is 65 is going to be early retirement and regular retirement is going to be 70.

But I must admit . . . and I have a question. I am hoping that the Premier will answer it. Because when I read the recommendations from the Advisory Committee, it seemed to be suggesting that 70 wasn't what I call the equivalent of the 65 when you had early retirement at 55, because there was some mention of annual re-employment contract. So, maybe, maybe the recommendation from the committee has been overtaken, and now it truly is that early retirement is age 65 and regular retirement is age 70. So, I am hoping at some point in time the Premier might actually clarify that.

But having said that, I just want to remind people as to how we got here. Because I think if you do not remember . . . you have to remember, though, that when we started years ago, you had people retiring and they had such a thing as a defined benefit plan. And the defined benefit plan meant that people knew that when they retired, they got a certain amount of money. And back then, that certain amount of mon-

ey actually was quite good. And it was quite good for two reasons: One, you had a lot of people coming into the plan, which meant that it was growing. [Two,] you also had a situation where the investment income that people were getting from that plan was also quite substantial. So it meant that the benefits that they were paying out with the assets that they had there actually were not too bad. And I say that because we have to think about how we got here in terms of the issues and what has happened to us. Because when we are trying to solve these problems we have to remind ourselves that sometimes if you know where you came from and you know where you are going to, then you make sure that you do not do anything that helps you recreate something that was bad in your past.

So, that is what I just want to remind ourselves that what happened after that was two things happened to change this and it impacts on us now. The numbers of new people joining the plans back then, the benefit plans, started to decrease, and also, the rate of return on those plans started to also go down. So it meant that a lot of plans, defined benefit plans, started to find out that they were struggling with respect to what they should do, and that is where you got what I call the introduction of the defined contribution plans, which were designed to say, *Okay, let's figure out a way whereby when people put their money in, what they get out of it is related to what they put in.*

But that also had some issues which is referred to in this report, the fact that you then put your money in and then you were forced to make choices as to how your money was going to be invested. Lots of people did not understand. There was a tendency for people to be very conservative, which meant that their plans were growing very slowly, and then later on when they retired, they found that they did not have this nice big nest egg.

Now, the other side of that was the fact that we keep forgetting then when government put in its contributing pension plan, what we call social insurance, that also was not going to be set up to sort of grow at the pace that one would think is going to create this big nest egg, which is how you came up with private pension plans in the beginning. Private pension plans were supposed to supplement the government one, the social insurance. So, what has happened . . . the fact is that you have now the situation where these plans, the private ones, are either not growing as much as they should, because of the declining numbers of people, because of the investments going down. The defined contribution plans are also not growing as much as one would like because the rates of returns in the industry are not that much, not like it was years and years ago. And then the government plan which you are also relying on, the amount that they came up with was not growing as much as we would like. And what I am saying is that

we have to remind ourselves that this is where we are today.

And then the Government, and I would say the Government because whether it is the Government of 40 years ago, 20 years ago, or 10 years ago, you started to have the issues of how much money was Government putting aside to start funding these plans. And that is also where the numbers of people that were in the plan impacted it as well, because the numbers of the people . . . we talked about the working population. As the working population started to shrink, that meant that the amount of contributions into the plan started to shrink, and then we are back to where we are right now which is talking about more people living longer and then they are going to expect to use the plan, the benefits, their pensions in their later years.

And the other thing which has come to haunt us is the fact that whether we like it or not, back then the cost of living in Bermuda was not where we are today. Bermuda is very expensive and the cost of living that we have to try and stretch these pension plans to cover, is much, much greater than where it was. So, as MP Swan was talking about, I know when I was out talking to seniors when I was a Minister, you are out talking to people and they are saying, *My money does not go as far, and I have to decide whether I am going to buy drugs, i.e. prescription drugs—I better make that clear for—*

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: —make that clear, make that clear.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: Make that clear.

Whether I am going to buy prescription drugs or food, which is why I was always trying to get the cost of prescription drugs down. But I am saying that these are some of the dilemmas that [we face] when we start looking at allowing people to work longer, I just want to make everyone realise how we got to where we are.

Because the other side of it, as we progress, was you had companies when people were getting older, the companies had good workers, they liked the fact that their workers were really, you know, working really well. And so, the companies started to say, *Okay, we will keep you on.* And they kept them on and some companies even had health insurance plans just for their retirees, because that was their way of saying, *We will keep you on, but we know that you won't have something different from the regular workers, because plans, whether you like it [or not], have claims, and claims result in premiums, and therefore, you want to ring-fence them.*

So, a lot of people . . . and this gets back to the people we have talked about, even those who took the early retirement at 55. A lot of people used to just work because they wanted the health insurance and that made it easy for them, whether those people went and played golf every Friday and worked for two or three days, or whether they drove a taxi, or whatever else, health insurance allowed people to do something, and where we are now today is the fact that the cost of living and the amount of pensions that people get are not matching, and therefore they need to work longer, in order to be able to not only get that income, but more importantly to get that health insurance. Because that health insurance enables them to take some of that money and deal with their regular requirements, whether it is a mortgage, or whether it be food, et cetera.

So, it is not just about the fact that they want to be part of the workforce. It also means that it gives them an added supplement. You sometimes do not realise that you are taking something out of your pocket by paying premiums. But if you figure out how much you are getting back by . . . if you are working for a company, the premiums that you pay for your health insurance are so much lower than if you are in the regular system!

So, you know, if you had to go into a stand-alone policy, what you would pay and what you would pay if you were in a company plan, you save money. You get money. So it is almost in your interest to pay the employer to employ you because you are going to get something back.

And I am saying this so that people understand that there are a number of things that we are trying to solve and there are a number of knock-on effects. The real thing that I think is important is what we need to understand is that our seniors are important to us. When we go out and talk about our seniors, and we talk about what they have done and how this country has been developed and, if you will, that Bermuda has reached the heights that it has on the backs of our seniors, I think it is important for us to make sure that they are accommodated [and] that we do whatever we can to recognise that they are important.

And there was something . . . I know that I read [about] something that happened in the UK. And, Mr. Speaker, if you will allow me for two seconds, I just want to read a little something.

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: This was something that was written. It was talking about changing attitudes about ageing. It was basically reminding us that we had to . . . that public services and the things that we do here and the decisions that we make . . . "Public services should be designed with the aims of promoting equality between people of different ages. Ad-

ressing the future needs of an ageing and diverse population and eliminating discrimination against older people."

Now, that is something which has been in this report and it is something that, as we go forward, I would like to think that we would work on. But the one thing that this report said, which I think is important for us to address [is], "We need to be [alert] to trends that appear to exacerbate age segregation and to seek initiatives which can bring different generations together around issues of shared interests and importance."

I say that because the last thing we need to do, while we are turning around and making sure that we do something for our seniors, we let them contribute more, et cetera, is that we do not turn around and have our young people feeling, *Well, what about me? You know, I'm here. I want to be a part of the workforce. I want to be a part of the contribution.*

And I do not believe we want to ever have a situation where you have to make a decision between a young person and a senior person, because Bermuda does not have enough people. We do not have enough. So everybody that needs and wants to work . . . we have to figure out how to make them work.

And, Mr. Speaker, when I started to look at some of the things that were in this report, I also realised that there are some things that we have to look at because the private sector obviously is going to take its lead from what we are doing. But I am also recognising that because we have things like the Social Insurance not being able to cover the cost of living, then . . . and even with the Government trying to turnaround and have periodic updates, you know, the idea of saying to people that seniors need to start retirement planning as early as age 50 is really important. And it is funny because I think a lot of people at 50, you know what they do? They like the idea of being 50 and they like the idea of going into a shop and they say, *Oh, are you age 50?* And they like the idea of getting that 10 per cent discount, but I do not think anybody is taking that 10 per cent discount and saying, *Let me go home and put it in my bank account because I need to start saving.* And this is what we have to have start happening.

People have to start saying at age 50, *It's time now to plan for [my] retirement.* Do not just think about taking that benefit. You need to turn around and say that this is a recognition that, starting now, you have to start planning. And I think that this is what is in this actuarial report.

The other thing that I think is important for us to deal with [is] health issues that seniors have. If they do not turnaround and deal with them, that also results in their ability to be able to [stay] in the workforce and, therefore, the greater demands that will be put on the health system will also mean that from the point of view of the ageing population and the pension fund, if you do not have enough people in the pension fund to

be able to make those contributions, it is not going to work.

Now, there was something that I just wanted to mention because it was in this report, the Labour Advisory Committee report, and if you will allow me, I will just find the little page . . .

The Speaker: Okay. Yes.

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: Okay. It is funny because there is a section in there which talks about “the evidence.” And this was evidence that the committee used to talk about where we are, and it was talking about the health insurance. Okay? And it says, “iii. Health Insurance”—

“The category of persons most commonly without health insurance coverage are 45–64 years of [age]” And this says, “This category represented 1,541 persons.” Okay? And then it said the category of people over 65 “increased by 354 members to total 564 persons.”

But what this said to me was not just about seniors, but it also said to me about the people who we have to worry about coming behind. These people who are 45 to 64, if they do not have health insurance, then, because the law technically requires if you are working you should have health insurance, it raises the question, *Are these people not working?* And if they are not working, then it means that we should be trying to get them also into the workforce because by getting seniors to work longer, based on this, you are only going to get 354 people in the workforce, but if you can get these other people who do not have health insurance and presumably are not working, you could get 1,500 people. And we have a lot of people that we need to get into the workforce.

But what really concerned me was when this report talks about what you want to do in terms of the working population. And it talks about unemployment and saying that it increased from 36 persons to 95 in 2016. That still says that there are a large number of people out there who are working, and therefore there are not quite as many people that one would think that are going to join the workforce. So, I take the position that if the Government really wants to do something about, as it says “Reducing dependency on foreign labour,” it is not just about the seniors that you have to work, it is about the people who do not have health insurance who are presumably not working.

And, really, what I want to find out is not just this bit about allowing them to work longer, I would like to think that the Minister, or whomever brings this forward, needs to address something more about, *How are you going to educate these people so that they can take some of these other jobs?* Because they are going to need some training. They are going to need to be able to go from the jobs that they had before to some of the new jobs that are coming up. So it makes no sense to turnaround and suggest that you

are going to reduce the dependency on the labour force and you are going to get them in there, unless someone addresses the issues of making sure these people have better employment opportunities by having training and looking at what we need on this Island.

I really get concerned when I see something written out and I do not see some substance. Because to me, I do not want to see something just written on a piece of paper that sounds good. The people out there want to see that we have a plan. That want to see that we have something here that says, *I am going to get involved. I am going to be able to work and I am going to be able to do something for this Island.* Most people, especially at that age, have been used to making contributions. They are used to being part of the solution rather than part of the problem. So, Mr. Speaker, I want to be able to see that when the Premier and his team start to look at what they are going to do, that they do something more. Make it not just this little bit here, but they do something about really reducing the dependency on foreign labour and talking about making accommodation for the ageing workforce. I want to see something of substance.

And, Mr. Speaker, in wrapping up, I just want to say that if we are going to do something so that our seniors really feel that we are going to do something about where they are hurting and what we can do about [that], I would like to think that whatever legislation is going to be brought forward, that it will address some of these issues. That we will be able to say that it is not just a little box that is ticked, but actually there is something coming behind it that says . . . I mean, I know that at one stage, as the former Government, we used to have the Ministry of Health and Seniors. And that is because we believed that seniors were very important. We had a national ageing plan. We had people who were out there working on all of these things. I would like to think that the current Government has something along those lines and that somebody is going to be out there talking about some of these things, because I am sure that everybody wants to make sure that our seniors are recognised.

So, Mr. Speaker, it was interesting for me to just basically say that if we are going to do this, I would like to find out, and I would like to have the Premier answer the question about whether it is going to be as it says, the re-employment or whether, as I say, 70 is going to be the new retirement age and 65 is going to be the early retirement age. Because that I think clarifies it. But as I say, I believe that our seniors make their contribution and whatever we can do to allow those people who want to continue to work, is going to be very important.

And whatever we can do to allow them to have the ability to change jobs, to make contributions, do all those things [that] will make them more of a viable contributor to the growth of Bermuda is going to be what we need to do because, as has been said be-

fore, with the declining birth rate, we need all the Bermudians that we have to be working Bermudians, making contributions.

I think there was a notation here with respect to talking about financial assistance and the fact that this was growing, et cetera. We do not want that. And most seniors that I come across are not out there taking advantage of financial assistance, because they are the ones who feel [they] would rather starve and not eat, or have medicine and not have food, just because they have grown up on the basis that says that you suck it up.

So, Mr. Speaker, I just want us to let them know that the things that we are doing here right now are designed to make sure that if they choose to, they can work longer. And as I said before, [we need to] do whatever we can to allow them to be part of the workforce, the growing workforce. Whatever new opportunities are out there, let's have them being a part of that. But as I said earlier, not at the expense of our juniors because we have to make sure that all people in Bermuda have the opportunity to contribute. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Honourable Member wish to speak? We recognise the Honourable Member from constituency 22.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Honourable Member, you have the floor.

Mr. Scott Pearman: There used to be an expression that 40 is the new 30. Then it was 50 was the new 30. And now it probably is that 60 is the new 30. And here we are looking at . . . perhaps it will be 70 is the new something. In principle, Mr. Speaker, like everyone else who has spoken before me, I am supportive of an increase of the retirement age. Ultimately, the devil is in the detail. We do not have any details yet. And we have heard that we will see some soon.

We do know that this is likely to be for the public sector and we understand also that this is a proposal that is likely to give people a choice, so that when they hit 65 they are not obliged to remain but will have the option. And, of course, "choice" is one of the most important things that employees can be offered.

It is an interesting thought, but it is one we often overlook: We spend more time at work than we do doing anything else in our lives; more time at work than we do sleeping; more time at work than we do having time off. It can often define who people are. Therefore, this is a very important thing and it is a very important aspect of society.

Mr. Speaker, the report, which I have had the pleasure of reading . . . one of the people who pre-

pared it was Ms. Claudette Fleming, of Age Concern. One of the things that she spoke out recently on was her hope to see that any legislative changes in this area, generally, would also include changes to promote antidiscrimination on the basis of age. Now, that is a subject about which I have had a lot of experience. Before I returned home to Bermuda, I was a discrimination barrister in the UK. I spent a lot of time in a lot of conversations with clients talking about age discrimination. It was in 2006 that the age discrimination regulations came into effect in the UK, and at that time a chap called Simon Cheetham, Queen's Counsel, produced the first book on age discrimination and I had the pleasure of proofreading and working with him on that book.

That then morphed into the Equality Act in 2010 with the age discrimination aspects of the 2010 legislation coming into effect in 2012. So that is where the UK got to in 2012. And some of those thoughts . . . they were not moving the retirement age. What they were saying was that if someone has a retirement age, you could not dismiss someone before 65 without valid reason, and you also had to consider any applications for people to remain beyond 65. And this was private sector, not public.

But as I say, the devil is in the detail. As this report notes expressly, the question is that of unintended consequences. I do not know if it is a mistake, but it is one of the points people often overlook when talking about age discrimination, and they imagine that age discrimination is only discrimination against seniors, those above a particular age. But, of course, age discrimination is far more than that. Age discrimination against anyone on the basis of their age, and therefore, it is also discrimination against the young. This had some rather comical results in reality in the UK when this was brought in. And let me just be permitted to give two slightly light-hearted examples.

One is the apocryphal story of Saga Holidays. And Saga Holidays was and is a travel company that used to focus on trips and voyages and cruise ships mainly for the over-50s. Perhaps it was for the over-50s and single, I don't know. But they found themselves on the defensive end of this new antidiscrimination legislation because people under the age of 50 would not normally have been permitted to go on these holidays, and that was potentially discriminatory. Although that was a bit of an apocryphal story.

But there was another very practical and real example, and that was a large chain of home stores in the UK who had, quite rightly, in my view, recognised the benefit of the elderly (if I may use that term, in no pejorative way) worker. What did they find? They found that the 60-plus worker was more likely to show up on time, was more likely not to take sick days, was better able to help their customers and therefore they deployed a policy of hiring older workers because they thought it was better for their business. And indeed, arguably, looking at the bottom line, it was. Looking at

the way customers were served, it was. And yet, unintended consequences that, in theory, is discriminatory; to say that I will only hire those 60 and above is, technically, discriminatory against the young.

And so if Ms. Fleming is right and if these changes will also usher in, as I hope they do, consideration of the antidiscrimination in relation to age, let us just make sure that we do not get ourselves stuck by some unintended consequences.

Let me just touch on two more quick points and I will sit down. I know most people have spoken about this already. He is not in the Chamber at the moment, but I do find it ironic that perhaps for the first time the Honourable Derrick Burgess and I agree. He said this: he said we should go right to 70. Let's not stop at 65, 68, 67, let's go right to 70. I agree. If this Government is going to seriously try and tackle this issue, why not go straight to 70? Why mince around?

There is, of course, not just a moral and ethical reason for this change, but there is a financial one. It would be a disservice if I did not pause to mention it. Some people have mentioned it already. But that, of course, is the pension fund. In this very useful report, which those who have not read should take a quick look at page 8, we see that the total liabilities of the pension fund are \$1.4 billion, give or take. And yet, the actuarial unfunded liability is \$848 million. That is an \$848 million black hole. Now, no doubt some actuary could tell us how soon the pension monies is in that pension that we have, the funded element will run out. But one would reckon that this is a matter of decades, if not less. So this is a serious issue. And I am lawyer and not a mathematician, and it has been pointed out to me that I need to be careful with my numbers. So I try to be. Taking my calculator out, as I calculated, that means 58 per cent of our pension fund is unfunded. That is a shockingly high number and something that should concern us all.

So perhaps 60 is the new 30. And let's very much hope, Mr. Speaker, that when those who are 30 today come to have their retirement there is still money in the pension fund for them. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

Does any other Member wish to speak?

No other Member speaking?

That brings us to a close of this matter and we will move on to what is on the rest of the Order Paper.

We now move on—

The Deputy Clerk: There is a resolution.

[Crosstalk]

An Hon. Member: He has the right to reply.

The Speaker: Oh. Well, no one was getting up in his seat.

[Laughter]

The Speaker: We were about to move on.

Premier, if you would like to use your right to reply, I suggest you be in your seat on time.

Mr. Premier, you almost lost your opportunity.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, I had no idea that the Honourable Member was going to be so [brief]. I just stepped out of the Chamber to get my computer.

That much being said, Mr. Speaker, I was trying to get some information because I know the Opposition Leader had a question. He had a question specifically on page 4, which said there was an "increase of 44 per cent reported in 2010. Additionally, the population aged 65 and over grew by 23 per cent between 2010 and 2016." And he asked if that was a typo.

I have had a chance to look back at the actuarial report and I think that is a typo, and I will get the actual thing. I actually think it is only about 3 per cent of the total population was how much it increased and expanded to, but the absolute numbers may be different. But that is . . . so thank you for that, particularly.

I do know that there were a number of questions which came from a number of Members and one of the things that I think is important is that we consider the totality of what it is that we are doing here. It seems that there is broad support. I am thankful that it seems there was broad support for the need to retain the retirement age, to increase the retirement age. And when we talk about the options, Option 1 was status quo. Option 2 was to increase the retirement age beyond 65. Option 3 was to introduce re-employment contracts. Option 4 was to include age discrimination in the Human Rights Act, and Option 5 was to increase the population's financial literacy level.

I am uncertain if there was any particular opposition to any of those particular points. But I think, Mr. Speaker, what is the most important thing to recognise is that there is broad agreement that the retirement age should increase. I think that is something that we will certainly do.

For the Honourable Member who just took his seat, his experience in the United Kingdom is certainly interesting. I think it is an issue that has faced a lot of us, the issue of age discrimination and how to tackle that, it's knock-on for the young and the not-so-young inside the private and public sector. But I happen to have the belief, as I said in my opening remarks, Mr. Speaker, that we should not look at these things constrained by narrow views. And that is to say that more people living and working inside of a population, persons with expertise, persons who may be productive, persons who may know how to do stuff and who are told to stop working for no other reason than the fact they are 65, may also have a negative effect inside the economy. And if we are talking about overall

growth and overall expansion, then I think we can look at persons working longer. And those persons working longer of course will help our public funds and also our private funds, but I think they will also help the economy as their contributions are certainly needed and valued.

There was a question from the Honourable Member, Patricia Gordon-Pamplin, speaking about consideration for seniors to withdraw some money from their pensions if they elect to be ineligible for financial assistance. What I will tell the Honourable Member is that the Government will certainly take that under its particular advisement.

I can let Members know that I believe the Minister of Finance will be bringing amendments to the National Pension Scheme which governs private sector pensions, and I know there will be certain provisions in there, and certain flexibilities which we asked for. I am not entirely certain if this particular provision is in here, but that is something that I am sure with the debates (and the Minister of Finance was here earlier) is something that may be willing to factor in, Mr. Speaker.

The final note which I wish to raise and to add . . .

[Crosstalk]

Hon. E. David Burt: Did I get your point? Because you asked . . . you said the devil was in the details. I just want to make sure; did I get your point?

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: No.

Hon. E. David Burt: Mr. Speaker, can you just clarify a point for me again? If I may? I am sorry.

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: Mr. Speaker, I was hoping that the Premier would clarify, the recommendation from the report, which was the re . . . re . . . what is it?

Hon. E. David Burt: Re-employment.

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: Yes. Versus . . . whether it was 70 is the new thing and 65 is the early employment [sic]—

The Speaker: Early retirement.

Hon. Jeanne J. Atherden: Early retirement.

The Speaker: Right.

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

What I will say, Mr. Speaker, is regard to the recommendation of the “introduce re-employment contracts” . . . and just for Members who are listening. Option 3, one of the things that was there, “Re-

employment contracts can be utilised as a viable option to help older/ageing employees remain economically productive. Re-employment contracts will be used to enable [people] to continue to work using agreed flexible employment contracts up to 5 years after statutory retirement.”

Now, statutory retirement is a very interesting concept in and of itself, given that there is no technical statutory retirement. Even though the Public Service Superannuation Fund Act says that retirement age is 65. Other Acts—

[Gavel]

Hon. E. David Burt:—inside of Social Insurance and different things it is assumed . . . it is assumed at the age of 65, but there is no actual age there. I think to answer that question would be beyond whatever the *de facto* retirement age ended up being. So if the *de facto* retirement age right now is 65, there will be employment contracts after 65. If the *de facto* retirement age moves in five years to 68, as per the recommendations of the report, then it will be employment contracts after the *de facto* retirement age of 68. And if it goes to 70, then it will be after that point in time.

But I know that a lot of Members spoke about the devils that were in the details, and I think, broadly, Mr. Speaker,—

An Hon. Member: Devils?

Hon. E. David Burt: The devil.

[Laughter]

Hon. E. David Burt: I think broadly, Mr. Speaker, the most important point for consideration is the fact that on its overall recommendations about the gradual increase in the retirement age from 65 to 68, over the next five years, and then to 70 over the next five years is something that the entire House can support and it is good that we have that particular support from Members today.

The Government will commit, as I said in my opening Statement, Mr. Speaker, that there will be forthcoming amendments to the Public Service Superannuation Fund Act, which sets the retirement age for the public service, and that will be amended, as it was stated inside of the Speech from the Throne.

There is the National Pension Scheme Act which is coming up this year as well, which will have certain things and provisions related to this which may have to also factor on and impact on the retirement age.

And then in the next parliamentary session, which will begin in November, there will also be changes to the Social Insurance Act, as the Government has said previously, that we want to make social

insurance contributions, as they are in every single other country in the world, progressive based on a percentage of income as opposed to a fixed rate.

And inside of those changes, which we are doing for social insurance, will also possibly be the additional things to bring effect to the Government's policy on increasing the retirement age.

But there are a number of questions which have come today, those will be helpful and formative for the policy as the Government looks to finalise what will go forward. But it is gratifying, Mr. Speaker, that the entirety of Members on both sides recognise the need for us to move from a construct which is about 50 years old right now, and that is the retirement age at the age of 65.

So, with that, Mr. Speaker, I move that the Honourable House do now vote . . . or ask for unanimous consent that the Honourable House supports the recommendation—

The Speaker: Yes.

Hon. E. David Burt: —of the Sub-committee of the Labour Advisory Committee as contained in the report, Reviewing the Retirement Age.

The Speaker: Members. Are Members in favour of that?

Some Hon. Members: Aye.

[Motion carried: The House supported the recommendations of the Labour Advisory Committee Sub-committee as contained in the Report "Reviewing the Retirement Age."]

The Speaker: Yes. Good.

That now brings us to the close of items that were to be debated today on the Order Paper, so we will go to our third reading.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDER 21

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that Standing Order 21 be suspended to enable me to move that the Bill entitled the Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs Act 2019 be read the third time by its title only.

The Speaker: Are there any objections to that?

None.

Continue.

[Motion carried: Standing Order 21 suspended.]

BILL

THIRD READING

PREMIER, MINISTERS AND OPPOSITION LEADER PERSONAL STAFFS ACT 2019

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that the Bill entitled Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs Act 2019 be now read the third time by its title only and passed.

The Speaker: Are there any objections?

No objections.

So passed.

[Motion carried: The Premier, Ministers and Opposition Leader Personal Staffs Act 2019 was read a third time and passed.]

The Speaker: Yes.

Premier, all other items are carried over, so we are now to that . . . motion to adjourn.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. E. David Burt: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I move that this Honourable House do now adjourn until Friday, June 7th at 10:00 a.m.

The Speaker: Thank you. Does any Member wish to speak?

We recognise the Honourable Member from constituency 10, Mr. Dunkley.

EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE—CHAIRMAN'S REMU- NERATION

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good evening to you and to Members in this Honourable House and to the listening audience.

Mr. Speaker, I am not here tonight to talk about the march on Parliament by the teachers. I am not here tonight to talk about the Work to Rule in Corrections and the lack of progress in the issues of dealing with the corrections officers because there might be a march. I am not here to talk about that. I am not here tonight to talk about the challenges in transportation with the buses and the Work to Rule and the cancellation of routes. I am not here tonight to talk about the challenges with the taxi industry. Mr. Speaker, I am not here tonight to talk about retail sales. Mr. Speaker, I am not here to talk about twelve months of retail sales being down. Mr. Speaker, I am not here

tonight to re-debate the amendment that was passed in this Honourable House just two weeks ago that is causing great consternation in the community because I do not have enough time to talk about all of those issues, Mr. Speaker, and they are critical, important issues.

But I am here tonight to talk about two other important issues and they go back to transparency and accountability—what the current Government talked about so much when they were in the Opposition, and they seem to have forgotten in the short period of time when they have been the Government.

Mr. Speaker, today the Honourable Minister Furbert, the Minister for the Cabinet Office, read a statement and tabled a report on the Efficiency Committee that he said had met 32 times starting in March of last year and convened their work early in this year. Mr. Speaker, while I have not had a chance to read the whole report yet, because it seems to be quite thick (I am not sure how detailed it is), but what concerned me, Mr. Speaker, is after debating legislation today on consultants and advisors, what disturbed me, Mr. Speaker, was in the back and forth during the question period today, we learned that the Junior Minister at the time was paid \$60,000 to conduct work during this Efficiency Committee report that went on for a number of months.

Mr. Speaker, \$60,000.

Now, let me be clear because very shortly after the report was finished the then Junior Minister at the time, Mr. Speaker—and for those in the listening audience who are listening on their drive home show tonight, they are going to get a real treat to some transparency and accountability from us in the Opposition.

The Member at the time was a Member of Parliament and he was a Junior Minister within Finance. And lo and behold, because of questioning by Honourable Opposition Members, we found out that on top of that he was getting paid \$60,000 to work on a committee, Mr. Speaker.

The report was tabled. The report was written up. The Minister read out a statement and never once did we hear that there was \$60,000 being paid for that.

Now, Mr. Speaker, you know the PLP talked a lot about what is in their platform, what they committed to—the 100-day report, and the longer timelines to that. So, I refreshed my memory. I looked through it. In the platform there is not one mention of consultants or advisors. But we have seen a plethora of consultants and advisors over the past 18 months.

Reflecting back, Mr. Speaker, to the questions that [we as the] Opposition asked on March 11th . . . we found out that the Minister of Economic Development had a consultant. And that was a Minister without portfolio.

The Minister of Education had a consultant. The Minister of Transport and Regulatory Affairs had

a consultant. The Minister of Legal Affairs had a consultant. The Minister of Public Works had a consultant. The Minister of Transport and Regulatory Affairs had a consultant, Mr. Speaker. And today we learned that an MP and a Junior Minister at the time got paid \$60,000 on top for the regular work to be done.

But if you look at the platform for the PLP, it mentions *We will focus in on good public education*. Well, clearly, we are still having challenges on that because we had the march today—which I am not going to talk about on the motion to adjourn tonight, Mr. Speaker.

It said in the 100 days of the PLP, they would conclude negotiations with the public sector unions. Well, it is clear, Mr. Speaker, that they are not concluded because the corrections officers are still at the table and on the Work to Rule. The police officers still have not concluded their negotiations, and it is clear that the BTU has some challenges.

In the platform, it talks about a code of conduct for MPs. We have not seen that yet, Mr. Speaker. And, Mr. Speaker, I know that some Members would like to see that, because I think it would raise the level of accountability for us. In the short-term platform objectives, it says, Mr. Speaker, and this one brought tears to my eyes, *Conduct a review of all school facilities to identify and correct health and safety issues*. That was a short-term initiative, but today, in the longer-term—it is almost two years now—we find that T. N. Tatem is going to be closed and it is going to cost us \$3 million to remediate that, Mr. Speaker. Three million dollars, without hearing [if it] was put out to bid, what is the scope of the work, who else bid on it, or who was the successful bidder, Mr. Speaker. A bull in a hurry—

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. Point of order.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: —will never make a calf, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: We will take your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: The Minister never said that he had any quotes, [or that] he put anything out to tender. That was a report from within the Ministry. So, it has not been out there to anyone. It is not out to tender.

The Speaker: In fact, let me help on that. There was a question that came from one of your Members about that, and the Minister said that it has not gone to bid yet. That was the report that came back, and the report suggested it was going to be \$3 million, but it had not gone to bid yet. So, that was a question that was

directly answered by the Minister when he was on his feet.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Then, if that is the case, when will it go out to bid? Because I understand that there are a number of companies in Bermuda who specialise in this type of work, and they would be willing to get on with it as quickly as possible. So, the school could be opened and not closed for—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Point of order.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: —the longer period of time.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: We will take your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: The Honourable Member, Mr. Speaker, obviously was not in the House this morning, and is sort of . . . all that information was given out. I would suggest the Honourable Member attend the House when he should be here.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Because all of that was talked about this morning.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Speaker, that is just not a point of order. The Honourable Member has not been in the House this afternoon, but you could listen on the radio.

An Hon. Member: You did not hear anything.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: You could listen on the radio, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Members—

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: —so, you know, the Honourable Member—

The Speaker: —we are not going to go up and down on this.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: You know, I am bowling a good line and length and the Honourable Member should just stay in his seat.

The Speaker: We are not going to go up and down on this.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

The Speaker: Just stick to your point.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Just stick to your point. Stick to your point and get on . . . but do not go over what was missed this morning. I will put it in those terms. Okay?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: So, Mr. Speaker, getting back to what was in the platform, I mentioned all of those, but nothing on consultants and advisors.

And this subject comes up over and over and over again, and on the day that we debate a Bill to crystallise it, formalise and type it up to some extent, we learn that \$60,000 has been paid out to a Junior Minister to conduct this work. And when the work gets finished, all of a sudden the Junior Minister becomes a Minister.

Mr. Speaker, while the people of Bermuda struggle, while we discuss a living wage, while we discuss cost of living, while we realise that there are brothers and sisters out there in our community that are finding it hard to make ends meet and finding it hard to get a job, we learn that somebody is paid \$60,000 to sit on a committee and do work that is expected to be done anyway. Because, Mr. Speaker, last time I checked, as a Member of Parliament and as a Junior Minister, you have a responsibility to work significant hours taking care of issues. But all of a sudden it is thrown out there that as a Junior Minister he has got another \$60,000 on the side.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Honourable Premier to identify all extra payments to Members who sit on committees, because the public has a right to know. The public has a right to know how their money is being spent.

Now, Mr. Speaker, this report could be a good report. But if it gets shrouded in the fact that after the report is released, we learn that somebody is paid \$60,000 it is going to be lost—all the good of that report is going to be lost in that, Mr. Speaker.

It is unacceptable that it had to be found out this way and, you know, Mr. Speaker, if it is found out this way you think that the Government is trying to hide something. The Minister, who was a Junior Minister, who got paid the \$60,000, could easily have said, in the report, because on the last page it says *The report cost \$130,000*. Break down the \$130,000, be open and transparent.

ARBITRADE

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Now, Mr. Speaker, the second item I would like to talk about tonight is the issue of Arbitrade.

Mr. Speaker, two days ago a Government spokesman put out a statement [with this] headline, and I will quote, Mr. Speaker, ¹“Government will focus on making strides in Fintech.” And there are a number of parts of that statement that really jumped out to me, and my first reaction was, *I really cannot believe that somebody is saying this.*

The first part of it, Mr. Speaker, if you allow me to read—

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: “The Government ‘will continue to focus on making strides in the Fintech space’ and ‘will not be deterred by the Opposition’s myopic focus on one of the many tech companies that have incorporated in Bermuda’.”

Now, Mr. Speaker, why do I start with that? Simply put, and importantly, Mr. Speaker, one bad apple can spoil that whole bunch. Mr. Speaker, one company with a reputational issue can cause Bermuda challenges that we will have to try to ameliorate for weeks and weeks and years and years and years. We have worked hard to create a reputation as a very sound, stable, business environment, following best practice, being open and transparent. One bad apple can spoil that whole bunch, Mr. Speaker, and that is why we focused on it.

That is why Members of this House, on our side, have stood up and focused in on that issue because from the beginning, it just did not seem to be on solid ground, Mr. Speaker—from the very beginning, Mr. Speaker.

I spoke to this issue probably a year ago for the first time, Mr. Speaker. A year ago, the first time, and shortly after that, a couple of months later, when they had one of the most interesting press conferences that I have ever seen in my life. In fact, it could have been a skit on *Saturday Night Live*, Mr. Speaker, when the company talked about *we are going to give \$1 million to the Government, we are going to have a chicken farm, we are going to have a gang violence reduction programme and we are going to do all of this in a couple of weeks.*

Well, here we are a year later, and nothing has happened other than we know they have not got a licence to conduct much of a trade in Bermuda. They did get a licence for a building, Mr. Speaker. We do know that a civil servant tried to chase down the \$1 million that was promised, or committed to, and we have not heard anything or feedback from that.

But, interestingly enough, in the statement that came out by a Government spokesperson, Mr. Speaker, it says, ²“On May 9th,” this year, “the Premier issued a statement stating that the Opposition can use the opportunity at the Premier’s Question Time to ask about Arbitrade. When the opportunity arose, the Opposition failed to bring any questions.”

Mr. Speaker, that is outright fabrication! And the records of this House will show that, Mr. Speaker, because last year I asked questions on two separate occasions to the Honourable Premier—two separate occasions, to the Honourable Premier. The first occasion was after Arbitrade became public, probably the first time because of the social media message by the Honourable Premier himself, I believe it was in late May last year when the Honourable Premier said that he was pleased . . . and these are my words because I do not have the Tweet message in front of me, but I can research it, Mr. Speaker. And the Premier is probably pulling it up right in front of him because I think it was May 31st.

But the Honourable Premier said he was pleased to see the platform that was demonstrated by this company Arbitrade that . . . blah, blah, blah, going on applying for licence in Bermuda. So, I asked him, *Honourable Premier, can you say who the principals are that you met with Arbitrade and who the local contacts were?* It was asked right here in the House of Assembly.

The Honourable Premier said he could not remember, and he would get back to me.

I followed up with the Premier and to this day, it has been a year, and there has not been a reply. The question was asked, not answered, Mr. Speaker.

And that continued on because in the next Premier’s Question Period, I think it was in July, we asked more questions of the Premier, and it was all pushed off to the side and there were no answers given, Mr. Speaker. And it is apparent why that was the case, to me anyway—until I am proven wrong. But, Mr. Speaker, when you are on solid ground, you stay on that ground.

I remember the Honourable Member for constituency 29 after I had spoken on the motion to adjourn about Arbitrade, stating that I was trying to tarnish a good company trying to come to Bermuda. Asking questions is not tarnishing a good company that is trying to come to Bermuda. Asking questions and getting no answers raises that level of suspicion even more. And so, the process goes on, Mr. Speaker, with this . . . the Premier has a statement issued that the Government will happily answer questions from the Opposition, but we just have not asked those questions, Mr. Speaker. That is fabrication.

Then the statement goes on to say that, “Bermuda has an extremely high standard, and the government, in conjunction with the Bermuda Busi-

¹ [Bernews](#), 29 May 2019

² *Ibid.*

ness Development Agency, will continue the work of attracting companies that can meet the Bermuda Standard . . .” and we support that 100 per cent, Mr. Speaker. We support it 100 per cent. But in this case, with the company that is mentioned, they have not shown that they can reach that Bermuda standard.

So, we are in a bit of a conundrum here tonight, Mr. Speaker, because the Government clearly supports this company. And so I ask the Honourable Premier or anyone on that side: What is the current situation? What licences have been granted to that company? They own a building. They own land and a building that was bought from Bermudian entities. And at this point it does not appear that they have the ability to do anything out of that building, Mr. Speaker. It appears that the cart somehow jumped in front of the horse with the PLP Government, Mr. Speaker.

We have stayed on this one because from the start we knew, we had the feeling that this company was offering a lot more than they could ever do. And now we have learned recently that they have appeared to run to other jurisdictions in conjunction with other companies, Mr. Speaker. So, it is best now that this Government not duck and weave, not hide from this, come clean, say what the current situation is, show how we are going to clean it up and move it forward. And I hope, Mr. Speaker, that no one is continuing to call and ask for that \$1 million.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member. Does any other Honourable Member wish to speak?

I recognise the Honourable Member from constituency 21.

Oh . . . he sat down.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Oh, okay. The Honourable Member from constituency 11, then. I saw the Honourable Member on his feet, I thought he was wanting to get my attention.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Good afternoon, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Good afternoon.

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY CLUBS

Mr. Christopher Famous: Good evening, colleagues and good evening, Bermuda.

Mr. Speaker, there is a character on *Game of Thrones* called Arya Stark—Air-ee-yah, Ar-rye-ah—she had a saying, *A girl is no one*. And the Member from constituency 10 started off, I was like, *Whoa, this sounds like Game of Thrones*. I am not here to talk about . . . but he mentioned it. I am not here to talk about . . . but he mentioned it.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Wow. Guess what? I am not here to talk about an OBA Senator that got to work as an aide for the Premier. I am not here to talk about an OBA MP that got to work for the Gaming Commission. I am not here to talk about an OBA Senator's wife who got a million-dollar contract from this *[sic]* Government. No, I am not here to talk about that.

An Hon. Member: That Government.

Mr. Christopher Famous: Sorry, *that* Government. What I am here to talk about, on a positive note, Mr. Speaker, is community clubs.

Mr. Speaker, for the last year and a half I have been serving on the Liquor Licensing Authority. Part of the remit of the Liquor Licensing Authority is to examine the functions of members' clubs. As we all know throughout this country, from east to west, there are workmen's clubs built by black men, our grandparents, through the sweat of their brow. And these people built it for reasons of recreation, sporting, education—multi uses. Over the years, the functions have diminished and part of the remit of the Liquor Licensing Authority is to examine the membership, make sure that their membership is in order, make sure that their books are in order, securities and all of that.

Recently, there has been some bad press around . . . sorry, bad *printed* press around members' clubs. So, I am here today to speak to that.

I want to speak about Bailey's Bay Cricket Club. I want to speak about the president, Mr. Arrim (I might be pronouncing it wrong) . . . Mr. Perinchief, the work they are doing down there—\$5,000 towards school supplies for children, back to school, every year, going even further, to create employment for some of their members, by teaching them trades, starting off with working around the clubs.

Let us move on. Hamilton Parish Workman's Club or as we know down in the east, Crawl Club. Mr. Nigel Burgess and his committee, youth programme for 100 young people, seniors' outreach. Moving farther towards your side of the country, Southampton Rangers. *Once a Ranger, never a stranger*. Coincidentally, their colours are . . . do you know what their colours are, Mr. Speaker?

The Speaker: I think you should move on.

[Laughter]

Mr. Christopher Famous: Mr. Jason Wade, president Jason Wade and his committee. They have family fun days every time there is a cricket game. They have a seniors' night every week that provides free meals for 40 seniors.

You see, Mr. Speaker, these clubs, these bastions of our community, have been tarnished over and

over because of, let us just say, incidents at the club. Not from the club itself, but persons visiting the club. Oh, so yes, part of our remit is to make sure safety first.

So, in speaking with these young men, and when I say young, most of them are 40 and under. These people are all volunteering their time to help evolve their clubs to move away from the image of their clubs just being a glorified watering hole. So, I am asking Bermuda, please, please, please, when they have family events, please give them your support. I am asking each one of my fellow MPs. Find out the club in your area, support them, join as a member, even if you are not a functioning member, be a financial member. It means a lot.

And most of all, I am asking the printed press to stop being so negative to our clubs. They are trying their best to turn things around because this is part of Bermuda.

Let me move on, Mr. Speaker.

PUTTING BERMUDIANS FIRST

Mr. Christopher Famous: In the year 2011, the OBA came out with a slogan *Putting Bermuda First*. At first, I was like, *Wow, this sounds pretty nice*. Putting Bermuda First. Then I read a little deeper, and I said, *Well, where are the Bermudians?* because they are talking about the country. So, somehow, they forgot to put Bermudians first. But I am not going to digress.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, we are an Overseas Territory, one of 14. One thousand miles directly south of Bermuda, is a place called Tortola, British Virgin Islands. The Premier, Honourable Andrew Fahie made this statement recently . . . one minute, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Would you like to read it and make a comment of his statement?

Mr. Christopher Famous: Well, basically what he said is that there is going to be some new investors coming to his country. Financial investors, different sorts of investors. But he wanted to ensure that his people got jobs first. They are not just coming here to just come, bring in your own people and we cannot work.

I think there is an Honourable Member here who has some business down there. I will not say who, but . . . anyway, the point I am getting at, Mr. Speaker, he was chastised because he said he wanted to put his people first—vilified, even. Putting your people first seems to be a problem for some people.

Mr. Speaker, earlier this week, Honourable Immigration Minister Wayne Caines put out a release and it essentially said that we are going to put immigration reform, looking for balance, but a primacy for Bermudians. Once again, vilified.

Let me read some of the comments. “Apart from broadening the tax, pension and healthcare load we seriously need to increase the gene pool given the level of intellect and in-breeding of many [of us] Bermudians.”

This is comments because we want to put our people first. You see, Mr. Speaker?

Last week, many of us attended Bermuda College graduation, let me be clear. One hundred and thirty persons graduated. I am going to go on a limb and say 120 of those were born Bermudians. Over the next few weeks, 400 to 500 young people are going to graduate from high school. Over the next few weeks, another few hundred Bermudians are going to graduate from university. Logically speaking, those young people, when they finish university and whatever they learned, should be looking to come back to their country to get employment. But, yet, when we say putting Bermudians first, we are vilified.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to speak to everyone in this House, everyone in the listening audience. Everyone in this House, bar none, has children. Everyone in this House has or will sacrifice to send their children to university, or high school, whatever they do. Every one of us, bar none, wants their children to be successful. So, why is it, when we sit here and we make legislation to ensure that OBA people’s children get [put] first, PLP people’s children get [put] first, the children of people who do not vote for nobody get [put] first, why are we being vilified?

I keep asking myself, *Why is this?*

You see, Mr. Speaker, if we do not put this legislation in place, we are going to find ourselves like a country that you and I visited. That even the most educated of our people are on bread lines, doing stuff that they are more than qualified for but cannot get a job in their category. So, I am saying to all my fellow MPs in here, no matter if you are green or red, the immigration reform committee is a bipartisan committee. We have mandates for Bermuda status, for mixed families. We have mandates for work permits. We are working hard. We are not going to just put things out there and then somebody say, *Oh man, this policy is a failure. This has put Bermudians backwards.*

Every day we hear it on our phones. Every day we see it on Facebook. *Bermudians cannot get jobs.* Go to any grocery store nowadays. Go to any restaurant. You ask yourself, *Where are the Bermudians?* You got to look underneath the tables, any Bermudians in there? These are things we have to turn around, Mr. Speaker.

So, again, I am going to end on this note. OBA, *Putting Bermuda First*. Mr. Speaker, we cannot put Bermuda first if we put Bermudians second. Bermudians must come first in Bermuda because they are not going to come first anywhere else.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

[Desk thumping]

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member. I recognise the Deputy Speaker.

Deputy, you have the floor.

COST OF THE POLICE INVESTIGATION INTO DR. EWART BROWN

Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I was reading the Bible the other day . . . not intentionally any particular book of the Bible, but I was reading John 19. And in John 19 it tells us about how Pilate had Jesus flogged, they put a crown of thorns on his head. Jesus was slapped—and when Pilate came out to present Jesus he says, *I do not find him guilty of any crime.*” But when the High Priest and the police saw Jesus, despite what Pilate said, they said, *Crucify him, crucify him.*

Mr. Speaker, I learned this week that the Bermuda police are now trying to freeze the bank accounts of Dr. Brown. Why would they do that? Cripple somebody so they cannot fight them. Mr. Speaker, it is shameful. It is shameful in this country to be investigating somebody . . . Bermuda will have the record in the world, investigating somebody going on nine years. Shameful, Mr. Speaker.

I do know the Minister of National Security has asked the police for a breakdown of the costs of this investigation. Mr. Speaker, I want that report to be tabled in this House. Not only one lump sum figure, but I would like to know: What is the hotel cost in Bermuda and overseas? What is the air travel cost? What is the cost of food in Bermuda and overseas? What is the ground transportation cost in Bermuda and overseas, Mr. Speaker? What is the miscellaneous expense? What did it cost them when they broke into Dr. Brown’s clinic [and had] to repair that?

I want to see all of that in the report, Mr. Speaker, because this has gone too far, that you can investigate somebody for nine years based on a comment from a convicted perjurer. And when you have crimes committed by others and recorded in the audit report, and there is no investigation. There is no special report—that is shameful. It shows you that we still live in a country where it is divided and they sometimes call it Two Bermudas, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to see that report as soon as possible. I know the police have asked for an extension to get it to them to next week. I want to see that report tabled here because, you know, we are spending millions of dollars on this investigation when Mrs. Smith cannot even afford her medicine or proper food to eat. And we have got people . . . in fact, we had a couple of officers travel to California here recently to question Dr. Reddy’s wife. For what? This is nonsense. You know, you cannot find nothing now and it becomes dangerous now, they will put anything there.

And not only the investigation of Dr. Brown, but anybody that is connected with him, anybody in this party, we want to know what the cost is. And so, I hope those true figures come back here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member. I recognise the Honourable Member from constituency 16. Honourable Member Weeks, you have the floor.

BERMUDIANS OF PORTUGUESE DESCENT

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before I go on, I want to say that I concur with the Member that just took his seat. For as long as I have been in Parliament, which is 10 years this year, there has been a witch-hunt to try to destroy one of our best Premier’s that I think this country has ever seen.

Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity, like many other Bermudians, to attend the Bermuda versus the Azores game at our National Sports Centre on Saturday evening. But I want to pause right here and take a minute to thank the president [*sic*] of Clube Vasco da Gama, Mr. Paul Franco, and his club at large for inviting me and my wife to attend the game.

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

[Hon. Derrick V. Burgess, Sr., Deputy Speaker, in the Chair]

The Deputy Speaker: Mm-hmm.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: —I went on a fact-finding trip last year to the Azores, when I was still Minister of Community, Culture and Sport. Joining me was Mr. Jekon Edness, he is a representative for Youth, Sport and Recreation, and Mr. Rick Richardson, who had a programme along with Mr. Clyde Best, called Bermuda International Football Festival that is reaching and teaching our young sons through football. This programme, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was borne out of the upsurge of antisocial behaviour.

While I was in the Azores, I met many of the officials who actually accompanied the team to Bermuda and I met them again on Saturday. They were led by a Mr. Robert De Camara. He was the perfect host when I was in the Azores. So, I just want to mention that.

Mr. [Deputy] Speaker, Saturday night—for those that went—was a very exciting night. As we know, or those that do know that Bermuda walked away came away with a 2-1 victory and our national pride on Saturday, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was at its highest and, you know, in the words of one of my younger children, they were saying *Ber-Ber*. That is all you heard leaving the stadium, the stadium on Saturday night.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, anyone who attended the game I am sure noticed that there was a level of excitement. But also, there was an obvious disconnect between the Bermudian of Azorean descent and the Bermudian of African descent. What do I mean by that, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Well, watching the game, and the feeling in the atmosphere, I realised as I looked around and listened that we had a language barrier that actually separated us.

So, looking around, I saw the different pockets, I tried to read people's perceptions and the position that they were taking. And if we are honest with ourselves, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we were desperately trying to figure out what our Portuguese counterparts were saying—most of them Portuguese Bermudians—in their native language, what they were so vehemently and passionately and whatever else they were shouting at the players and the officials, sometimes even in jest. You know, my group of people watching the game would laugh and shout, *Say that in English! Say that in English!* And, of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I mentioned . . . and I must stress that this was all in fun and it was all in jest. So before anybody takes it a different way, it was just in fun.

But, having said that, Mr. Deputy Speaker (on a serious note), the language barrier was so clearly evident. I can recall, briefly, vaguely, in 1999 when Dame Lois Browne-Evans . . . you may remember because I think you were here back then, Mr. Deputy Speaker, she brought a Bill that would give Portuguese and other members of our society, long-term residence, I think that was about 20 years ago.

The Deputy Speaker: Paula Cox.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Paula Cox brought it? Okay, well, you have to excuse my memory, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: No problem.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: And that, to me, is another indication, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of our then Attorney General or the Honourable Paula Cox was looking out for those that had a long history and a connection to our country and the development of our country.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the phrase that it is time for *Verdade e reconciliação*—that is Portuguese, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

An Hon. Member: Was it?

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: For truth and reconciliation.

[Laughter and inaudible interjection]

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: I spent last—

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I think you skipped a beat, but we got the message.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Well, I spent last night practicing, and—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: One more time.

The Deputy Speaker: You got a teacher here.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Give it to us again.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: *Verdade e reconciliação.*

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Okay. Appreciate it.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Ta bom! That is truth and reconciliation.

[Crosstalk]

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Because for truth and reconciliation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is something that we must not just speak about when it comes to the reparations of the African Bermudian. But it must all be looked at when we talk about the history of the African Bermudian and the Portuguese Bermudian in this country. There needs to be some truth and reconciliation, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The reason that we are celebrating Portuguese Day on November 4, 2019, I think, is an indication that we recognise the contribution of the Portuguese community in Bermuda.

The Deputy Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: We understand that they did not come here like the African Bermudian came here, but they were brought here by the same people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, largely through the English Bermudian. Those of us [from] Back o' Town came to call the English Bermudian the "Forty Thieves." So, I will refer to that as I go further on in what I have to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We live side by side with our Portuguese neighbours, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They were an integral part of our community and they brought another cultural perspective to our country.

Back in the 1960s, Mr. Deputy Speaker—I am warming up now . . . back in the 1960s, Mr. Deputy Speaker, when the party system was first formed, when this illustrious party of whom I am a member, the Progressive Labour Party was formed . . . I am humbled by those members, those founding members that saw fit to put our party together to fight for democratic rights, justice and equality in these isles of Bermuda. The English Bermudian, Mr. Deputy Speaker, used his power at the time to persuade the Portu-

guese Bermudian to separate from the black Bermudian by using the law of white privilege.

These are the things that I was thinking about while I was sitting there watching that game, wondering what separated us. And what little history I do know, it was the law of white privilege. They were crafty. They were crafty, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as it was their way of separating our communities for their benefit.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the historical perspective . . . it must be understood. When the PLP was formed, it was not formed, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for only the black Bermudians. It was formed as a labour party for all Bermudians. But truth be told, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the English Bermudians, the Forty Thieves back in those days were highly instrumental in getting the Portuguese Bermudian and the black Bermudian to separate.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I speak of history. I speak of culture. I spoke of sports, and now I want to speak of language. It has always been my assertion that we have Portuguese taught in our schools, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Not as an elective like French or Spanish. Oh, no. Not to just have a foreign language taught in schools, but given the size of our Portuguese community, the Portuguese language should be Bermuda's national second language, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and therefore taught as such in our schools—Portuguese as a second language.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there will be some who fall on both sides of the divide. Some will agree and some will disagree. That is fine, because we live in a democracy, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And because this is my opinion, we all have our own opinion, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But beyond that, we need to begin to think about our country one day becoming independent. We have to think of our country one day becoming independent.

We must start thinking independent and all roads should lead to independence, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because independence will not just drop out of the sky, as I have had conversations with one of my colleagues. Everything that we do in this Honourable House should be . . . we should have in mind that one day this country will have to stand on its own. And this is why I am talking about the language and how we have to bring our communities together, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We have to get the Portuguese community re-immersed into the overarching Bermudian community and culture. No more of “us” and “them.”

Of course, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, there will be some in both communities that may not agree with my philosophy. There are some of us who may enjoy the separation. There are even some Portuguese who do not even speak a lick of Portuguese, but are of Portuguese heritage. And I have a colleague who does not speak Portuguese—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Who are you talking about, Trevor Moniz?

[Laughter]

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Mr. Deputy Speaker—

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: I, for one, Mr. Deputy Speaker, am minded by a comment that the Honourable Member from constituency 2 said earlier. I am one of those that is a little of this and a little bit of that. As my great-grandma, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on my mother's side, was a Portuguese from the Azores and her maiden name—

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: Oh, yes. I thought you said another word, but I am glad—

[Laughter and crosstalk]

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: I venture to say that there are a lot of us, there are a lot of us . . . a significant percentage of our black Bermudian population who have those similar ties, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And just for the record, my great-grandma's maiden name was De Minx Ferrera.

Mr. Deputy Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker: You are related to Trevor Moniz.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: He is my cousin, but it is nothing else.

[Laughter]

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: It is nothing else, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But as I mentioned prior, the black Bermudian and the Portuguese Bermudian, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we lived among each other in the same communities and we intermingled, went to school together, before the Portuguese was bamboozled and tricked and lured away to benefit the few, to continue to control the men, economically and in all kind of other ways.

So, I venture to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have to now look at a way to bring about healing, to heal the divide, to bridge the gap between the Bermudian of Portuguese descent and the Bermudian of African descent. What better way to do this than through language, Mr. Deputy Speaker? Starting with our schools.

We need some truth and reconciliation . . . I am not going to say it again, what I said earlier, because I got tongue-twisted, –but we need some truth and reconciliation, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We need some real talk. What better way to bring them back into the fold, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to show our Portuguese brothers and sisters that it is time to heal the divide and to understand why the divide came about in the first place? You know, if we do not talk real about it, we will never understand why the divide came about in the first place, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

But when I was at the game on Saturday, this is what started my mind wandering when I was watching the game. When I was at the game on Saturday, I was talking to a few of my Portuguese Bermudian friends, and they were wearing red and green, the colours of Portugal's national team. But they had hats on that said Bermuda. And when I saw that, I said, *Hmm. Look at that—*

An Hon. Member: They were covering their bases.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: —because they too understand . . . yes, they covered their bases, but what I am saying is that they too understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that they are a part of this community. And we need to open our arms and welcome them back.

That picture that I described? It shows that we are confused, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on many levels. But I must stress, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this is not an educational issue that I speak to. But it is a community and cultural issue. Those persons of Portuguese descent, they have helped to cultivate and contribute to this country. They have helped to grow this country, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in all the ways that we can think of, they have assisted in making this country what we know it as today.

So, it is time to openly acknowledge the ills of our past. It is time to welcome our [Bermudians of Portuguese] descent as a true part of this country, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The dialogue must begin, and the divide must be closed.

So, I say again *verdade e reconciliação*. Truth and reconciliation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, must happen. Portuguese as our second language must and should start with our young people and as I close, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say *muito obrigado, Mr. Orador*.

The Deputy Speaker: I say good night.

Mr. Michael A. Weeks: That is thank you, Mr. [Deputy] Speaker.

Thank you.

[Desk thumping]

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. Any further speakers?

The Chair recognises the Minister, the Honourable Zane De Silva.

Mr. De Silva—
[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: No, he cannot speak anything.

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: *Bom dia*, everybody.

An Hon. Member: Keep it above board. Keep it above board.

[Laughter and crosstalk]

EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE—CHAIRMAN'S REMUNERATION

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I will give you a little Spanish when I am finished, too! I am going to speak English now, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member, former Premier Michael Dunkley, spoke tonight. And he talked about the things that he was not going to talk about.

I am going to take a similar line and length, and tonight, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am not going to talk about how their former Attorney General shredded paper. I am not going to talk about how the former OBA Government cut our former Premier's fees up to 87 per cent. I am not going to talk about the former Government, the OBA Government, wanted to issue status to thousands of non-Bermudians, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in one fell swoop.

I am not going to talk about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about how our people were pepper-sprayed under their tenure. And I am certainly not going to talk about how they gave away our airport without tender.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Honourable Member Dunkley seemed to really have a bee in his bonnet about now Minister Wayne Furbert being paid \$60,000 for work he had done as Junior Minister. Well, what the former Premier Mr. Dunkley does not know, probably, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is how many hours Wayne Furbert worked as Junior Minister.

Quite frankly, I do not know he did it. I have done some calculations because I happen to have worked a little closely with Mr. Furbert during that period, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I would venture to say . . . first of all, let us clarify something else. He was not paid \$60,000. He was paid \$5,000 per month. He just happened to work for 12 months. Now, you might say, *Well, why do I clarify that?* Well, the Honourable former Minister of Health Pat Gordon-Pamplin, very quickly, when she was Minister hired the former Honourable Member Louise Jackson for \$30,000 for six months, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Now, why do I bring that up? Only because former Premier Mr. Dunkley

brought up Wayne Furbert, the Honourable Member's consultancy wage during that period. So, you have to draw some analogy. The difference that I—

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: What is your point of order?

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: The Honourable Member is, I believe maybe inadvertently, misleading the House. Mrs. Jackson was not a sitting MP on a government salary at the time she was hired as a consultant.

The Deputy Speaker: Continue.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Well, Mr. Deputy Speaker, my point was . . . that is a good point of clarification. But the fact of the matter is, she was still . . . the ink was very, very wet on that paper, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The ink was very wet.

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me say . . . and I certainly would not want to degrade former Member Louise Jackson. Not at all, because she was a very good friend of mine and so is her daughter. But I just want to clarify one thing. I would think that everyone in this House would realise that the qualifications of Mr. Furbert for his consultancy contract certainly outweighed the qualifications of former Member Louise Jackson's qualifications to do what she was doing, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

As a former Health Minister and someone that worked closely with Mrs. Jackson, I think I am qualified to make that statement.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me say something else. For those who may think that that \$60,000 figure that got repeated over and over and over again by the Honourable Member Dunkley during his presentation . . . I have done a little calculation and I work. I do not know why . . . well, I do know why . . . I do not know how he did it. But Minister Furbert during that period, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I venture to say that he got paid \$4.16 per hour.

And, I will tell you what, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not want to use up all my time giving you the breakdown, but I will tell you what. It does not take one too much time to figure it out. But if they spend a little time . . . the Honourable Member Dunkley I am sure the amount of time he spent getting ready for that presentation tonight, by the time I am finished he will be able to work it out—if he is honest with the hours that the former Junior Minister worked.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, whilst we are talking about these things, we will also know that the former—I know they have had so many leaders in their

party over there, Mr. Deputy Speaker—certainly the Honourable Member Jeanne Atherden got paid a nice little sum for working for the Tax Commissioner while she was a sitting MP, I do believe. I stand to be corrected.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: She is not a Minister? Oh, because they are not a Minister, but they are Backbencher and they get paid it makes a difference.

Hmm.

Okay, all right.

Which, then, I guess, if you want to prorated that as Junior Minister to just a regular MP, one making \$23,000 one making \$63,000, I guess if you prorated it, it might be the same.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the other thing that the Honourable Member Dunkley seemed to have a problem with this morning is when we talked about the estimate that was given for the T. N. Tatem. It was an estimate only—an estimate only, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

And then he had the audacity, because he was not in the House, you know, maybe someone told him . . . I do not know, maybe he said he was listening to the radio. But he obviously was not paying attention, Mr. Deputy Speaker. And he was corrected on that.

But, you know what? It is amazing because he mentioned something that caught my ear when he said, *Well, who bid on it? Who got the bid for it?* This is the same Premier that gave [BCM McAlpine], Mr. Deputy Speaker, a multi-million dollar contract and no bid! None whatsoever! Multi-million, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Wait a minute. I did not hear a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Continue.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Why is that?

And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will certainly recall that when they had members on this side of the House, there was a certain law firm, Mello Jones & Martin, had one of their members who sat in another place whose wife worked for Mello Jones & Martin, again, millions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, millions of dollars spent with that firm.

Was that put out to tender?

You see? So if you are going to talk, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if you are going to talk . . . and before I leave, I do believe we had a sitting Member of the House for the OBA by the name of the Honourable former Member Nandi Outerbridge, she was a Junior Minister, too. How much time did she put in her Ministry? How much work did she do?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Junior Ministers are nothing new in this country; nothing new in this country, Mr. Deputy Speaker. None. They are not new. But it seems like Members on that side want to try to pinpoint things. But they do not pinpoint millions of dollars—I am not talking about \$60,000, I am talking about millions of dollars—going to friends and family, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

So, I say to the Opposition, if you want to bring things to this House and you want to talk on the motion to adjourn and the Honourable Member finished, I think he finished off his speech talking about Arbitrade and wondering where they are. Well, I am not surprised they have disappeared. Not surprised, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I mean, they have been slamming FinTech—

An Hon. Member: Why aren't you surprised?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: They have been slamming FinTech since we got in power because we are trying to bring a third pillar to this economy, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

We talked about it on both sides, about strengthening another pillar in this country. And FinTech technology is the way of the future, even though, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to admit, I am not your techie kind of guy. I have to, you know, rely on my children to guide me all the time when I want to operate my phone or do something different. But we know that is the way of the future. We know that is the way of the future.

But the Opposition . . . and we have had how many? I think 85 companies register since we have been in power, Mr. Deputy Speaker—85 who have registered—bringing income to the country. And let me tell you, if we could get our banks to cooperate, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if we could get our banks to cooperate, I think we would be well on our way. We have gaming that we complained about when we were in Opposition. They could not get it done and now we are struggling to get it done, too. You know why, Mr. Deputy Speaker? We do not have support.

An Hon. Member: You are going backwards.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We do not have support.

But hopefully, hopefully that will bear fruit soon because we know that it is good for the country. We want to get tourists to the Island, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and you know that it is a passion of mine. The problem we have in the country is entertainment at night. We struggle to give our visitors something to do after dinner at night and I think that is a segue into it.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Let us start up a band.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: It is certainly a way.

Start a band? You and I, Pat? Okay, I am game.

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I can beat a drum, but I cannot sing too well. My name is not Wayne Furbert.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, all I want to say to the Opposition . . . and it seems like it is only maybe one Member on that side that seems to try to bring about . . . and he mentioned it tonight, the “C” word, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The transparency, non-transparency is going to start surfacing again, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Some Hon. Members: What “C” word?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: “C” word—the “corruption” word.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I didn't mention it.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Oh, oh, he says he did not mention it, Mr. Deputy Speaker. But we have heard it already.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We have heard it!

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Oh, you are struggling now.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: No, no, I am not struggling, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Hey, come on, come on. Hey, come on. Stop it. Stop it.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: I never mentioned that.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker: Dunkley, stop it.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —because it is starting to surface.

Look at the op-eds in the newspaper, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Just look at those op-eds and what is being said. They are laying the foundation. It's coming. It's coming. Look at the ever ongoing investigation on our former Premier. All that is for a reason, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We know what it is about.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: It started in your Government.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We know what it is about.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: It started in your Government.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And of course, the Honourable Member Pat Gordon-Pamplin says it is our Government.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: No, it *started* under your Government.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Started [under] our Government. We know where it started. It was not our Government.

An Hon. Member: Yes, it was.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: It was at that place up on the hill. That is where it started.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mm-hmm. Yes, we know where it started.

An Hon. Member: Who was the Government?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That is right.

But, Mr. Deputy Speaker, let me just say this, right, because I know some Honourable Members on that side are not like certain Honourable Members on that side. And I would implore them to encourage their colleague, when they come up here and speak, to let's try to speak something a little bit more positive.

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Rather than every week, Mr. Deputy Speaker, every week, try to hit that way.

[Inaudible interjections and laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And, look, they are laughing over on that side, Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know why? Because they know that I will fire. And I will not stand here and let them fire, they are going to get it back. And the only time I fire . . . the only time I fire, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is when there is need for fire. Oh, yes, that is when I fire. And, Mr. Deputy Speaker, remember we do not control, we do not control *The Royal Gazette*. We do not control that. So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, we know who controls *The Royal Gazette*.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Who? Who?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: We know who controls it.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Who?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And the Honourable Member Michael Dunkley is saying "who?"

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I do not see any owls around here and that is the only "hoo" I see, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

[Laughter]

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: But who? You can't even say it.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: But it is true. It is true.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: You can't even say it.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: They control it—

Some Hon. Members: Who? Who?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And they have controlled it for years and they will continue to control it, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Nonsense, man! Nonsense!

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Look at the headlines, look at the headlines since we have been in power.

An Hon. Member: Oh, come on, man.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Look at the headlines in *The Royal Gazette* before we got power back. But, see the thing is—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: Look, I want to hear the Member speak, please.

[Gavel]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Deputy Speaker, you know the beauty part about the life, the place we are in today in Bermuda and in the world is social media.

Once upon a time, *The Royal Gazette* dictated playing the country. And they have some influence today. They still have some influence. But the beauty part is, through social media we can send out one blast, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and it goes around this Island like wildfire.

An Hon. Member: Just like Arbitrade.

Who is the next speaker?
Mr. Pearman?

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Go around there like wild-fire.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say this, right? I would encourage those Members Opposite, right? And we talk about, look, let's get along, let's be nice to each other and all that stuff. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would encourage the Honourable Member, especially Mr. Dunkley, the Honourable Member Dunkley, because it seems like he is the Lone Ranger over there. It really does. And I just wonder, and it seems—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Well, now and then, the Lone Ranger had Tonto. Now and then Tonto pipes up.

[Laughter]

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on that note, I would just like to ask the Honourable Lone Ranger and Tonto, when she pipes up, to let us try—

[Laughter]

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mr. Deputy Speaker—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —to do things a little bit, a little bit nicer going forward—

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: You are allowing him to call names. It is not right.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —so we do not have the banter that—

The Deputy Speaker: I do not know anybody named Tonto.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: —they do not like so much.

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Come on—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Deputy Speaker: What is that, Mr. Dunkley? What did you just say to me?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: He called names.

The Deputy Speaker: What did you say to me? “Come on,” who?

Hon. Michael H. Dunkley: Come on—

The Deputy Speaker: Oh, all right.

TALE OF TWO ARTICLES

Mr. Scott Pearman: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

I am going to try to take the tone in the room back two speakers ago, to the Honourable Member Mr. Michael Weeks, who for the second time in a few weeks has given a very powerful speech. I agree with quite a lot of what he had to say. If I may say so, it was only a shame you did not extend the concept of unity to English Bermudians as well, because that is yet another step we have to take. But I leave that to one side and I make it as no criticism.

I also want to speak, Mr. Deputy Speaker, about language, about what we say and how we say it. I am new here. Next Friday will be my first year in this House, also Honourable Member the Minister of Finance, his first year, next Friday to the day. I had the pleasure of being told by our Honourable Premier this morning that he would *learn me up*.

[Laughter]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Well, let me say this. I am always willing to learn. I do not know it all and I will learn. But when I started a year ago, I thought to myself, *What is it that I want to do? What tone do I want to try and set?* And when I gave my Maiden Speech a few weeks later, the central theme of that is that we actually have more in common than that which divides us. And I fundamentally believe that. And I think we would all do well . . . and I do not want to preach, but we would all do well simply to pause and remind ourselves that from time to time, when we see some bricks being thrown.

Let me give two examples, and I will predict now that the example I give of what was said from that side will be a negative example and the example I give as what was said from this side will be a positive example, because I am still in politics and I am learning myself up. But I will try to be fair, nonetheless.

It is a tale of two articles. The first article is the article by my Honourable and Learned friend, Mr. Michael Scott, in the daily.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Did you say tale of two articles or tale of two hospitals?

Mr. Scott Pearman: Tale of two articles.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Oh, okay.

Mr. Scott Pearman: Tale of two articles. And, I am admirer of Mr. Scott's. We know each other outside of the House, and I believe that we have mutual respect and get along with each other. And I know he is strong

enough to take a bit of criticism because I intend to give him a bit of criticism.

His article said two things that I think we were rather unhelpful. The first was his opening sentence,³ “As the One Bermuda Alliance continues to strive for relevance, we are concerned with their attempts to try to create an issue,” et cetera.

[Inaudible interjection and laughter]

Mr. Scott Pearman: I remind the Honourable and Learned Member—

[Laughter]

Mr. Scott Pearman: —that this Government has been the Government for 16 of the last 20 years.

The problems that Bermuda faces are the problems that the Government of the day must fix. We, the Opposition . . . if you wish, can help you, or, we can oppose you. But the problems, respectfully, are yours—they are not ours. And this concept that everything is the fault of the OBA, and all you can talk about is the OBA, is doing you no favours with Bermudians. They would like solutions from their Government, which is the PLP Government, and has been for the better part of two decades.

The second point I would make from this article (and I now see it is Mr. Speaker in the Chair)—

[Hon. Dennis P. Lister, Jr., Speaker, in the Chair]

Mr. Scott Pearman: —is what I do take umbrage with (to borrow the word that was said behind me), and that is when people say they have done things when they have not. And I pointed this out a few weeks ago when it was said that the PLP Government had achieved the first budget surplus in 15-odd years, I think since 2003, when clearly no such budget surplus has been *achieved* because we will not know if it is going to be achieved until afterwards, looking back.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Again, respectfully, the Honourable and Learned friend says this, “The Progressive Labour Party,” if you permit me to read, Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Go ahead.

Mr. Scott Pearman: “The Progressive Labour Party has championed the introduction of a living wage, the creation of less expensive mortgage options and the tackling of the cost of health insurance.”

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Well, championing it, maybe. That means standing up and saying something. But they have not done any of those three things and to suggest to the public that they have is, I am afraid, false. So, do not take credit for something that has not happened, because it is what we say and how we say it.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Scott Pearman: Well, fair enough. You can speak after me.

The other article, and of course, this is my article, but I want to talk about it for a moment, and I will put a positive spin on it. But I wrote an article a week ago, two weeks ago, in which I sought to praise a Member from the other side of the aisle, the Member who spoke two speakers ago. And I praised him because, to my mind, and I am new and I will be learned up, and maybe I am naïve, but to my mind, what he had to say was important. And it is why we, as Parliamentarians, should be here doing things.

Again, respectfully, we have spent the better part of today talking about how to pay for political advisors. That is not why Parliament should be sitting, debating legislation. We should be talking about legislation for a homeless shelter. That is far more important than legislation about political advisors and how they are going to get paid, respectfully. And, equally, in that article I called upon the Honourable Member and, indeed, I called upon all of this House that have the ability to bring pressure to bear.

REPORT OF INVESTIGATION INTO DEPARTMENT OF CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES

Mr. Scott Pearman: We had an investigation into allegations of abuse and neglect at the Department of Child and Family Services. We now learn a report exists into that investigation. We would like to see it made public. It is in the interests of Bermuda that it be made public and I would call upon all parliamentarians from both sides of the aisle, if you can bring pressure to bear for this report to see the light of day and to see truth and reconciliation occur and a light shined upon what went wrong, that will benefit Bermuda.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

I recognise the Honourable Member from constituency 6. Minister Furbert, you have the floor.

EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE—CHAIRMAN’S REMUNERATION

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, you know I have been around for a while, and if anybody understands some of the rules around here, it is you and I.

³ [Royal Gazette](#), 30 May 2019

Most people know that when you are a Junior Minister, you really do not do much.

An Hon. Member: Huh?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Yes, Junior Ministers do not do much. They do not have to attend to the Ministry every day. There is a Junior Minister, and they must stand up, Junior Ministers do not have to attend to a Ministry every day. So, we have got that part right. As Junior Minister, I attended to Cabinet to the Ministry of Finance every day, sometimes starting at six o'clock in the morning and sometimes finishing at eight, nine o'clock at night.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: That is what you signed up for.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: No, I did not. No, I did not.

An Hon. Member: Yes, it is.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: No, I did not. Junior Ministers do not sign up for that. They do not sign up that.

You cannot name one Junior Minister on your side that goes those hours over a year, a month, a week, or whatever. You cannot name it. I did it because I love to do it. I did not sign up for it.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: You did it because you got paid for it.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: I got paid. Junior Ministers get \$11,342.

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Plus \$60,000.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: As Junior Ministers, \$11,342, and they really do not have to show up to Cabinet . . . at a Ministry every day.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Premier has a right, and the Minister of Finance has a right under section, I think it is 61 to appoint committees, just like he appointed a tax reform committee, which the Honourable Member Jeanne Atherden was paid \$20,000.

The Minister—

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: The Minister, in his wisdom, felt that he should appoint me as Minister *[sic]* of the Efficiency Committee.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: I am sorry, as chairman. As chairman; I was not a consultant. I want to get that record straight. I was not a consultant. I was chairman of the committee—for \$60,000. And I was supposed

to find that information. It takes certain skill sets to determine that information, because the Minister of Finance, the Honourable Bob Richards had been for five years, could not find one cent of that and he was paid \$180,000.

Some Hon. Members: Rubbish!

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: The Minister of Finance who was paid \$180,000 for five years did not find one cent of this information.

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: So, the Honourable Member Trevor Moniz says they knew all this stuff. But they never did anything, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: If they knew all that, why did they not do anything, Mr. Speaker?

So, we worked diligently over that period of time . . . first of all, everything was for three months and then we renew for another three months, another three months because we kept on finding things. Well, the Premier still wants me to be chairman of that committee.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: How much money did you bring in for the Government?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: I am sorry. I forgot that number. To be honest with you, it was over \$12 million.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: What's that?

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Well, if I put the right number to it, Mr. Speaker, it was just under \$20 million. It was just under \$20 million. So if the people of this country did not feel like they got a good return for \$60,000 . . . because there were certain skill levels that you needed to find the information.

If the Honourable Members said that they could have fixed . . . I mean, those cheques were sitting in that drawer for over five years! And they said they knew about it, but why didn't they do something about it? I mention in the report that 318 of those stamp duty were there from 2013. Why do I say that, Mr. Speaker? Because 2012 is when they came into Government.

Hon. Trevor G. Moniz: Point of, point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: We will take your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Trevor G. Moniz: Isn't there a motion to debate the report? Is he anticipating that debate by going into the content of the report?

An Hon. Member: Yes. Yes.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Thank you.

Minister, you started by saying you and I have been around a long time—

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Yes, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: So, you know how to handle yourself on the floor here. And I will just remind you of that.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: No, I accept that, Mr. Speaker. I agree with that. But the Honourable Member Michael Dunkley attacked me on receiving \$60,000 a year.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And he talked about the Efficiency Committee.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: And he talked about the Efficiency Committee. All I am pointing out, Mr. Speaker . . . and I accept that when we get into the full debate on this report that we will dig into it. All I am saying is that the Honourable Minister of Finance, the former Minister of Finance, did not find one cent of this. And if they did—

An Hon. Member: That is not true.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: If they found one cent, Mr. Speaker, why have we still got the money there?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Continue on.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: That is the point, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Do not get sidetracked. Continue on.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: But do not open the book.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: All I am saying is that—

The Speaker: Do not open the report.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: —that this country received a significant good return [with] me as chairman on this committee, James Jardine who received . . . he was receiving \$2,000 a month—

An Hon. Member: But that is okay.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: —as a Senator. But that is okay, I guess.

An Hon. Member: That is okay.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: That is okay.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: You should announce what everyone got paid.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Oh, everybody should be knocked off.

Mr. Speaker, they are aware that some of their Members, some of the Members served on committees throughout Bermuda as far as on certain boards.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Some of their Members served on boards when they were in Government.

An Hon. Member: Yes.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Do you think, Mr. Speaker, they got a cent? Many of their Members served on the government boards.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Yes, they got paid! Yes, they got paid.

An Hon. Member: Check it out.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Yes, they got paid. I do not have to check it out. I do not have to check it out. I do not have to check it out because—

The Speaker: Just speak to the Chair.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Mr. Speaker, they automatically, automatically . . . I do not think any of them sent back and said I do not want it.

[Inaudible interjections]

An Hon. Member: Give to charities.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: I do not think anybody said that. So this is not unusual. This is why I started out, Mr. Speaker, and said from the very beginning. Members have served on boards and committees for years and received remuneration for it. But they never talked about . . . and, look, I had no problem . . . I do not mind disclosing what was taken, that is why I gave the information. I was not hiding. But it was interesting why they would not talk about the \$12 million, \$12 [million] or \$20 million that we found, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Save that for the debate.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: I will save it for the debate.

But it is so interesting that this small little money . . . matter of fact, Mr. Speaker, it would probably still be there if this committee had not worked on it. Probably still, Mr. Speaker, because it was there from 2008 why should it still be there after two years after we got in? Or 2013. Why should it be still here? I remember the Honourable Member, every time he spoke about finance, Honourable Member Zane De Silva speaking about it . . . tell them what it was about the stamp duty.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Week after week.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: They did not do anything about it, Mr. Speaker. So, I remember that when I became chairman. I said, *Oops, I remember what Zane said. Let me go check something out.*

So, Mr. Speaker, I am not ashamed. I am not ashamed how much I saved the country either.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: How much did you . . . how much did you—

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Sorry, I will repeat it again. Between \$12 [million] and \$20 million.

Now, I could break it down for you, if you want.

The Speaker: No, no.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: I just gave approximately \$12 [million].

The Speaker: Save it for the debate.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: I could break it down for you if you want.

The Speaker: During the debate.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Mr. Speaker, I do not run from this. I really do not. And I am glad the Minister of

Finance, the former Minister of Finance and the current Minister of Finance, saw the wisdom to at least say, *Wayne, go do what you do best.*

I am a CPA. And what the Honourable Member said earlier about budget surpluses, well, that is exactly what it is. A budget. We do not know what the actual number is going to be at the end of the day. We hope that it will work according to our budget. But the budget, Mr. Speaker, is a budget. So, the budget surplus for the last 15, 20 years, I cannot remember what he said it was, but it is a budget. That is what it is called, and what that one said was actually right.

Now, when we get to the numbers at the end of March 31st and we see what the actuals are, we hope that it will be more! What will they say then, Mr. Speaker? Because I can tell you, this Minister of Finance, he is tough! So, he is keeping to the goal. He knows what he wants to meet. And if he keeps on what he is doing, we will probably be breaking some numbers that you will be surprised at.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Well, then stop complaining about it every week. Stop it. Acting like little children.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Well, you talk about it.

The Speaker: Continue, continue to speak to me. Speak to me, Minister.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: I have not gone far from that . . . I had a slight tantrum from that Honourable Member, the Leader of the Opposition, a couple of weeks ago. I was not sure what room we were in.

So, Mr. Speaker, if those . . . and the Members on that side are trying to embarrass Wayne Furbert. They have picked the wrong Furbert, because I am not embarrassed of where I am.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Not embarrassed one iota that the Government saw fit and had the wisdom to make this happen.

I heard the Honourable Member chirp a few minutes ago, the Honourable Member from Paget. But, Mr. Speaker, I am glad that the result . . . I hope the Honourable Members on both sides read it, digest it, and if the Minister of Finance or the Premier asks me to continue to do this, guess what? I do not get any more money. I will work as the Minister of Finance getting it done. I hope I find another \$12 million so I can put a report on his desk.

Because as Minister of Finance, I understand . . . sorry as the Minister I understand that. But as Junior Minister, it was a little different. That is the differ-

ence, because Ministers who sit on boards or committees do not get any extras. But if you are a Junior Minister, or you are a Member of Parliament, you do get extra. Because you are sitting there as a Member.

So, Mr. Speaker, thank you very much for allowing me a few minutes to say a few things.

[Inaudible interjections]

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Well—

The Speaker: Just speak to the Chair.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: I am sure—

The Speaker: Members, keep your comments quiet.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: —they realise that, as I said, I was Junior Minister of Finance and that is all I will say.

The Speaker: Thank you.

Any other Member wish to speak?

I recognise the Honourable Member Richards, Honourable Member from constituency 7. You have the floor.

RISING COST OF LIVING IN BERMUDA

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: Thank you again, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, it is interesting being a politician in this community. Obviously we live in a very small community, about the size of a small town anywhere else in the world. And most people know who their elected representatives are when we walk the streets, when we go shopping in the supermarkets, when we socialise out in public. And it is a blessing and a curse. It is a blessing because you are a public servant and people take advantage of you when they see you to talk to you and to speak to you. That is the blessing. The curse is that sometimes when you are out in public you do not want to have those conversations, maybe you are with your significant other or your child and someone wants to have a political conversation. But it is all part and parcel of what we do up here.

An Hon. Member: It is what we signed up for.

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: Exactly. It is what we signed up for.

And, Mr. Speaker, when we are in this place, I think sometimes we forget, or we kind of get insulated in the political banter back and forth in Parliament. But what I try to do, Mr. Speaker, when I get to my feet is to be a voice for those who speak to me. Some might say be a voice for the voiceless, and I think that is a big responsibility.

And when I walk around the streets of our country today, I hear a lot from people who are fearful, people who are suffering to a degree economically, I hear from people who are not pleased with the direction that the country is headed in. They are not pleased with the discourse of the politicians . . . and I touched on this earlier today, Mr. Speaker.

I believe that the function of parliamentarians is to make the lives of our citizens better, to make Bermuda a better place to live in for this generation and for generations to come. And, Mr. Speaker, there is politics and then there is reality. And when I am sitting here a lot of times I hear politics—who is getting paid for what, who did what, and this that and the other—and I believe that is a bit of a sidetrack.

I am going to speak some reality tonight, Mr. Speaker, because the people that stop me . . . and it always seems to be in the supermarket when I am trying to go in and buy something real fast and leave. But what I am hearing *consistently* over and over again from people of all political persuasions, because they usually tell me, the conversation starts like, *I am PLP you know, but . . .* And the *but* is this: this Government promised to lower the cost of living in Bermuda; however, the reality is the opposite. I do not think there are too many ways you can get around that fact.

Two years into the Government of the Progressive Labour Party, the majority of people that talk to me are no better off than they were from the day of the election. That is what they are telling me. I do not solicit this response. I listen now. When people approach me and they are telling me how they feel, I go quiet. I just listen. Because I do not want to steer people's conversations, so I listen.

Unfortunately, and I know how difficult it is when you are Government to try and make things happen, how difficult it is to encourage inward, forward investment, how difficult it is to create an environment for job creation in the private sector . . . it is hard. It is not easy. And this Government is finding that out. However, it is my observation, and the observation of those in the community that speak to me, that this Government has no other areas of revenue creation to pay for the increased size of the civil service.

All good intentions aside, of FinTech, and what that could have been and what might be.

Therefore, the cold hard truth is that the only revenue left for this Government is to increase the tax burden on everyday citizens.

I was at a public meeting that the Government had when the land tax debate was ongoing. The Finance Minister stood at the front and was asked a question about why do taxes have to be increased at this time when people were already finding it difficult to make ends meet. The Finance Minister said we have a civil service that we have to fund. And when asked, *What are you doing to stimulate the economy?*

He said, *We do not have an America's Cup in the pipeline and we do not have—*

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, point of order, please.

The Speaker: We will take your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: If the Honourable Member is going to choose to quote me, I would request that he actually quote the words that I said instead of paraphrasing what he thinks I might have said.

The Speaker: Member.

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: Mr. Speaker, I will yield and allow the Finance Minister to say what he actually said.

An Hon. Member: Why don't you say it?

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: I am paraphrasing what he said.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Would you like to yield?

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: If he wants to say what he said, I will sit down and let him say what he said, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, I will say this, I am not as skilled in the rules of this House, but it is not my time to speak. It is his. If he wants to use my words, he should find the words and speak them in quotes.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: Mr. Speaker, I would encourage that Minister, at some point during his political career, to take to his feet and give a speech in this House. It has been almost a year and we have not heard anything from him. I thought Ministers were supposed to give a Maiden Speech. Unless I was absent, I have not heard it.

The Speaker: He has had his Maiden . . . yes, he gave a Maiden Speech.

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: Okay, I must have been absent, so—

The Speaker: He has given his Maiden Speech.

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: I stand corrected.

The Speaker: Yes.

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: But, I am not going to get sidetracked—

The Speaker: All right.

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: —from the point of why I am on my feet today.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: You mean again.

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: Taxes have increased, and I am going to read out just a few of the taxes—

POINT OF ORDER

[Misleading]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker, point of order again, please.

Mr. Speaker, earlier we heard the Honourable Member, Mr. Pearman—

[Inaudible interjection]

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: I am going to give it in a minute, if you will close your mouth, please.

An Hon. Member: You got a stapler?

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Speak to the Chair. Just speak to the Chair.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: Mr. Speaker—

The Speaker: Give your point of order.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: A moment earlier, Mr. Pearman made mention—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Speak here.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: —of the fact of words. My point of order is I think the person is misleading the House.

A moment earlier, Mr. Pearman made a reference to this conversation in his article about talking about surpluses. He did not also point out in the same article that he made a point of Government has increased taxes. There is a projection to increase taxes, as there is a projection to have a surplus this year. So, if the Members are going to talk about what Government is doing, they need to frame it in the context of what it is doing.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Thank you.

Hon. Curtis L. Dickinson: We do not know if we have increased taxes yet because the end of the year has not come around yet.

[Laughter and crosstalk]

The Speaker: Speak to the Chair. Speak to the Chair, Members.

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: Mr. Speaker, I am just going to let that sit out there and the public can dissect that one for themselves.

The Speaker: Just speak to me, just speak to me.

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: But, Mr. Speaker, we have passed legislation in this House—

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Exactly.

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: —and have increased land tax. That is not speculation. That is not, *Let's wait until next year when we can see the numbers*. That is . . . when people get that land tax bill this month, it is going to be higher. I have already calculated what mine is going to be. It is going to be higher. I can afford to pay it, but there are a lot of people out there, Mr. Speaker, who are going to struggle to pay their land tax and the Finance Minister will hear from them. That is guaranteed.

What other taxes have increased? Stamp duty has increased. Import duty has increased. Payroll tax has increased. Dividend tax has increased. Foreign currency exchange purchase tax has increased. And for those listening out there who do not know what that means, it means that every single thing that is imported into this country costs more. There is an additional tax on it. That is why—

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: I will take your point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Payroll tax was not increased under this Government.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Continue.

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: Foreign currency purchase tax has increased, and I was saying that everything that is imported into this country is going up. That is why when you go to the grocery store, every-

thing is more expensive. The sugar tax, it is part of it, but that foreign currency purchase tax is the remainder of it. So, people need to understand that. It is a direct result of this Government's policies.

Mr. Dennis Lister III: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

This Government gave duty relief on staple items to the grocer, so that is not a direct result of what we have done. We have given a relief. The grocers have not passed that on to the consumers, Mr. Speaker.

It is not—

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Continue, Member.

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The foreign currency purchase tax is built into everything that is brought into the country. I will continue. Licences for vehicles have increased. I already mentioned the sugar tax. Social insurance has increased. Company registration fees have increased. And the health care costs that the Government promised that they would decrease are going to go up.

And we have heard banter back and forth of the how's and the why's, the Bermudian public do not care. All they know is that it is going to cost more for their health insurance. As a result, not only has the cost of living for the everyday citizen of this country gone up, but the cost of doing business in Bermuda has increased. Now, anybody who knows anything about economics knows that you do not create jobs, you do not encourage economic activity when you increase the cost of doing business. It is simple. This stuff is not difficult.

And then we have the 12 consecutive months of decreasing consumer retail sales volumes—month after month, after month, after month, after month, after month, after month, after month, after month, after month, after month.

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Yes?

POINT OF ORDER

Hon. Wayne L. Furbert: The Honourable Member forgot to tell this House that they removed the . . . they allowed taxis to buy their cars directly from Japan which reduced motor vehicles retail sales.

Thank you.

The Speaker: That point of order should address where he is at, but let us move on.

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: I have made my point, Mr. Speaker.

And the inconvenient truth is that the Government does not want to acknowledge that. They own that, Mr. Speaker. It is a vital economic indicator that this country has used for many, many years. So, what that tells me, and is what I am hearing from the people who stop me [at] MarketPlace, and who stop me when I am walking on the street, is that they do not have confidence in this Government. They do not have confidence in the direction that this country is going in.

I want to hear some good news. I am waiting for some good news, Mr. Speaker.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: Now, we have a school, T. N. Tatem School, which has closed.

The Speaker: Members!

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: I am going to make a prediction. I am making predictions up in this place because I want it to be recorded into the Hansard.

And once again, I hope I am wrong. But my prediction is that T. N. Tatem School will never reopen. Those students and those teachers have already been assigned to other schools. In September, when the new school year starts, they will go to those respective schools and, after a period of time, the Government will release a statement that says, you know, *We have looked at the numbers, \$3 million does not make any sense to invest in this school. It is old, it is dated, it sits on a marsh, and it is not going to reopen.*

Kind of like what happened with the trash pickup. We do not have enough trucks, not enough manpower. We are going to go from two days a week trash pickup to one day a week trash pickup, and then once we get the equipment and the manpower, we will re-evaluate. And once they re-evaluated, the Minister said we are going to stay at once a week.

And that is the prerogative of the Government. That is their prerogative. They are running the show, Mr. Speaker. It is their show now.

It is your responsibility now.

I have a young friend of mine, a young Bermudian male, who works in the real estate business. We have lunch about once a week. And all he says to me is, *Man, the value of houses in Bermuda is going down. He says, I will be able to buy a house in Tucker's Town soon for \$1 million.* It is a joke.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: No, you will not.

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: It is a joke, but what he is saying is based on reality. Housing values are going down.

And then he is saying, *Why doesn't the Government not do something? Why don't they do something about it?*

I said, *What's your suggestion? What's your suggestion?*

He said, *Give a visa or something so rich people can come down here and buy property. You know, do something.* Because he sees, in the real world—in the real world that people are living in—that the housing values in Bermuda are going down.

And, Mr. Speaker, this Government ran on a slogan at the last election, the Two Bermudas. That is all we heard about was the *Two Bermudas this*, and the *Two Bermudas that*, and the *Two Bermudas the other*.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: Well, Mr. Speaker,—

An Hon. Member: About America's Cup. It was not just—

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: —the Two Bermudas, this is the Two Bermudas—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: And the airport.

The Speaker: Members!

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: You are going to have the Two Bermudas: the "One Bermuda" is going to be the Bermuda that can afford to pay all of these increased taxes; the "Two Bermudas," the part of Bermuda that is going to make it through; but then, you got [the second part], the other Bermuda—

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: That is three.

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: —that the Government says they represent, which is suffering and their situation is getting worse.

The divide is increasing between the haves and the have-nots. Now, I know when the Progressive Labour Party have their constituency meetings and have the public meetings, they are hearing it from their people. Because that is what happens in politics. Their people are not happy. Their people are not happy. They are telling me they are not happy. They are telling me, *Opposition, hold their feet to the fire.* This is what Progressive Labour Party supporters are telling me.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: No, they are not.

An Hon. Member: Yes, they are.

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: Yes, they are.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Members!

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: Yes, they are.

The Speaker: Members!

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: I do not have to sit here and make up stories. I am not a storyteller. I am a megaphone for what is going out there on the streets, because I walk the streets.

So, where do we go from here, Mr. Speaker? The Government had their first march. The teachers came up here and demanded a meeting with the Minister. There is going to be more of that, unfortunately, unless the Premier [and] his Ministers are able to pivot. They are going to have to pivot; and the Backbenchers . . . I know how it is when you are a Backbencher. I have been one of those, too.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: You were front and back a couple of times.

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: That is right. And I was fine with that, because I am not here for any ego trip. I am not here for a title. I am here because I care about the people in my country.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: I like that.

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: And whether I am front or back, it does not make a difference to me. It is the same bus.

An Hon. Member: Hear, hear!

Hon. Patricia J. Gordon-Pamplin: Exactly.

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: It is the same bus.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: So, my thing is this: You Backbenchers, you better hold your Ministers to account.

Hon. Zane J. S. De Silva: Oh, they do! Trust me.

[Timer beeps]

An Hon. Member: Time is up.

The Speaker: On that note—

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: —there you go, sir. Does any other Member wish to speak?

I recognise the Honourable Member from constituency 2. Honourable Member Swan—

PLP BACKBENCHERS

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Make no mistake about it. The Backbenchers of the Progressive Labour Party speak up and we have a good, healthy dialogue with our Cabinet colleagues. And I am here to tell you, the speaker who just sat down, that I have some good news, if you are prepared to hear it.

But I want to just remind folks that some of the challenges that our Ministers have to deal with today . . . the previous speaker mentioned trash . . . I am going to mention buses and I am going to mention ferries, which were all on the blocks for privatisation under the previous Government during its four-and-a-half-year tenure.

And when you deliberately underfund, woefully neglect, you cause problems that someone else will inherit. And as a consequence, this Government is having to deal with those very problems.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: And the Honourable Member could take to his feet when it is his time and speak. But it is true that the OBA Government were very much on a mission of privatisation of Bermuda industries—

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: —and underfunding.

The Speaker: Member, what are you getting up for? Point of order? Clarification? What?

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. I just had to catch my breath.

The Speaker: Point of order?

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: Yes, point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Honourable Member, you take your seat while we hear the point of order.

POINT OF ORDER

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: Mr. Speaker, we were not on a path to privatisation. We were reducing costs.

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: We were reducing costs—

[Inaudible interjections]

Mr. Sylvan D. Richards, Jr.: Something that this Government struggles with. It was not about privatisation. We never talked about privatisation.

The Speaker: Okay. Member, continue.

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: Well, anyway, Mr. Speaker, I will let the public determine that. As he says, let them pick the bones out of that.

I do want to say that it was over 10 years ago when the narrative of our 2007 election was corruption. I remember it. It was probably around that time when Dr. Brown was called into question on any number of issues, and I certainly remember the start of an investigative period. And I have great empathy when I have to think that some 10 years later my Dr. Reddy is included in that particular debacle, as it has turned out to be now.

And, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that there comes a time when enough is enough.

OFFERING SOLUTIONS TO ENHANCE TOURISM

Mr. Hubert (Kim) E. Swan: I planned to speak on the motion to adjourn today because Bermuda is scheduled to have over 500,000 cruise ship visitors this year. And I have always been one who wanted us to have those types of numbers reflected in hotel beds, because, it is no secret, persons in hotel beds spend a great deal more—considerably more, upwards of six times more than a cruise visitor. But in the absence of that, and thankfully with the emergence of Airbnb, we did see the recreation and the rejuvenation of the Dockyard into a major cruise port, which came at great criticism, I might add. I know all too well.

For Bermuda to facilitate over 500,000 visitors, there are a lot of people running around this country very busy right about now because of that. Minibus drivers, taxi drivers . . . I know them; I see them every day.

I rise on this occasion to offer a solution to enhance the product that we have in this country as it relates to our tourism. In my constituency, and in the parish of St. George's alone, I can think of some fortifications. I can think of Gates Fort, I can think of Alexandra Battery, I can think of Martello Tower, I can think of Fort George. I can think of Fort William, which is known to many as Gunpowder Tavern. I can think of the Fort Albert and also the Fort Victoria on the top of what used to be Club Med Hill on the northeast section of that . . . just northeast of Tobacco Bay.

These fortifications, many of them are in disrepair and in need of repair. And I offer, Mr. Speaker, this for my Cabinet colleagues who I have shared

with, that these fortifications could be used as vantage points, stop-off points to alleviate the congestion that occurs in areas such as the town, and other areas. I see it even in Southampton where I ply my trade, where the minibuses, many, are looking for a good vantage point so they can tell our visitors about some of our history.

I will throw in Whale Bay Battery for good measure, for any Member that might be familiar with the Southampton area. I declare my interest: my mother was born only 300 yards from Whale Bay Battery and grew up swimming in those waters on that shore.

I say that because entrepreneurial opportunities are very much a part of our mantra in the Progressive Labour Party. And I would venture to suggest that these fortifications could provide a gift shop opportunity for community-based businesses to sell souvenirs, to pass on our most treasured gift, which is the Bermuda experience and the Bermuda smile and the Bermuda hospitality. Much-needed bathroom facilities around the Island, which our visitors—those 500,000 visitors on those cruise ships—so desperately need when they are traveling around the Island, putting a strain on some establishments that cannot cater to just that, because it has only been since about 10 years since we were around, maybe 350 or so visitors in that realm.

So, as a consequence, Mr. Speaker, we have to look differently at our infrastructure. And, might I suggest that areas such as Martello Tower over at Ferry Reach and Ferry Island Fort Point, could very well be a niche tourism spot for our visitors to enjoy with the help of a few local entrepreneurs and the like. And, the support of restoring these areas would make them less remote, make them safer and allow us to better service our areas.

Gates, Fort Albert and Fort Victoria present a different challenge within the town of St. George's because they are lesser known fortifications. They sit on top of, and fall within, the remit of the new hotel which is being developed down on the shoreline. And while I am saying that, I just want to say that the Honourable Member that spoke before me spoke of diminishing house prices. I am here to tell you that with the clean-up that is already taking place in St. George's on the golf course, of which I am very much pleased to see, property values have gone up. And that only bodes well for our community.

And as we look forward, that presents other economic activities. But you cannot have on the one hand within a community enhancement of those and then [on the other hand] have those other deteriorated infrastructure monuments, historical monuments right on their doorsteps. So, Fort Albert and Fort Victoria may well have to be renegotiated situations which may fall under the hotel, which may not be in a position to be able to embrace them in quite the way that they would like. So, I am throwing out there the oppor-

tunity possibly where that may be something for future consideration. And the appropriate Minister, as we have the Minister responsible for Works, and you have the Minister responsible for Tourism, who work well together, could very well look at that. But I am urging them, in the spirit of our tourism, as one who has spent his entire life in the tourism industry, knowing the challenge and being intertwined with those who are traveling around our Island daily, making it possible for those visitors on those cruise ships, particularly, to have a good time.

So, Mr. Speaker, as I take my seat, it is my plea that we will look at our fortifications with a view to incorporating them more readily through upgrades and providing business opportunities for local entrepreneurs in the community and look at ways to make it happen, particularly in St. George's.

I declare my interest. I am a Member of Parliament for number 2, constituency in St. George's. And if you are going to do it, I would like for you to start out in Ferry Reach and work your way in, just saying.

But it is important. It is important that these fortifications be looked at and used in a modern sense. And make no mistake about the importance of a bathroom to a visitor. These visitors I see going around our Island every day, because I come in contact with them, I have conversations with them, [and they] are not the youngest of persons going around the Island. Thankfully they are here, and they are here in great numbers in 2019. Projections based on cruise visits booked, only hampered if we have a serious hurricane, and I certainly pray and hope that we do not this year or any year in the future. But I am sure we will have some to deal with.

So, Mr. Speaker, I offer that to my Government, and I offer the acceptance of it, universally, as a solution to addressing some of our challenges with infrastructure. But something that I do not wish to see on any backburner, that I would hope it would be done in tandem, because I am very pleased at the progress that I have seen with the restoration, and this would enhance the investment that is already taking place.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Member.

No further speaker?

We rise and stand adjourned until next Friday the 7th of June at 10:00 am.

Have a good weekend, Members.

[Gavel]

[At 7:27 pm, the House stood adjourned until 10:00 am, Friday, 7 June 2019.]