

BELIZE

No. HR 27/1/11

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, 26th June 2015

10:20 A.M.

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Members Present:

The Hon. Michael Peyrefitte, Speaker
The Hon. Dean O. Barrow (Queen's Square), Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Development
The Hon. Gaspar Vega (Orange Walk North), Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Natural Resources and Agriculture
The Hon. Michael Finnegan (Mesopotamia), Minister of Housing and Urban Development
The Hon. Patrick J. Faber (Collet), Minister of Education, Youth and Sports
The Hon. Manuel Heredia Jr. (Belize Rural South), Minister of Tourism and Culture
The Hon. Anthony Martinez (Port Loyola), Minister of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation
The Hon. John Saldivar (Belmopan), Minister of National Security
The Hon. Wilfred P. Elrington (Pickstock), Attorney General and Minister of Foreign Affairs
The Hon. Pablo S. Marin (Corozal Bay), Minister of Health
The Hon. Rene Montero (Cayo Central), Minister of Works and Transport
The Hon. Edmond G. Castro (Belize Rural North), Minister of State in the Ministry of Works and Transport, Deputy Speaker
The Hon. Santino Castillo (Caribbean Shores), Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
The Hon. Hugo Patt (Corozal North), Minister of State in the Ministry of Natural Resources and Agriculture
The Hon. Mark King (Lake Independence), Minister of State in the Ministry of Human Development, Social Transformation and Poverty Alleviation
The Hon. Dr. Omar Figueroa (Cayo North), Minister of State in the Office of the Prime Minister
The Hon. Francis Fonseca (Freetown), Leader of the Opposition
The Rt. Hon. Said Musa (Fort George)
The Hon. John Briceño (Orange Walk Central)
The Hon. Michael Espat (Toledo East)
The Hon. Dolores Balderamos Garcia (Belize Rural Central)
The Hon. Rodwell Ferguson (Stann Creek West)
The Hon. Julius Espat (Cayo South)
The Hon. Oscar Requena (Toledo West)
The Hon. Marco Tulio Mendez (Orange Walk East)
The Hon. Jose Mai (Orange Walk South)
Vacant (Dangriga)

Members Absent:

The Hon. Erwin R. Contreras (Cayo West), Minister of Trade, Investment Promotion, Private Sector Development and Consumer Protection

The Hon. Herman Longworth (Albert), Minister of State in the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

The Hon. Elvin Penner (Cayo North East)

The Hon. Florencio Marin Jr. (Corozal South East)

The Hon. Ramiro Ramirez (Corozal South West)

MR. SPEAKER in the Chair.

PRAYERS by Pastor Conrad Arzu.

PAPERS

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, I rise to lay on the Table Sessional Papers: No. HR265/1/11 - Fisheries (Hol Chan Marine Reserve) Regulations, 2015; No. HR266/1/11 - Fisheries (Hol Chan Marine Reserve) Order, 2015; No. HR266A/1/11 - Supplementary Appropriation (No.3) Schedule for Fiscal Year 2014/2015; and No. HR266B/1/11 - Supplementary Appropriation Schedule for Fiscal Year 2015/2016.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, Sessional Papers No. HR265/1/11 and No. 266/1/11 are order to lie on the Table, while Sessional Papers No. HR266A/1/11 and No. HR266B/1/11 are refer to the Committee of Supply for examination, consideration and report.

PRESENTATION OF REPORT FROM SELECT COMMITTEE

HON. G. VEGA (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources and Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present the Report from the Ombudsman Reports Committee on the Fourteenth Annual Report of the Ombudsman of Belize for the year 2014.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, that Report is order to lie on the Table.

QUESTIONS TO MINISTERS

MR. SPEAKER: Member, as I had indicated to you, you asked two questions, one to a Minister who is not a Member of the House. So in replacing that Minister answering a question, the Prime Minister will answer the immigration question.

HON. M. ESPAT (Toledo East): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Will the Minister of Natural Resources and Agriculture say if negotiations are underway to sell the rice mill at Big Falls, Toledo, to a private group? If this is so, can he give the name of the group purchasing the mill and at what price?

HON. G. VEGA (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources and Agriculture): Mr. Speaker, the simple answer to this question raised by the Honourable Member for Toledo East is no. We are not negotiating the sale of the Big Falls rice mill with any private group. Mr. Speaker, on assumption of the agriculture portfolio, the need for the deep reform of the rice industry was clear, especially the southern production zone. What started out decades ago as a means to spur investments and sustainable growth in the sector never materialized, even during the time when the Honourable Member of Toledo East was responsible for it as Minister of Agriculture.

What we encountered was the failed system that was being heavily subsidized by taxpayers, yet producing uneconomic volumes and poor quality rice. The subsistence farmers, those used to justify maintenance of the system, were benefiting the least. Early on we had dialogued with the southern rice producers on a proposed share issued to them to allow them to take over the mill. They accepted this as a possibility; but we have been preoccupied with improving quality and sustainability of rice growing that the mill continues to be operated by the Belize Marketing and Development Corporation.

Mr. Speaker, we have received several proposals from interested parties but none is being considered by the Ministry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. M. ESPAT (Toledo East): Will the Minister of Immigration and Nationality say how many Guatemalans have received Belizean nationality between January 1, 2014 and December 31, 2014?

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, the answer is 104 Guatemalans were sworn in and became Belizean citizens after renouncing their Guatemalan nationality and completing the necessary processes. Just for the sake of completeness, there were three swearing in ceremony during that year, and a total of 439 persons, altogether, became Belizean citizens during that period.

The other nationalities are: Hondurans - 61, Salvadorans - 37, Chinese - 34, Americans - 30, Mexicans - 8, Lebanese - 5, Jamaicans - 4, 1 person from Liechtenstein; 2 from the Philippines, 9 from Nicaragua, 9 from India, 14 from Nigeria, 3 British persons, 2 from Pakistan, 2 from Panama, 4 from Cuba, 3 from Columbia, 2 from Taiwan, 1 from Belarus, 1 from Canada, 1 from Syria, 1 from Trinidad and Tobago and 3 Venezuelans.

STATEMENT BY MINISTERS

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, I crave your indulgence to make two statements actually. The first is on the situation arising out of the incident in the Santa Cruz Village. I had printed it out but I can't seem to find it. Anyway I'll read it off my iPod.

Mr. Speaker, this week there has been the airing on national television of very graphic and extremely disturbing images of a Creole Belizean, a black Belizean, Rupert Myles, tied hand and foot and imprisoned by Mayan Belizeans in the village of Santa Cruz. Additionally, we also saw footage of an earlier

encounter between Cristina Coc of the Maya Leaders Alliance and another ethnically mixed Belizean, Joe Estephan. Both what was said by Ms. Coc and what was done by the villagers of Santa Cruz raised some hinge issues that I feel I need to address.

The first thing I must do is to clarify the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) consent judgment that was recently recorded in the Maya Land Rights Case. And I start by saying what the judgment did not do. It did not supersede the Constitution and laws of this country. (Applause) It did not transfer sovereignty over any part of national territory from the government to any particular ethnic group. (Applause) It did not create a state within a state. (Applause) It did not set up a separate Maya nation in Belize. (Applause) And it did not give anyone the right to use force to vindicate any claim they might have to land. (Applause) What the judgment did do was to recognize and accept that Maya Belizeans have certain rights over certain land in the Toledo District. But the judgment also made clear that the precise nature of those rights must be defined and legislated by government, in partnership with the Maya and after consultations with all Belizeans. (Applause)

A number of things are therefore clear. Under our laws anyone wishing to enforce land rights and remove persons in wrongful occupation must obtain an eviction order from the courts. And it is only under a court order that bailiffs, marshals, agents of the court, pray in aid, the security forces, the police, may use reasonable force to carry out that court order.

There was no court order in the Santa Cruz matter, and therefore, no one, and especially not civilians, had any right to use any force to dispossess Mr. Myles. Thus, the stance of the villagers and of the MLA (Maya Leader Alliance) was quite wrong. I repeat that no Alcalde system, no custom or practice, no cultural remit can supersede the law of this country. (Applause) What is also clear is that no matter what form the Maya land rights in Toledo may eventually take they will never amount to sovereignty. And they can never include vindication of those undoubted rights by private force of any sort, much less force against the person.

Having said that, though, I stress that all Belizeans must see Government's acceptance of the Maya's entitlement to special rights as a great national advance. It is an opportunity to give a whole new dimension to our much vaunted multiracial harmony while legally and institutionally enshrining our respect for, and pride in, our Maya heritage and legacy. Thus, the work to define and legislate the precise nature of Maya rights and remove confusion must move as quickly as possible with everyone embracing the process. But that work is epic in scope. It is the most consequential, social, political and demographic exercise, certainly, since Independence. And its execution will be problematic and tortuous in the extreme. Patience, understanding and abiding by the status quo until it is legally changed are, then, the minimum requirements for all of us. And confrontation and violence cannot be tolerated from any of us.

I therefore call on Belizeans of every hue and stripe to begin to demonstrate from now the maturity, restraint and perseverance that will be necessary to see us through the long-haul resolution of this all-important issue. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, thank you for indulging me again. And this second statement is to make much, I say that without apology, of that proud and far-reaching announcement made on the 16th day of this month, when, for transparency purposes, the Ministry of Finance issued a short press release formalizing the results of the Fiscal Year 2014/2015 – Salary Increase for Teachers and Public Officers. (Applause) The public is aware that, as a consequence of good faith negotiations between the teachers and the unions representing the public officers, the negotiating team set up by three unions, actually: the BNTU, the PSU and the APSSM, an accord was signed in February last year to share half, 50%, of the incremental increase in recurrent revenues during a three-year period. At the time, and in response to the request by the unions for a 30% salary adjustment over 3 years, we proposed and got them to accept instead a partnership in which salary increases would come if, and when, public sector revenues increased. Our government pledged to pursue progressive, social, and economic policies that would advance revenue collections without raising taxes and asked of the unions the collaboration of their members and, indeed, all public servants in this innovative approach. The serial cynics were unceasing in their attempts to misrepresent the proposed framework. They said, “This thing is not going to work.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, today all the naysayers are vanquished. In this fiscal year, as in the last one, the results of UDP imagination, stewardship and stoutheartedness are on proud display, as our teachers and public servants, our police officers and soldiers, all 12,000 of them, will benefit from an 8% salary increase, (Applause) and, for most, 10.5% salary surge when the annual increments are taken into account. The value of this upward salary adjustment is estimated at an astonishing \$43 million for Fiscal Year 2015/2016. This \$43 million is 1½ times larger than the size of last year’s salary increase and increment. In that Fiscal Year 2014/2015, teachers and public officers shared a bounty of \$29 million more in salaries and increments, representing at that time a 6% salary increase in addition to the 2.5 increment.

So then in two fiscal years, since the partnership was forged between government and the unions, this UDP Administration will deliver a cumulative 19% (Applause) salary and increment increase for teachers and public officers, the equivalent of \$72 million more (Applause) in the collective pockets of public servants. On average, that is an epoch-making \$6,000 more per year for each public servant. Each public servant will get \$6,000 more. (Applause) A \$72 million wage increase in two years for 12,000 Belizean workers has simply never happened before in this country, never, ever. (Applause) There can be no question about the quantifiable effect, the real buying power of this historic dividend, because when you remember, Mr. Speaker, inflation in 2014, was gauged by the Statistical Institute of Belize at just 1% and for 2015 through the end of April at minus 1%. So there is no question of inflation eating away. In other words, as of today, with no foreseeable increase in inflation, the purchasing power of 12,000 Belizean workers will leap by 19% in 2 years. The numbers are awesome, Mr. Speaker.

There is little more I can say except to make this final point. It is a UDP article of faith that our teachers and public officers are the single most valuable element in the unceasing endeavour of UDP nation building and government. (Applause) Yes, our administration envisioned and is undertaking a massive, unprecedented infrastructure renewal program to stimulate the economy, boost

employment and enhance the productive capacity of the nation. But our zeal for upgrading national infrastructure is surpassed by the value we ascribe to people, in this case our teachers and public officers. These momentous wage increases validate our partnership, redeem UDP management, and urge us to build on our achievements.

In closing, for the sake of comparison, we are almost at the 8th year of our two terms. I want to go back to the 8th year of the People's United Party Administration. And I want to quote a little bit from a Channel 7 story on May 27, 2005. "GOB says no to IMF but yes to salary cuts." We are raising by \$72 million at their 8th year they were cutting salaries. First, they said, "We have to." Three Ministers had a press briefing: the current Leader of the Opposition, Mr. Jose Coxe, and Mr. Godfrey Smith. They held that press briefing to explain government's so-called adjustment program. And the newscast said, as we found out, "Government's plan is modeled off the IMF recommendations, and it includes major cuts in the wage bill, which will mean some government employees will lose their jobs". Who will get the axe? That's what we asked. I won't say anymore, Mr. Speaker. (Applause) The comparison is stark, and that comparison makes us look good, very good, and makes them look bad, very bad. (Applause)

HON. G. VEGA (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Natural Resources and Agriculture): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I stand here today to give a brief report on our sugar industry that is about to come to closure on the 7th of July. Mr. Speaker, I would like to make some comparisons for the past five years to show the growth that this industry has had. In the 2010/2011 crop, we delivered or we produced 98,482 metric tons of sugar. This year up to the 24th June we have produced 130,069 metric tons of sugar. (Applause) It is an increase, Mr. Speaker, of 32%, and we are still hoping to be able to produce some 6,000 plus more tons of sugar by the time the full closure comes to an end.

Mr. Speaker, it is clear that with all the challenges that this industry is having we are succeeding. Last year we milled 1,152,000 tons of sugar cane and produced 125,000 tons of sugar. It is clear that this year the cane farmers, the entire industry is having a huge increase in the production of sugar. At the end of the day, we won't be able to deliver as much sugar cane as last year but by far we're producing much more sugar. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, last year in the 2010/2011 crop, we delivered 843,786 metric tons, and this year to the 24th June we have delivered 1,063,148 tons of sugar cane. We have fallen short of like almost 100,000 tons of sugar cane compared to last year. And that is, Mr. Speaker, simply because of the fact that the sugar crop was delayed by certain individuals for personal reasons, and today the cane farmers, the entire industry is paying the price because, Mr. Speaker, in the previous crop when it had ended they had agreed to start the crop on the 24th of November. But prior to that date all stakeholders had gotten together and agreed on starting the crop on the 8th December. However, again, because of several individuals with their own agenda, they delayed the crop and it did not start until the 26th January, which was 49 days late. Mr. Speaker, this year the factory has been able to mill 311.72 tons of sugar cane per hour, which gives us 7,481 tons per day. And if you multiply that by 49 days it gives us 366,582 tons of sugar cane that we would have been able to deliver had the crop started when it was firstly agreed on. Mr. Speaker, I'm bringing this up so that the cane farmers and all

stakeholders realize that we have enough sugar cane for the factory and we must not play games anymore, (Applause) to ensure that the industry maximizes on every opportunity possible. Mr. Speaker, the crop this year is going to come to a closure one day prior to last year's. So we are not going to be able to blame the weather. It's simply because of the lateness on the start of the crop.

Mr. Speaker, this year why we've been able to produce so much more sugar with much less sugar cane is because of the quality and the system of harvesting that has been implemented by all stakeholders. I must take my hat off for the farmers to be able to invest so much in their fields, to be able to produce much better quality cane, and also for being so responsible in their harvesting methods that they are using today. Also, I must say that one of the reasons is simply because of the efforts that all stakeholders are putting into the industry. The ACPC has done a tremendous job in enforcing that good quality is being delivered to the factory. This year we are having just over 85% of all the cane delivered to the factory tested for quality, while other years we used to have up to 37%, the maximum. In some years it was 37% of the cane being tested. So everyone is taking it very serious and I am certain that come next year the mistakes that were committed this year will again make us break another record because, Mr. Speaker, this is the year and the first time that we are producing so much sugar in the history of this industry.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to challenge all stakeholders in the industry to take it serious, to make sure that we put politics one side and we concentrate on the industry because for this season we will have some cane farmers that will be staying with hundreds and hundreds of tons of sugar cane standing in their fields because of the lateness that we had in starting the industry. I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the Government of Belize, the Sugar Cane Farmers Association, the Corozal Cane Farmers Producers Association, the Progressive Sugar Cane Producers Association, and all cane farmers whom they represent as well as the Belize Sugar Industry, ASR, in working together and demonstrating that once we work with one common goal we can achieve tremendous things that will make us break record year after year. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, with the consent of the House, I propose to vary the order of the Sitting today, to allow the Introduction of Bills at item 12 on the order paper to be taken after the Committee of Supply at item 14. This is to allow the introduction of the General Revenue Supplementary Appropriation (No.2) (2014/2015) Bill, 2015, and the General Revenue Supplementary Appropriation (2015/2016) Bill, 2015, which, according to Standing Orders 71 of the House, cannot be introduced until the proposals have been approved by the Committee of Supply and agreed to by the House.

I therefore propose that the House resolve into a Committee of Supply under item "Government Business".

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

PUBLIC BUSINESS

A. Government Business

I COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the House will now resolve into a Committee of Supply under the Chairmanship of the Honourable Prime Minister as Minister of Finance. In accordance with Standing Order 65, the deliberations of this Committee shall not take place in public. I must therefore ask the visitors in the galleries to leave. You may, of course, return after the Committee of Supply has concluded its business.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Mr. Speaker left the Chair.

[In the Committee]

The Chairman in the Chair.

1. Supplementary Appropriation (No.3) Schedule for Fiscal Year 2014/2015.

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, and Economic Development moved:

That the Committee approves the proposals set out in Sessional Paper No. HR266A/1/11 referred to the Committee of Supply.

Question put and agreed to.

2. Supplementary Appropriation Schedule for Fiscal Year 2015/2016.

The Honourable Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, and Economic Development moved:

That the Committee approves the proposals set out in Sessional Paper No. HR266B/1/11 referred to the Committee of Supply.

Question put and agreed to.

The Chairman left the Chair.

MR. SPEAKER in the Chair.

II MOTIONS

1. Supplementary Appropriation (No.3) Schedule for Fiscal Year 2014/2015 Motion, 2015.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, with respect to Supplementary Appropriation (No.3) Schedule for Fiscal Year 2014/2015 Motion, 2015, I report THAT the Committee of Supply has met and approved the proposals set out in the Sessional Paper No. HR266A/1/11.

I therefore now seek the indulgence of the House and ask it to agree with the proposals approved by the Committee of Supply.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is, that the House agrees with the proposals approved by the Committee of Supply for Supplementary Appropriation (No.3) Schedule for Fiscal Year 2014/2015 Motion, 2015.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

2. Supplementary Appropriation Schedule for Fiscal Year 2015/2016 Motion, 2015.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, I also report that the Committee of Supply has met and approved the proposal set out in the Sessional Paper No. HR266B/1/11 - Supplementary Appropriation Schedule for Fiscal Year 2015/2016.

I therefore now seek the indulgence of the House and ask it to agree with the proposals approved by the Committee of Supply.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is, that the House agrees with the proposals approved by the Committee of Supply for Supplementary Appropriation Schedule for Fiscal Year 2015/2016 Motion, 2015.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

3. Adoption of the Report from the Ombudsman Reports Committee on the Fourteenth Annual Report of the Ombudsman of Belize for the year 2014.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, this is the Adoption of the Report from the Ombudsman Reports Committee on the Fourteenth Annual Report of the Ombudsman of Belize for the year 2014.

I move THAT THIS HOUSE adopts the Report from the Ombudsman Report Committee on the Fourteenth Annual Report of the Ombudsman of Belize for the year 2014.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is, THAT THIS HOUSE adopts the Report from the Ombudsman Report Committee on the Fourteenth Annual Report of the Ombudsman of Belize for the year 2014.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

1. General Revenue Supplementary Appropriation (No.2) (2014/2015) Bill, 2015.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce a Bill for an Act to appropriate further sums of money for the use of the Public Service of Belize for the financial year ending on the thirty-first day of March, two thousand and fifteen.

Let me indicate that the Bill has the recommendation of the Cabinet. And if I might say just a little bit in introduction.

Mr. Speaker, the monies appearing in the Schedule to the Bill are monies payable for the financial year ending on 31st March 2015, and the purposes on which or for which the monies were spent are all listed in the Schedule to the Bill. We are talking about a total of \$15,958,604 that we're asking the House to approve by way of the Supplementary Allocation. It's broken down into one million. Well, I'm sorry. There are two Schedules. Members will see that with respect to the first Schedule the sums appear in which the total is \$6,223,488. There is \$1,038,800 - Ministry of Finance; \$16,674 - Ministry of Health; \$20,939 - Ministry of Education; \$4,563,872 - Ministry of Works; \$132,125 - Ministry of National Security; and Ministry of Housing and Urban Development - \$451,179. These were Capital II Expenditures, and the total there is \$6,223,488. Then Capital III Expenditure: Ministry of Finance and Economic Development - \$1,811,327; Ministry of Works - \$7,923,789; for a total of \$9,735,116. So that the grand total is \$15,958,604.

When Members go to the detailed setting out of the heads and the subheads, I believe, Mr. Speaker, they will find all the information that they require. We set out infrastructure programs, the residential mortgage relief, counterpart, maternity, neonatal service, back-to-school assistance, village roads, Southern Highway; it is all there. Of course, the source of the funds for what we are seeking approval for now, the source of the spending is Petrocaribe. But consistent with our commitment to transparency and the way we've always done it, we come to the House, we set it all out, this can be circulated, and the members of the public will see precisely how the money was spent. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, I am not sure but I believe if there is to be a debate this is the time. So I don't want anybody to be left.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, it's a money Bill so usually the first reading and the second reading occur at the same. Yes, Member.

HON. F. FONSECA (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, just to place on the record once again that for us this is absolutely not satisfactory. The Honourable Prime Minister is saying all the details are there for everyone to see. That is absolutely not the case. There are these large headings with large amounts of money allocated for specific projects but there is no accountability, Mr. Speaker. (Applause) We don't know who got these contracts. Did we get value for money with each of these contracts? (Applause) None of that information is available to the Belizean people, Mr. Speaker. So this is absolutely unacceptable to us, and, as we have been saying over and over, Mr. Speaker, the Petrocaribe Program, we have no problem with that program. That is an initiative of the People's United Party Government. (Applause) What we have a problem with, Mr. Speaker, and it is reflected here again, today, why we have this problem, what we have a problem with is the manner in which this UDP Government and this Minister of Finance is using and abusing those monies for their own purposes without accounting to the people of this country. Just putting some broad headings about what the Ministry of Finance is spending, Ministry of Education is spend, man we've heard about the Member for Collet taking people to eat tacos and swim in the sea and drink beer. (Applause) Where is that accounted for here, Mr. Speaker? We want to know exactly who got these contracts because, you know, under this government, the whole tendering system has collapsed. There is no tendering system anymore. (Applause) They are abusing everything.

So, Mr. Speaker, we need to know and the Belizean people need to know, who got contracts? How much money was paid to these contractors? Did we get value for money for each of those contracts? Those are the things that we need to see before we are able to support these Supplementary Appropriations, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

HON. P. FABER (Minister of Education, Youth and Sports): Mr. Speaker, what he is asking is utterly ridiculous, Mr. Speaker. He is being ridiculous, Mr. Speaker, because...

MR. SPEAKER: One minute Minister, who suck his teeth? Suck your teeth now man, do it now. If I cannot recognize who it is, everybody will have to go, everybody. (Applause)

HON. P. FABER (Minister of Education, Youth and Sports): Mr. Speaker, the request coming from my friend, the Leader of the Opposition, is absurd. It's absurd, Mr. Speaker, because he is fully well aware that on no occasion when an Appropriation Bill or a Supplementary is brought they get into the details. We have never had a budget speech where the Prime Minister presented the estimates for the upcoming financial year and we got details upon details as to what and who got contracts and all of that. That is utter nonsense. Mr. Speaker, you know, there are opportunities and there is a proper way for them to come and ask these questions if they want to. Look, the Member from Toledo East this morning quite properly asked his questions. If you ever want to know

what it is that the family, the Collet Family Day in Corozal cost, you could have posed the question here. But you didn't do that because you don't really want to know, you see. What you want to do is to try to misguide people. The Supplementary that is being presented, of course, gives you a broad stroke. But if you ever want to know the details, ask the question. It is as simple as that. But since he raised it, Mr. Speaker, will you allow me the time to tell him because he asks specifically about the Collet Family Day.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): That's it Member. Mr. Speaker, there is a second Bill; this is with respect to last year. The Leader of the Opposition doesn't even have the ability to understand what he reads. (Applause) Two Bills are in front of him. I haven't introduced the second one yet; this is for last fiscal year. That thing that you are complaining about happened this year and it is recorded in the second Supplementary Bill. Please, Sir, exercise your abilities if you have any. (Applause)

HON. P. FABER (Minister of Education, Youth and Sports): Mr. Speaker, I don't know whether you will permit me to answer his attack.

MR. SPEAKER: Well, he didn't ask a question. But, if you want to clarify quickly, you can. He raised it, so.

HON. P. FABER (Minister of Education, Youth and Sports): I wish to, Mr. Speaker. All constituencies that wanted it, you remember that they said that they don't want any part of the Mother's Day Cheer. Ivan took it, yes. But remember, Mr. Speaker, they were the ones who said that they didn't want any of this money, Mr. Speaker. Well, the rest of the government, Mr. Speaker, received their constituency funds for Mother's Day. Mr. Speaker, \$50,000.00 was allocated for each constituency. Mr. Speaker, people in those constituencies chose or the leaders of those constituencies chose to use their monies in various different ways. You did not want any. So you can't raise your mouth.

MR. SPEAKER: Minister, respond to what he said.

HON. P. FABER (Minister of Education, Youth and Sports): But, Mr. Speaker, just for the record, \$50,000 was allocated for Collet. We did not wish to have a Mother's Day celebration. Mr. Speaker, so what we chose to do instead was to have a family day. We took mothers, we took fathers, we took the entire family, Mr. Speaker, on an event that was, on a day, Mr. Speaker, that brought the entire family together. Mr. Speaker, I don't know how many of them represent a poor constituency like mine, one that is, of course, riddled with crime and violence, Mr. Speaker, and opportunities that are not like that. They don't live in front of the Caribbean Sea like one newspaper publisher who opens his window every morning and smells the Caribbean breeze and feels the Caribbean breeze on

his skin. So he could write a million headlines and articles. Yes, he was one who complained about it. Yes. But my Leader did not complain about it. In fact, he is the one who helped us to be able to provide such opportunities for the people of Collet. (Applause)

But for the record, Mr. Speaker, let me tell them. Our \$50,000 was not spent only on the Collet family day. In fact, Mr. Speaker, if you check the record, you check my Facebook page, they love to follow it, you know, you will see that we had a senior's day on the 15th of June. Two hundred seniors, Mr. Speaker, we took to Birds Isle. We had a relaxing day. We shared with them. We had a spiritual service in the morning, and, Mr. Speaker, \$10,000 out of our \$50,000 was divided among those residents, the senior residents of our division, \$50.00 each, per cheque. You could check with the Financial Secretary, if you'd like, 200 X \$50.00, if their mathematics is weak, that equals to \$10,000; 200 senior citizens of the Collet area received \$50.00 which they used to buy medication and other little necessities that they had. How can that not be proper use of the Petrocaribe money? (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, we spent another \$4,000.00 on food for that very same event. So that is \$14,000.00. And, Mr. Speaker, the other \$36,000.00, I noticed the news people are quoting me to say, and Jules Vasquez needs to correct his story because at no point in my interview I said that the family day costs us \$36,000.00. That was the portion of the Mother's Day money, Mr. Speaker, that was spent on that family day. But, if anybody who has any sense of these things will check it out, you will see that a trip like that, taking 22 buses, Mr. Speaker, to Corozal will not cost \$36,000.00.

HON. M. FINNEGAN (Minister of Housing and Urban Development): Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, Sir, I think you instructed the police to take that gentleman out there who is disrupting the House. Well, let him get out! You get out of the House!

MR. SPEAKER: One second, Minister. Yes, Leader of the Opposition.

HON. F. FONSECA (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Leader of the Opposition, let me explain to you. I'll explain to you. I explained a long time ago. Wait, man, relax man. I am explaining to you, man. I explained to both sides, when you want me to talk let me know. I explained to both sides, when your side is doing a presentation, you can clap, you can support, you can do whatever you want within reason. When the Opposition side is speaking, remain quiet. It doesn't matter if you are a Senator, or the Governor-General, or anybody. You will be removed by me if you can't follow my rules, simple! (Applause) When you speak, they have to be quiet or I'll move them out too. And, for the record, I put out more from this side than that side. Who gets vex could leave. Officers, remove the gentleman.

HON. F. FONSECA (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, this is outrageous man. This is outrageous. We are subjected, and we take it like big boys and girls. We are subjected to all kinds of name calling and all kinds of things and we take it. I did not hear the Senator say anything, Mr. Speaker. He laughed during a comment made by the Member for Collet. Mr. Speaker, I am appealing to you, Mr. Speaker, to reconsider.

MR. SPEAKER: Member, that's not true. That's not true.

HON. F. FONSECA (Leader of the Opposition): I am appealing to you, Mr. Speaker, to reconsider because if you will remove the Senator then we will walk out of this meeting. I'm telling you that right now. (Applause) You touch one of us, you touch all of us. You are treating us unfairly; you are treating the Senator unfairly; he did nothing. He is one of the most well behaved persons in this Chamber.

HON. M. FINNEGAN (Minister of Housing and Urban Development): Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Yes, Minister?

HON. M. FINNEGAN (Minister of Housing and Urban Development): Mr. Speaker, you have laid out your rules to both sides.

HON. F. FONSECA (Leader of the Opposition): No way we are not tolerating that.

MR. SPEAKER: Listen, listen, Minister, let me say it. Member, it is not true, and I have to address that. It is not true that when you speak or any other Member from this side speak that I tolerate any shouting at you or anything like that. That is not true. But I believe, if the person is a Senator, the person should set an example. (Applause)

HON. F. FONSECA (Leader of the Opposition): But he always does.

MR. SPEAKER: To be frank with you, he acted that way as if though he was daring me to put him out. Well, he dared me and he dared the wrong person, he has to go. And, if you chose to go, that's your choice, that's your choice. Remove Mr. Vaughan too, please.

HON. F. FONSECA (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, we are walking out and I put on record again that this is the arrogance and tyranny and dictatorship of this government that the people of this country are starting to wake up to and stand up against. We will have no part of it, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Remove this person here, please. Officer, remove this man. Are there any more presentations on the debate? Do you want to finish your presentation, Minister? Yes, Minister, as you were saying.

HON. P. FABER (Minister of Education, Youth and Sports): I was breaking it down for my Honourable friends how we spent the \$50,000.00 but apparently they are not interested in that, Mr. Speaker. They are more interested to defend a Member of the National Assembly who is clearly breaking, has no

respect for this Honourable House, Mr. Speaker, and was clearly breaking the rule. You were merely enforcing your own rules, Mr. Speaker. So I applaud you for waiting until he leaves. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, just to recap what I was saying, \$10,000.00 was given by way of cheques from the Ministry of Finance to the senior citizens of my constituency who attended senior's day at the Bird's Isle on June 15, I think it was. A sum of \$4,000.00 was spent on food for that same event, Mr. Speaker. That's \$14,000.00, and the other \$36,000.00, in addition to contributions and donations, Mr. Speaker, was what we used to take the 22 bus loads of people to Corozal, Mr. Speaker, to foster family bonding, to foster cultural exchange, to foster, Mr. Speaker, as well, appreciation and joy of experiencing our own beloved Belize. It didn't cost us anything, Mr. Speaker, to bathe in the Caribbean Sea. I can't understand, for the life of me, how that is an issue. And, Mr. Speaker, people in this country eat tacos and Pibil and BBQ every single day. I don't understand why that is an issue. We had to feed the people something. It wasn't champagne and caviar.

And so, Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day we are fully satisfied. I think I can tell you that I am satisfied and the people of the Collet constituency are more than satisfied with the fact that that money was put to such a good purpose, Mr. Speaker. We have stronger family bonds. We have now situations where there were tensions before between maybe some young men in the area. Mr. Speaker, they went on that trip together. They socialized together. That caused, Mr. Speaker, the tension to be eased in some areas of the constituency. So we make no apology, Mr. Speaker. You've heard the Venezuelan Ambassador say that the government has not breached anything and we are, in fact, spending monies accordingly. In fact, if you read the Loan Agreement, Mr. Speaker, you will see that social activity, and, in fact, even as we look at the new amendment Bill today to the Petrocaribe Act, you will see that this is right in line with such spending, Mr. Speaker. So we make absolutely no apology, and, as I've said to the media, we are looking forward to Mother's Day next year so that we are able to go to Hopkins. (Applause) Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding the departure of the Leader of the Opposition and his merry men, for the record, I still want to reply to some of what he said. He had the face of brass to get up and say that he and his party are not against Petrocaribe and that the program began under the People's United Party. Mr. Speaker, the country needs to know that the court action that PUP has filed seeks to stop the Petrocaribe Program. (Applause) The records are there. How can the Leader of the Opposition keep repeating this absolute falsehood and say to people, "We are not against Petrocaribe, we are against the way it is being handled"? He asked in his suit, and Julius Espat, for an injunction to be issued by the Supreme Court of this country, restraining the government from continuing with the Petrocaribe Program. Indeed, he is correct when he says that the program commenced under their administration. Why he is trying to stop it now is because, the comparison again bedevils him, makes him and his party look so absolutely terrible, since we are completely transparent and above board with our spending of the Petrocaribe monies and the entire nation bears witness to and lives the reality of the tremendous improvement, (Applause) the transformational bounty that this administration has been able to bring to Belizeans as a consequence of the Petrocaribe spending. (Applause)

The Minister of Education is quite right. Supplementaries are not an unusual feature of our parliamentary process and of our budgeting system. The last supplementary we did in this National Assembly before Petrocaribe came about was for some \$90 odd million that the People's United Party, the previous administration, had overspent in a particular budget year, and we came so that the books can be, as it were, balanced, so that the record can be complete, and we passed a supplementary to approve retrospectively the spending they had done. That Bill was in the same form as the current Bill. As the Minister said, you don't list contractors in the Bill. You say under the heads, under the normal budgeting processes, you know, I am not going to get personal with the Leader of the Opposition, but really he is such an empty vessel. (Applause) He makes all this noise when in reality he is the most anemic, anorexic Leader of a political party that this country has ever seen. (Applause) I read something somewhere that some sociologist or psychologist says that personality is destiny. Well, if that is true, given his personality, it is the destiny of the People's United Party to lose and lose and continue to lose as long as he is their leader. (Applause) But, Mr. Speaker, so we set out in all the detail that is normal with respect to some sort of a financial allocation Bill, in this Bill, with all the Schedules.

He talked about, he wants to know whether there is value for money and who gets individual contracts. Mr. Speaker, I repeat again, and this is where all of them had gone wrong, the spending of Petrocaribe Funds by the government, within the context of the budget process, is like the spending of any money that comes out of the Consolidated Revenue Fund. It is subject to all the safeguards, all the protocols, all the requirements of the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act and the whole infrastructure that governs government spending. To make that clearer, no contract is entered into by this government with Petrocaribe funds or any funds in the Consolidated Revenue Fund, except that contract, when it is at the proposal stage, has been sent to the Auditor General for his examination. (Applause) I apologize! It is the Contractor General for his examination, to give him an opportunity to question the Ministry of Works, for him to determine whether the contract is fit and proper and is consonant with, as I said, all the requirements and protocols of our system. (Applause)

In addition to that, the Ministry of Works, with respect to infrastructure, has the obligation and discharges that obligation to examine the proposed contracts before they are sent to the Contractor General, to certify that the costing, that the estimates are all accurate, that nobody is trying to do what was the rule rather than the exception under the People's United Party, submit a proposal for works to be done for \$20 million when it is clear and anybody who knows anything about works will be able to tell you that those works only value \$5 million. That does not happen under this administration, and it does not happen with the Petrocaribe funds. (Applause) It does not happen with any money spent by government. That Ministry of Works has a number of extremely professional engineers, persons of integrity that can carry out that assessment and that valuation. The Chief Engineer is a gentleman called Lennox Bradley who is legendary in the Public Service and in the wider society, certainly in the engineering field, as a man of the utmost competence and probity. (Applause) Yeah, he is a Cayo man, right. And the CEO Errol Gentle, a man who in a previous incarnation was a Major in the Belize Defence Force and brings that same kind of discipline and no nonsense approach to his job, he together with his Finance Officers as well make sure that not a penny is misspent on any of these

contracts. (Applause)

Apart from infrastructure, take the case of the Minister of Education and the excellent, innovative use to which he put his Petrocaribe Mother's Day allocation. He, no Minister, nobody gets any money out of Petrocaribe in their pockets, you know, or in their hands, you know. He has to submit the pro forma invoices for whatever he is going to purchase in terms of the supplies. If he is going to rent buses, he has to get pro forma invoices for those things. So that the spending, which is well done, on his family day is a spending that is scrutinized by the Ministry of Finance and not approved, except every last little detail is in order. (Applause) We are not like them. They got US\$42 million out of Petrocaribe and nobody can tell you where that money went. (Applause) Did they bring any allocation, or Supplementary Allocation, or prospective Appropriation Bill to this House? Nobody knew about Petrocaribe in their time, except for those in the south who were aware of the relationship between the government, Petrocaribe and Petro Fuel.

Mr. Speaker, it is important that we repeat what the true position is. There is this huge campaign, the Opposition has enlisted the support of certain sections of the media, enlisted the support of certain sections of the social partners and they are determined to continue to burn fire on the Petrocaribe Program. They are raging a relentless campaign, and we are here to tell them today, as we have told them before, and as we will tell them again, you will never stop Petrocaribe. (Applause) Petrocaribe is powered by the people of this country who are experiencing everyday of their lives the transformation that is being produced by Petrocaribe. (Applause)

One last point in all this, the Auditor General is free to go into the Ministry of Works anytime she pleases, or go into any other government department or Ministry, through which Petrocaribe funds pass because we keep saying that we have nothing to hide, there is nothing to conceal. Quite to the contrary, the more people know, the more the details are put out there, the greater is the political win for the United Democratic Party. (Applause)

We've had, and do remember how long they come with the anti Petrocaribe things? You know, Mr. Speaker, apart from that \$42 million, do you remember how much they borrowed from Bear Sterns when the people they said US\$250 million couldn't be accounted for? It's for a while now that they have been conducting their campaign against Petrocaribe. Well, we had the 10,000 people outside when we first began to roll it. We had a referendum in Cayo North, you know, on Petrocaribe, and we beat them silly. Then we had the municipal elections and we beat them sillier. And we are having a by-election in Dangriga on Wednesday, the 8 of July, they don't have to wait long, that will be the third referendum on Petrocaribe, and we will beat them silliest. (Applause) And, Mr. Speaker, as my good friend, the Minister of Housing, will tell you, it's not only in baseball where strike three means you're out, you know, it's the same thing in politics. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is that the Bill for an Act to appropriate further sums of money for the use of the Public Service of Belize for the financial year ending on the thirty-first day of March, two thousand and fifteen, be read a first time and a second time.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Bill read a first time and a second time.

2. General Revenue Supplementary Appropriation (2015/2016) Bill, 2015.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, can you give me one minute, please? Now, Mr. Speaker, this is the second Supplementary Appropriation Bill. Later on we will come to the Petrocaribe (Amendment) Bill but I should say from now that what this does is to ask for approval for what we spent on top of what was budgeted between 1st April, and end June. This is consistent with the promise that I made and which now finds its way into the Bill that will come up shortly, the amendments to the Petrocaribe Act. This is consistent with the promise that I made that every three months we will come back to the House and tell the nation exactly how much we've spent under Petrocaribe. I also promised, and it also finds itself in the Bill, that we will do more than that. We will tell you how much we spent in the preceding quarter, the preceding three months, but we will also pass prospective Supplementary Appropriations Bill to tell you exactly how much we intend to spend for the three months to come. Now, what can be more transparent than that? We are setting out in advance what we mean to do for the next quarter, in terms of the Petrocaribe spending. And, as I say, while that requirement is not yet a matter of law, hopefully it will become law after we pass the Bill today and the Senate approves on Wednesday, we are already doing so.

So this Bill, an Act to appropriate further sums of money for the use of the Public Service of Belize for the financial year ending 31st day of March 2016, sets out what we spent and what we intend to spend, what we spent between, as I said, April and June and what we intend to spend between July and September. So that, Mr. Speaker, when Members look at the details they will see that altogether the proposed additional allocation for April to June 2015 is \$29,354,579.00, source of funding - proceeds from Petrocaribe, and when they will see all that we spent this money on: social assistance, equipment for the Intensive Pediatrics Care, they talked about health, infrastructure projects, counterparts for rural water projects, I think the Minister for Belize Rural North benefitted from that, back-to-school assistance program, the BIL programs, the Mother's Day appreciation program, the residential mortgage relief, the multi-denominational chapel at the KMH, the grant to the Methodist High School in Belmopan; we are all over the place assisting every sector with the Petrocaribe. (Applause) There is the summer sports program, imagine half a million dollars to all those good and true citizens of this country who volunteer to put on these summer camps every year and who are always having to go around asking the private sector for support, half a million dollar to assist all those persons countrywide, Mr. Speaker. (Applause) There is the upgrading of the secondary schools computer lab, the Lake Independence Boulevard Project, counterpart for rehabilitation of the Hummingbird; all that is with respect to April to June.

And then we come to the projected additional allocations for July to September, and we are telling them that there we propose to spend an additional \$22,400,000. So altogether, between April and September 2015, we expect to

have spent \$51,754,579. They will cry on how we are spending the money. We are spending the money yes, and we will continue to spend the money on the people of this country. (Applause)

So, Mr. Speaker, I believe that our side of the House will have no difficulty at all in passing this Supplementary. You know, when I look at it, when I look at the breakdown, and, again, as the Minister of Education said, any particular program, in any constituency, and we had promised. At the time of the budget I had said that there would be a sort of mid-year mini budget. We told them to get ready because Petrocaribe will roll, and this is what's happening. (Applause) When I look at it, I checked, and for example, you get into the details, you start to talk about in Belize Rural Central; I am sorry, that lady, the current, I cannot say future because she is done once the election is called. (Applause) The current Member for Belize Rural Central, I'm sorry she is not here. When you listen to all what Petrocaribe is doing in Ladyville, Poinsettia Street and Manta Ray Boulevard, Scissors Lane, I frighten, Scissors Lane or something like that. Man, look here! Do you remember there was a song when the guy was quarreling with the lady because the lady left him? He said, "Man, how can you treat me like that when I treated you so good? I buy things for you, Gucci and Ferruci and names that I can't even pronounce." (Applause) It's like that we are treating the people of Belize Rural Central, you know, but they won't leave us. The streets that we are fixing, I am telling you, Mr. Speaker, when I go over the detailed listing, I lost. It is places that I don't even know but the people of Belize Rural Central know them. And we are moving now, as soon as the rain holds up that is Ladyville, to Lord's Bank, you see. And the same story is replicated all over; we said we were coming to the rural.

So when you go to Toledo East you will see all the work that is taking place at Trio and Bladden, and Bella Vista, and the new Crique Sarco Bridge for four hundred and odd thousand dollars. When you go to Cayo North East, Los Tambos and Duck Run I and Duck Run II and the road that worthless Kareem Adley gave to fix, the Bullet Tree/Santa Familia Road that was broken up in two months, Mr. Speaker, you see how beautifully that is being rehabilitated. And you can hear the people from Bullet Tree, and from Santa Familia, and from Duck Run, they called into the radio station, and they expressed their undying gratitude to this government. (Applause) And you go to Esperanza, new drainage system, new this, new that.

I had to say in Cabinet on Tuesday, you go to Cayo North, this is supposed to be rural, but you have a man the Representative for Cayo North, you know, Dr. Omar Figueroa. I see why he is PHD because he fights for his people, and guess what he did with me, Mr. Speaker? I said this round is only for the villages, the rural. He said he has some streets in Cayo North that are just like rural. So he got extra Petrocaribe money for those too. (Applause)

But it is all over Sarawee and Hope Creek; the work is starting at Succotz. Don't talk about what will go on at, what's the name of the place, Trial Farm and San Jose. You see we just had a convention in Orange Walk South. Where is Ms.

Guadalupe? Ms. Guadalupe won and Petrocaribe has not reached there yet. (Applause) That is only on the basis of other government projects that are carrying the road from Orange Walk all the way to Blue Creek, something that those people promised for generations. (Applause) How many signs they had put out there saying the road is starting? How many ground breaking ceremonies they had? And the UDP is doing it. We had 2,500 persons turn out for that convention. I am sorry the one from Orange Walk South is still here.

So, Mr. Speaker, long story short, those people really need to give it up because they seem to think that constant dripping will wear away the stone. Well, I don't know if that is any kind of principle of physics or anything like that, but this UDP Petrocaribe rock will not be affected one width by their campaign. We and the people will grow only stronger as the transformation continues and expands, and that is what this Supplementary Appropriation Bill is about. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is that the Bill for an Act to appropriate further sums of money for the use of the Public Service of Belize for the financial year ending on the thirty-first day of March, two thousand and sixteen, be read a first and a second time.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 12 (8), I move that the proceedings on the matter on the Order Paper may be entered upon and proceeded with at this day's Sitting at any hour though opposed.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is that the proceedings on the matter on the Order Paper may be entered upon and proceeded with at this day's Sitting at any hour though opposed.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Bill read a first time and a second time.

3. Petrocaribe Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2015.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, I believe this is the Petrocaribe Loans (Amendment) Bill. I rise to introduce a Bill for an Act to amend the Petrocaribe Loans Act, (No.4 of 2015); to clarify certain provisions of the Act; and to provide for matter connected therewith or incidental thereto.

Mr. Speaker, this Bill has the recommendation of the Cabinet. I believe that while the other side is not here, and, Mr. Speaker, I have to comment on that. They've made all this noise about Petrocaribe. This is the opportunity to make a last stand on their part and they manufacture an excuse to walk out. I don't know

if it's sea breeze and pelican they figure that they will try to dodge the lick that was coming because we were ready for them on this side of the House. (Applause) But, in any case, what on earth, Mr. Speaker, is happening to the constitutional Opposition in this country? First, they were not going to contest a by-election. Second, Petrocaribe that they claim was the most fundamental issue in this country today, when you get a chance to debate it, you walk out. It is a gross dereliction of duty. (Applause) It must be condemned in the strongest terms, and it is not because, Mr. Speaker, you tried to stop them from making their contribution because somebody in the gallery was defiant. In terms of your orders, and you exercised your obligation as Speaker, they will walk out and leave the nation and those that support them and those that are interested in democracy and debate hanging. Mr. Speaker, we on this side of the House say, shame. (Applause)

I believe one or two on our side may want to say something about the Bill.

HON. P. FABER (Minister of Education, Youth and Sports): Mr. Speaker, I join with the Prime Minister in condemning the Opposition for walking out.

MR. SPEAKER: We can do it this way, indeed. But I think, Minister, it is best we make the ruling. It's a Bill but it's a money Bill nonetheless, and I think it is best we ask for the stages to be taken in one and all of that first, and then we get to the debate.

HON. P. FABER (Minister of Education, Youth and Sports): That's alright.

MR. SPEAKER: Before you proceed, Mr. Clerk, with the reading of the Bill, Honourable Members, that Bill is referred to the Finance and Economic Development Committee for examination consideration and report.

Bill read a first time.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order No. 49(1), I move that the Bill be taken through all its stages forthwith.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is that the next stages of the Bill be taken forthwith.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

4. Cruise Ship Passenger Tax and Validation Bill, 2015.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce a Bill for an Act to levy, charge and collect a tax on each manifested cruise ship passenger on a cruise ship entering and leaving Belize and tendering its passengers to the Fort Street Tourism Village; to validate the imposition, collection and distribution of a tax on

each manifested cruise ship passenger on a cruise ship entering and leaving Belize and tendering its passengers to the Fort Street Tourism Village; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

This Bill has the recommendation of the Cabinet.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, that Bill is referred to the Finance and Economic Development Committee for examination consideration and report.

Bill read a first time.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order No. 49(1), I move that the Bill be taken through all its stages forthwith.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is that the next stages of the Bill be taken forthwith.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

5. National Protected Areas System Bill, 2015.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce a Bill for an Act to provide for the maintenance of a coordinated management of a system of protected areas that is representative of internationally agreed categories, effectively managed, ecologically based, consistent with international law, and based on best available scientific information and the principles of sustainable development for the economic, social and environmental benefit of present and future generations of Belize; to repeal the National Parks System Act, Chapter 215 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2000; to amend the Fisheries Act, Chapter 210 and the Forests Act, Chapter 213 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2000; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

This Bill has the recommendation of the Cabinet, and perhaps I should just say a few words by way of introduction. This is, of course, the work of the Ministry of Fisheries and Forestry in consultation with and perhaps even in conjunction with the NGO Community, the Conservation NGO. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the Ministry, all the officials who worked on this, and, in particular, the NGO community. It is, I believe, a splendid example of the partnership that when properly exploited between government and the NGO community, an example of how it can produce a kind of epochal piece of legislation that is long overdue and that perhaps has been delayed too much already.

I do want to say this, on the media much has been made of the fact that some sectors of the NGO community have said that, while they all recognize how important, how much of a landmark the effort to, in fact, pass this Bill is, that there might have been a need for even more consultation. Well, I just want to

make clear that we had first received in Cabinet a letter sent to me by the Audubon Society and the BTIA, and, again, they started off by saying that this is a good idea, good undertaking, but there were certain concerns they had. I want to tell them that Cabinet took on board every single one of those concerns and the Bill was sent back. (Applause) The Bill was sent back to the Solicitor General to be redrafted, and we only got sight of the finished product on Tuesday. In the meantime though, APAMO, the sort of umbrella or one umbrella association of NGO's, had also written me to express, again, some disquiet about certain sections of the Bill. Well, that came too late. There was simply no time to reflect their concerns, and I don't know that we agreed with all of their concerns. We accepted, as I said in toto the earlier expressions of concern from Audubon and BTIA. We wondered whether we should perhaps not proceed with the Bill. But because some members of APAMO made clear to us that they were not in support of the official APAMO position, we thought it better to proceed. What we will do though is to make sure that, when this Bill goes to the House Committee, the public hearings will be held with enough time elapsing for anybody from the NGO community who has any additional submission to be heard and for there to be a full scale discussion at the level of the House Committee which does not include the Minister or any of the Minister's people on that Committee so an objective discussion can be had. No doubt somebody from the Ministry will be asked to be present so that, again, the Ministry's position on any suggested changes can be had. But it is in that context that we feel the best course of action is to proceed to introduce it, to record that this signal event will take place and will be brought to fruition, but to ensure that enough time is given for additional representation before we bring it back to the House for second and third reading. Thank you, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, that Bill is referred to the Natural Resources and Environment Committee for examination, consideration and report.

Bill read a first time.

6. Protected Areas Conservation Trust (Amendment) Bill, 2015.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, this is a companion Bill to the National Protected Areas System Bill. It is the Protected Areas Conversation Trust (Amendment) Bill 2015. So I rise to introduce a Bill for an Act to amend the Protected Areas Conservation Trust Act, Chapter 218 of the Substantive Laws of Belize, Revised Edition 2000 – 2003, to provide for a new definition of “protected area” and a new composition of the Board of Directors; to expand the functions of the Trust; to provide for the appointment of a Finance and Audit Committee and other Committees by the Board of Directors; to further strengthen the provisions of the Act in order to enhance the operations of the Trust in achieving its mission of promoting the sustainable management of Belize's protected areas; to make better provisions relating to the exemption from payment of the conservation fee; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

This Bill has the recommendation of the Cabinet, and what I said earlier about the other Bill applies as well to this.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, that Bill is referred to the Natural Resources and Environment Committee for examination, consideration and report. (Applause) Members of the gallery, you may clap but please don't shout.

Bill read a first time.

7. Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre Bill, 2015

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, allow me, before I introduce the next Bill, to again congratulate the members of the NGO community and to say to them that I certainly agree that those two Bills are a matter about which to shout, just not in your House. (Applause)

Mr. Speaker, I rise to introduce a Bill for an Act to give effect to the Agreement Establishing the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, the objectives of which are, to protect the climate system of territories that are members of the Centre for the benefit of present and future generations of their people, to enhance regional institutional capabilities for the coordination of national responses to the negative effects of climate change, to provide comprehensive policy and technical support in the area of climate change and related issues and spearheading regional initiatives in those areas, to perform the role of executing agency for regional environmental projects relating to climate change; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

This Bill has the recommendation of the Cabinet.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, that Bill referred to the Natural Resources and the Environment Committee for examination, consideration and report.

Bill read a first time.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Orders 49(1), I move that the Bill be taken through all its stages forthwith.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is that the next stages of the Bill be taken forthwith.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

MOTIONS RELATING TO THE BUSINESS OR SITTINGS OF THE HOUSE

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, I move that at its rising today, the House adjourn to a date to be fixed by this week.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is that the House at

its rising today, adjourn to a date to be fixed by the Speaker.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, it has been agreed that the following Bills pass this day:

1. Petrocaribe Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2015;
2. Cruise Ship Passenger Tax and Validation Bill, 2015; and
3. Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre Bill, 2015.

As you are well aware, under Standing Order No. 74, all proposed Legislation, Messages, Petitions, Motions and other matters relating to the subject mentioned under the title of each Standing Committee shall be referred by the House to such Committee for examination, consideration and report to the House.

The only logical way for this to be done, other than by suspension of Standing Orders, is for me to suspend the Sitting to enable the Finance and Economic Development Committee and the Natural Resources and Environment Committee to examine, consider and report to the House on those Bills.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

The Sitting is therefore suspended until the Finance and Economic Development Committee and the Natural Resources and Environment Committee have concluded their business.

Sitting suspended at 2:16 P.M.

Sitting resumed at 12:58 P.M.

PRESENTATION OF REPORTS FROM SELECT COMMITTEE

HON. J. SALDIVAR (Minister of National Security): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present the reports from the Finance and Economic Development Committee on the Petrocaribe Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2015, and on the Cruise Ship Passenger Tax and Validation Bill, 2015.

Your Committee referred the Petrocaribe Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2015, without amendment and the Cruise Ship Passenger Tax and Validation Bill, 2015, with amendments.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, those reports are ordered to lie on the Table.

HON. W. ELRINGTON (Attorney General and Minister of Foreign Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present the report from the Natural Resources and Environment Committee on the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre Bill, 2015, referred to by the House this day.

The Committee recommended that the Bill be brought back to the House without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, that Report is order to lie on the Table.

III **BILLS FOR SECOND READING**

1. **Petrocaribe Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2015.**

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, I move the second reading of a Bill for an Act to amend the Petrocaribe Loans Act (No. 4 of 2015); to clarify certain provisions of the Act; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

HON. P. FABER (Minister of Education, Youth and Sports): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I realize, Mr. Speaker, that the Members of the Opposition aren't here. But, as you know, Mr. Speaker, the opposition to this (Amendment) Bill and, in fact, the principal Act when it was passed a few weeks ago came not only from the Opposition but also from certain corners, Mr. Speaker, if you will. And so for the benefit of those persons as well as for the larger benefit of our population, Mr. Speaker, I make my comments on this (Amendment) Bill.

The fact is, Mr. Speaker, that because we have an amendment now to this Bill proves that we have a Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, a Leader of this country who listens to the people. The mere fact that this amendment is coming, Mr. Speaker, proves that fact. So for them who say that the Prime Minister does all this in isolation, the Prime Minister doesn't listen, you know, just now, Mr. Speaker, I listened as the Prime Minister spoke about the process, of course, for the Bills that were introduced just a while ago, and how he engaged the NGO Community, Mr. Speaker, and he spoke about the process for those Bills and how we listened to the concerns of the Audubon and the BTIA. That's the nature of our Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker. That's the nature of this government. We don't just implement legislation, Mr. Speaker, and then tell everybody else who has a concern, "Listen, we don't want to hear from you." And I can give countless numbers of examples, Mr. Speaker, to show you that that is how this government operates, particularly in education. But, if you also look at the various different constitutional amendments, Mr. Speaker, that were given, it spells that this government is the master of consultation, Mr. Speaker, and that it listens to the population out there, Mr. Speaker, and when there is the need for change, Mr. Speaker, that change is there. No twisting of the arm necessary, Mr. Speaker, this is the way we do things.

Now, Mr. Speaker, the (Amendment) Bill that is brought to us today, Mr. Speaker, doesn't necessarily come, as I read it, from changes because the Bill that was introduced some weeks ago was so wrong, you know, Mr. Speaker. In fact,

the amendments that are being made are being made principally because, Mr. Speaker, there was some purposeful misinterpretation and stretching of the intention of that then Bill, now the principal Act, Mr. Speaker.

If we look at the principal Act, and let me read, Mr. Speaker, from section 3(2), which is the portion that the (Amendment) Bill now intends to change. It says in the principal Act, this is what the Act says, “The money borrowed from APBEL may be kept in a special account at the Central Bank of Belize and may be withdrawn from time to time as the need arises.” Now, Mr. Speaker, when this was put in the Bill, we heard a lot of nonsense being said. I remember one of the comments was that the Prime Minister will write a cheque to his family members and so on. Do you remember that, Prime Minister? That was what they were saying. So they argued and they argued. The commentary out there by those who were on the radio stations and so on was, “Oh, the Prime Minister will abuse this now.” So that this is not done, Mr. Speaker, and so that we could be clear, it’s just a matter of being absolutely clear. That subsection 2 is being repealed, Mr. Speaker, and it is being replaced now by language that makes it absolutely clear or, as the Prime Minister likes to say, we can be doubly assured, makes assurances, doubly clear, as is your line, Prime Minister? So this is what this amendment aims to do now. It removes that doubt. It takes away any kind of concern that those people who were saying that at the time had, Mr. Speaker. So it is being replaced now by these words: “The money borrowed from APBEL shall be kept in a fund at the Central Bank of Belize which fund shall form part of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Belize.” (Do you remember there was all of this talk about whether or not it was a part of the Consolidated Revenue Fund merely because it is being held in the Central Bank?) “And may be withdrawn from time to time”, it continues, Mr. Speaker, “as the need arises. The withdrawal and spending of the said money from the Central Bank shall be in full measure subject to the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act, and all other Laws, Regulations and Procedures applicable to monies forming part of the Consolidated Revenue Fund of Belize.”

Why is this necessary, Mr. Speaker? It is because there were those who were casting aspersions on the language, Mr. Speaker, of the now principal Act. So it is just to remove that kind of thing. And, Mr. Speaker, we make it clear that this is intended to still fall under the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act because there are those out there who will have people believe, they are purposefully, Mr. Speaker, misguiding the people of this country to believe that we are trying to do away, to get out from under the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act which is just not true. So we are hoping, Mr. Speaker, that this now clears up that kind of doubt that anybody might have had.

And then, Mr. Speaker, the same section 3 (3) of the principal Act reads, Mr. Speaker, “No limitations shall apply to the use of the money borrowed from APBEL and it may be used to finance capital projects as well as to provide social and community assistance to the poor, and the socially marginalized, and any other legitimate purpose as the Government may consider fit.” They had problems with this, Mr. Speaker, the way the language was written again; “No limitation shall apply to the use of money borrow from APBEL”. So they will say, “What? How the Prime Minister could spend that on anything he wants?” I think, Mr. Speaker, they are somehow confusing the leadership of the current Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker, and the past Prime Minister.

So, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister now intends to make this language even more clear, and, you know, I'll tell you that these amendments that are being proposed today, as I've said, come as a result of us listening to the people but we took it back to the Cabinet and we had a discussion and everybody partake. And I remember asking particularly because, indeed, the language to me was a bit tricky. "No limitation shall apply..." I said, "Prime Minister, can't we word this in another way so that we can be sure?" It is because it said something about, let me read it again; "No limitations shall apply to the use of the money borrowed from APBEL and it may be used to finance capital projects as well as to provide social and community assistance to the poor and the socially marginalized, and any other legitimate purpose...".

When I heard that, Mr. Speaker, I initially thought, well, alright, any other legitimate purpose could mean that you could use it for other than what was specified in the loan agreement, and the Prime Minister quickly clarified. And I understand now that when it says, "other legitimate purposes" it refers back to the initial reference of it being used to finance capital projects as well as to provide social and community assistance. It's just a matter of wording. But, if that wording, Mr. Speaker, makes people uncomfortable, then we are prepared to change it, and that is exactly why we have the amendments.

So it will be amended, Mr. Speaker, and I say it will be amended because clearly there is no Opposition. They didn't see it important enough to stay here, Mr. Speaker. I wonder what they will say now to their flunkies, like those who get on the radio every morning and talk nonsense about the Bill. Well, the Opposition just walked out on two opportunities. I say two, Mr. Speaker, because the Committee Meeting was just held where this Bill, Mr. Speaker, was discussed and they were a no-show. They didn't bother to turn up. They left this Honourable House, and then, when it goes to the Committee of the whole, Mr. Speaker, for a third opportunity, sorry, another opportunity for it to be discussed, they won't be there, Mr. Speaker, and, when the opportunity is now for them to debate it, they are not here, Mr. Speaker. How can they be responsible to the nation?

This is what it is being amended to say, Mr. Speaker, "The money borrowed from APBEL may be used to finance capital projects, provide social and community assistance to the poor, socially marginalized and other sectors of the community, pay compensation relating to Government's nationalization of BEL and BTL, assist with commercial and SuperBond debt buyback, and for any other similar legitimate purposes." This, Mr. Speaker, that is being put in here now addresses much of the concern that people had. There were those who said, "Well, the Prime Minister will spend it." Well, the Prime Minister is telling you now, "We'll spend it on infrastructure. We'll spend it on the social programs." But, in addition now, to appease those who were complaining, this Bill isn't correcting anything that was a mistake. It is adding on because, Mr. Speaker, that is the kind of leader that our Member from Queen's Square is, to our party and to this country; he listens, Mr. Speaker. So if they want that kind of assurance, then he is prepared to put it in the Bill, and this is what is happening now. So putting aside for compensation for BEL, BTL, which is a burden that this country, of course, will have to face one of these days, putting aside to buyback the super bond, Mr. Speaker, which we know is a very, very serious weight on the shoulders of this government, how can this be wrong? How can they not want to support something like this, Mr. Speaker? This is, in fact, a very, very good amendment

to the principal Act. They asked for it, Mr. Speaker. It is put in here because it is being asked for.

And then, Mr. Speaker, a fourth subsection to section 3 is being added. This was not in the principal Act, the one we passed a few weeks ago, Mr. Speaker. It is a complete addition, and it reads, "It is hereby provided that all money borrowed from APBEL shall be reported to the National Assembly quarterly and shall require the passage of a Retrospective Supplementary Allocation for any spending done in the reporting quarter that was not provided for in the Annual Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure. At the time of quarterly reporting a Prospective Supplementary Allocation shall also be required for all spending proposed to be done in the following quarter, if such spending had not been provided for in the Annual Estimates of Revenue and Expenditure."

That's what we saw this morning, Mr. Speaker. That's what the Leader of the Opposition jumped up and complained about. Could you imagine? So, Mr. Speaker, it leads us to ask the question. Is it that they really want to see betterment, they want to see the Petrocaribe work, Mr. Speaker, but they want us to be more accountable? Or is it, as the Prime Minister pointed out so blatantly this morning to the Member from Cayo South, that they are trying to derail the Petrocaribe spending? Mr. Speaker, I am convinced and I believe that a good many Belizeans are convinced that that is their objective.

You see, there can be, as far as I see it, three types of opponents to this Bill. You have those, Mr. Speaker, like the Opposition who are Members of the Opposition, whenever they see something good happening for Belize, they feel the need to jump up and to oppose nonetheless because that is their duty, that is their job to oppose, oppose, oppose, oppose. They oppose, and, of course, they can't have the government looking good. They can't have the Prime Minister and the UDP winning election on top of election. They can't have that, you see. So they have to oppose. You have that kind.

Then a second group of opponents, Mr. Speaker, are those opponents who may legitimately have concerns about the Bill, and those persons have voiced their concerns. Those are the kinds of opponents which the Prime Minister have listened to and have caused these amendments, Mr. Speaker, that I shared just now that are in this (Amendment) Bill. We listened to them because they genuinely want to see us more accountable, and we are not hiding anything, Mr. Speaker. So we have no problem honoring that.

And then there is a third category of opponents, Mr. Speaker, the ones who just talk to hear themselves, and they can be mixed, I want you to understand, Mr. Speaker, in that first category that I spoke about, you know, who just oppose for opposing sake, like the Mose Hyde's and the Patrick Rogers'. They don't have any where to go. Patrick Rogers put his name on a ballot already, and people reject them. They don't want them. They have no leadership capability. And there is Dickie Bradley who the Prime Minister beat in the election twice. Nobody wants to hear from them. I hear he is coming to Collet now. Bring it on! I will beat him again. They will move the girl you know, Prime Minister; they say she is plastic. That's the kind of opposition, Mr. Speaker. They talk to hear themselves. They don't really want to see betterment. So, Mr. Speaker, why don't they because they are not going no way with those people, Prime Minister?

Then another argument, they put up, Mr. Speaker, is, of course, that this is unconstitutional. You know, I had the opportunity to witness on, I think it was Wednesday night, Wednesday evening when they had that forum, which by the way, before I get into that, Mr. Speaker, I want to say shame on the Belize National Teachers Union officials. Do you know why I say the officials, Mr. Speaker? It is because the vast majority of the membership of the Belize National Teachers Union don't support Luke Palacio and his nonsense, you know. In fact, Mr. Speaker, Luke Palacio was elected with about 300 members or less. They like to talk about democracy. He is not elected democratically, none, when the BNTU has in excess of 3,000. We have 5,000 teachers in this country; 300 went to vote for him; and they think they hard. That's why Ms. Avella who was the lady who ran against him had such choice words for him at the end of the same BNTU forum and told him, she got up and said, the last speaker, she said, "You all had an opportunity, all of you had an opportunity to educate the teaching population", those who are members of the BNTU, "and the wider country", because Mr. Speaker, they were listening, "but you didn't do that". This is what Ms. Avella, PUP Ms. Avella, who ran for the BNTU election as well and lost, said. She does not like Luke Palacio, you see. She told them that they failed because all of them are about politics and politics. The dirty, petty, rude attacks coming from Audrey Matura and from Mose Hyde, there is no sense of objectivity at all, Mr. Speaker. If the BNTU wanted to organize a forum to properly consult with the teachers, then they would have invited somebody from the government. But it was a railroad session. But, Mr. Speaker, what they did not expect was the group of young, talented people who went there and challenged them, Mr. Speaker, challenged them in their own forum because it was nonsense they were talking. They couldn't handle it, and they started insulting up. I heard Matura insulting the young Ms. Stephanie Duncan, telling her, "Oh, you're coming from the Prime Minister's Office." She is rude, had no respect for young talent, and I could bet you that Stephanie Duncan is a ten times better attorney than Matura will ever be. That is guaranteed. (Applause)

But, Mr. Speaker, those young attorneys will tell you because they talk about things being unconstitutional. Now, Mr. Speaker, I am no attorney. They talk about, and they criticize the portion of the law that speaks about all other laws. The principal Act speaks about all other laws and, Mr. Speaker, they say that part is unconstitutional because the Constitution is a law, the supreme law of this land. So when they say, all other law, they are saying that the Prime Minister's Petrocaribe Act is going to supersede the Constitution of this country. Mr. Speaker, anybody knows that that doesn't make any sense, and in Constitution 101 on page 3 of the Belize Constitution, Chapter 4, you could read it, Mr. Speaker. I know you are an attorney, and I know that you know better than Matura and them when it comes to this. Part 1, section 2(1) of the Belize Constitution reads: "This Constitution is the supreme law of Belize and if any other law is inconsistent with this Constitution that other law shall, to the extent of the inconsistency, be void." So we could make laws in here until thy Kingdom come and we could say until thy Kingdom come about any other law but any other law cannot trump the Constitution of this country, and I am sure that they know that. In fact, they know fully well, Mr. Speaker. But they try to misguide people that when in that law, in that piece of principal legislation that we are debating that we are amending today and the debate is about, when that refers to any other law, Mr. Speaker, I am sure that they know that it is referring to any other regular piece of legislation. You don't need a lawyer to determine that, Mr. Speaker, but those who are lawyers are put to shame in this instance, Mr. Speaker,

because they are trying, this is just showing you that they are trying to misguide people.

There is provision, you know, Mr. Speaker, if you continue reading that same section of the Constitution, Part 1, section 2 (2). It says, "The words "other law" occurring in subsection (1) above do not include a law to alter any provisions of this Constitution which is passed by the National Assembly in conformity with section 69 of the Constitution." And if you look at section 69, Mr. Speaker, it is that section of the Constitution that allows the National Assembly to change the Constitution. At no point at the time of the introduction of the Petrocaribe Act, Mr. Speaker, did the Prime Minister ever look to invoke any change to section 69 or to any section of the Constitution, none. In fact, the Prime Minister in our current state cannot even trigger a constitutional amendment without the support of the Opposition because we do not enjoy that kind of majority as we enjoyed in our previous term. And I am pretty sure that to trigger off something like that that would change the Constitution in this regard would require either, in some respects, two thirds, Mr. Speaker, you know it, you're an attorney, sometimes two thirds, if it is a really important piece, three-fourths majority in the Constitution. There was never any talk about that, no talk about changing the Constitution. So it has to be absolute nonsense when they say that the law tries to push the Constitution through the door, tries to push the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act out through the door.

All that it tries to do, Mr. Speaker, is to make for smooth sailing for us to access the Petrocaribe monies in order to help the people of this country. And that is really what they are afraid of because they know, this is why they make such a big deal about the Collet Family Day, you know, Mr. Speaker, because they know that the bond that has been created, as a result of us spending the money on the people, is a bond that they will never be able to break, that bond between Representative and people, and, in the case of the Prime Minister and the rest of our colleagues, the bond between Government and the people.

You know I listened to them and they talk all this nonsense about spending Petrocaribe money to do electioneering, spending the government's money to do electioneering. Well, Mr. Speaker, isn't that what the government is supposed to do, spend the money on the people where it is necessary? It is not our fault that they have an election every minute. It is them who cause it. We never tell Ivan to resign. We never tell Mahmud to resign. And if Dr. Mendez did not showed up again today, I don't know what is going on. It looks like things will happen, you know, Prime Minister. And the Prime Minister has indicated to us that if they have another one it will be the entire doll house that will tumble down. Is that right, Prime Minister? But we didn't ask for them to resign, Mr. Speaker. So if every time a by-election comes up and the Prime Minister, as a normal course, is rolling out the Petrocaribe money or the taxpaying dollars of this country, how can they say that that comes as a result of an election coming around?

The people of this country are service by this government and the resources of the taxes and the kinds of initiatives like Petrocaribe all year long. That is why in our eighth year in office this party continues to enjoy the kind of popularity and the kind of support from the Belizean people. There is no other reason for that. The people know that we are not putting, notice when they talk about the Collet Family Day, they can't say Faber put none of the money in his pocket because that's not our style. We work the money; we work the money for

the sake of the people; and you can't convince the people out there that the Prime Minister or anybody on this side of the House is pocketing any of that Petrocaribe money. Do you know why? It is because the proof is right out there, hard, cold, in the society. You go to Toledo, you go to Stann Creek, you go to Cayo, you go to Belize City, you go to Orange Walk, right, Deputy, you go to Corozal, you will see Petrocaribe in effect. The students received their tablets. The countless number of students got their educational assistance. The churches will get their ecumenical chapel. Education, health, infrastructure, it is there. The only reason that they fight against this legislation, Mr. Speaker, is because they don't want the government to continue to look good.

So they say, one last argument, Mr. Speaker, that they bring up is, of course, that the Prime Minister is trying to make this retrospective in order to cover his tracks and don't go to jail under the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act. We know, Mr. Speaker, that a good many of the same partners who are now complaining, in fact, agreed with the Prime Minister when it was not being deemed a loan, when it was being deemed as suppliers' credit and the Prime Minister took no shame in that. In fact, when he came to introduce that Act, at the time a Bill, he told them, he said, "Listen, we all saw this as something different." And when the Member from Cayo Central takes this issue to court, as the Prime Minister has pointed out, he can only have two agendas: one, he wants the Prime Minister to be arrested under the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act. It's Cayo South. What did I say, Brother? Cayo South, or and he wants to stop the spending of the Petro Caribe money. And I don't know, Mr. Speaker, which Belizeans apart from the categories that I described earlier, those who just oppose to oppose sake, or those who just talk to like hear themselves because they have talk shows and they have a pen and a drum of ink. They are the ones that will oppose. But any right thinking Belizean out there, Mr. Speaker, will not have any difficulty. They don't want the Prime Minister to go to jail, and they don't want the Petrocaribe spending to stop. That is the truth.

So if, Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister realizes that, indeed, all of us did not look at it that way and that we are now making a law that is retrospective, then they say, "Oh well, that is contrary to the Constitution". Well, Mr. Speaker, again, I am no lawyer, but I can read, and what I don't understand I ask those who know. And I think that all will agree that while they could criticize the Prime Minister for a lot of things, his law skills isn't one of them. That's why I am very shock at Matura who again will try to talk about libel and so, and, if the Prime Minister say the thing libelous, I going with the Prime Minister over Matura because Matura legal skills are not too sharp. But section 81(4) of the Constitution, Mr. Speaker, says, "No law made by the National Assembly shall come into operation until it has been assented to by the Governor-General but the National Assembly may postpone the coming into operation of any such law and may make laws with retrospective effect."

How is that against this? How is the passage of the Petrocaribe Act and even the amendments now which try to allow for the retrospective spending or borrowing, sorry, because it doesn't deal with the spending, it deals with the borrowing, how can that be against the Constitution, Mr. Speaker? The Constitution is clear. But the only people who would have a problem with this are those who are gunning for the head of the Prime Minister or those who are gunning for the end of the Petrocaribe initiative. So let's not follow that nonsense.

It's like, Mr. Speaker, the biblical reference of King Solomon and the baby. Do you remember that story, Mr. Speaker? You and I probably went to Sunday school, and you were a little bit ahead of me. But, do you remember that story? One lady thief the other lady's baby; she was wrong, you know, completely wrong. Her baby died in the middle of the night. She wake up and find her baby dead. So she looked to the other lady's baby that was alive and she swapped out the baby. Then they went to King Solomon to determine who the baby belonged to, and King Solomon's instruction was to cut the baby in half. The one, Mr. Speaker, that was guilty, who knew that the baby was not hers and who knew she did wrong, what did she say? She said, "Kill the baby, yes, give me my half." And the other lady, Mr. Speaker, who was the true mother of that child, who knew that she had done nothing wrong, offered, Mr. Speaker, to have the baby go with that other lady and so that the baby would not have to be killed.

Well, Mr. Speaker, did you heard the Leader of the Opposition talked this morning that they are ones who proposed Petrocaribe and they signed on to the Agreement and they know the goodness of it? You heard him. I am not making that up, Mr. Speaker. But when King Solomon is saying, split the baby in two, they are the ones who say, split the baby and make it finish, give me my half. That is what the Member for Cayo South is saying. Send the Prime Minister to jail, even though what he's doing is good for this country. Let them have their day in court where it is decided that the Prime Minister has gone against the Finance and Audit (Reform) Act. That's what they are saying, Mr. Speaker, and to hell with the Petrocaribe money, we will find another way to make it, the struggle in this country. That's what they are saying. So, Mr. Speaker, we should not give them any bly. And you see they are not here. They are not here, Mr. Speaker, because they have no real arguments. There is a saying in Creole that says *when pickni waan cry you only look pan dem and e cry*. They left, Mr. Speaker, for no reason, you know, because you were putting out someone from the gallery. It's not what you did or we did to them. They just said. "We have to dodge this bullet." That's exactly what is going on because they want to do nothing else but to derail the Honourable Prime Minister and to derail the Petrocaribe money.

Well, Mr. Speaker, I'll tell you and I will close with this, that my people in the Collet constituency, and I believe I can speak for all of my colleagues on this side, support the Prime Minister 110% when he says, "There ain't no stopping the Petrocaribe money, no matter what they do." I thank you, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

HON. W. ELRINGTON (Attorney General and Minister of Foreign Affairs): Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I trust that I will not be repeating anything that my colleague had just said. He seemed to have been so comprehensive in his coverage of this topic. But it's a topic that I had wanted to comment on for some time, and I truly regret the absence of the Opposition because, I think, if they were really interested in their constituents, they should at least have stayed and debated it.

The present Bill, as said by my colleague, is seeking to make assurance, doubly sure. But I think it should be emphasized here that the argument between the Opposition and us seems not to be as to the substance of the Bill but really as to the manner in which the resources are being spent. That is, in fact, the Opposition's position as articulated only this morning by the Leader of the

Opposition. He said that he wanted more information in relation to how the bids are being given, the quantum that is involved, who are getting it and that kind of thing. Those are all, in my view, Mr. Speaker, formalities and information which he could have gotten at any time, simply by contacting the Contractor General or the Auditor General or whoever it is that deals with these things. It's really not a matter of substance. So that I cannot understand why they seem to be so emotionally moved and driven by it because it's really a matter of information that can be gleaned at anytime.

What I want to emphasize this morning, however, is the nature of our responsibility in relation to matters of this type. We really are here to represent the people who elected us here. And I think it must be emphasized that we are not accountable to the Opposition and we don't expect that the Opposition will agree with us. As a matter of fact, they seem to think that their job is really to oppose everything we say. That is not really their job but that is what they are doing. But we are not accountable to them, we are accountable to this nation, and we give account of our actions to the nation by debating the positions we take in this House. This is, in fact, the House of the people for debating all these issues. Every piece of legislation that we pass can only be passed in this House, and the only limitation for the passage of legislation that can be given to our Government, duly elected, is within the parameters of the constitutional provisions. It's only the Constitution that can limit the power and authority of this House. And our day of reckoning, Mr. Speaker, is really election day. It's only on election day that, in fact, we can be censured and you are censured by being voted in back or being voted out back. So that the record is showing that the people of this country are quite content with what we have been doing over the past eight years that we have been present. The people have repeatedly voted candidates fielded by our party back into office.

But I want to suggest that, if that doesn't satisfy the Opposition, then I would like to make reference, with your permission, Mr. Speaker, to an article which appeared this morning in the Amandala Newspaper, a newspaper which is not necessarily charitable to us but which is reporting objectively the finding of the Gallup organization in the United States that normally does polling. It's a very revealing article, and, with your permission, Mr. Speaker, I'd just like to refer to it. It's an article to be found on page 5 of Sunday, 28th June, Kremandala, and the title to it is, "Belize 5th on the Gallup's personal well-being index, but low on financial well-being". And then it says at the bottom, "The US slips from 12 to 23." And it says this, it says, "Belize has ranked 5th among 145 countries in the 2014 Country Well-Being Rankings by Gallup, an American research-based, global performance - management consulting company, which indicates, based on Gallup surveys, that 38.9% of Belizeans are thriving in at least three or five elements: purpose, social, financial, community and physical." Basically what they assess us on is the issue of purpose; Belizeans like what they do each day and are motivated in what they are doing; Belizeans having social supportive relationships and love in their life; Belizeans managing their financial life to reduce stress and increase security; Belizeans living and feeling safe and having pride in their community; and Belizeans having good health and enough energy to get things done on a daily basis. So the five elements under which we are assessed are purpose, social, financial, community, and physical. And in the world of 145 countries, Belize places fifth. Mr. Speaker, that is only possible, and it is stated here, it says, "The state of a country's well-being sheds light on levels of prosperity and progress".

So that finding of Gallup indicates very clearly that generally speaking, even when you take it on an international basis, the country of Belize and the people of Belize are doing exceedingly well, exceedingly well. We are a contented people. We are a healthy people. We are happy with our work, our environment and our surroundings. We don't have as much wealth as other countries but that does not stop us from being content and happy. I think that is very significant because 10 years ago we were really in trouble when we took office from the People's United Party. The situation was dire that people were really, really scared. Lots of people were losing their properties, their assets and the like. But all that changed, within a period of eight years.

But most significantly, Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the use to which the Petrocaribe funds are being put because the impression that the other side is trying to suggest is that the use to which the funds are being put are, in fact, being misplaced. I have always categorized the Petrocaribe funds, Mr. Speaker, as our version of the Marshall plan and the New Deal. The Marshall plan was brought into force in 1945-1946 after the Second World War to help to rebuild the European countries. And the New Deal was introduced in the 1930's to bring the US economy back on stream after a terrible period of devaluation.

And with your permission, Mr. Speaker, I just want to read a brief extract from a book called *Law in America*, written by a guy named Lawrence M. Friedman, which indicates that governments have a responsibility to spend monies, to stimulate the economy and to make sure that, in fact, there is sufficient wealth in the economy so that people can have a good standard of living. And I want to show the different categories upon which the monies can be spent. It says, "In the aggregate, the New Deal legislation made a real difference in society." It's just like this legislation for the Petrocaribe. "In the aggregate, the New Deal legislation made a real difference in society." It says, "The Wagner Act put the federal stamp of approval on the union movement and created an agency, the National Labour Relations Board, to make sure employers let workers organize and played fair during union elections." It says, "The Tennessee Valley Authority brought electricity to one of the poorest, most backward sections of the country". And this, Mr. Speaker, most specifically, it says, "Massive public works and conservation programs gave jobs to millions of unemployed people. Works Progress Administration workers built trails, painted murals in post office, raked leaves, put on plays, but most fundamentally, earned paychecks for tens of thousands of families otherwise on the brink of disaster". I just want to read that once more, Mr. Speaker. It says, "Works Progress Administration workers built trails, painted murals in post offices, raked leaves, put on plays, but most fundamentally, earned paychecks for tens of thousands of families otherwise on the brink of disaster."

When I went to Jamaica in 1971 and, again, in 1975 and 1977, and when I walked on the streets of Jamaica, there were thousands, literally thousands of Jamaican ladies who were engaged in what was described as an impact program. And what those ladies were doing was simply cleaning the streets, keeping the society clean, and the objective was to provide employment for the people of Jamaica, the ladies in particular, to ensure that they would get a regular paycheck. The bottom line is that they are able to get a regular paycheck.

This Petrocaribe program is doing exactly that. It is no different from what was done by the Americans in the period of their own depression, the New Deal program, and it is no different from what was also done by the Americans after the Second World War to bring back Europe. So that the expenditures that are being made by the program are very legitimate, very proper. I can tell you that in my constituency, the Pickstock Constituency, at this present time, if you were to go there right now, you will see that roads that were neglected, perhaps from the time those areas were opened up, are now being built, and the intention is to have them cemented, so that people are going to have nice cemented homes. The drains are being cleaned and reconstructed. The canals are being cleaned, reconstructed and redeveloped. Indeed, the entire face of the division is being transformed. Not only that, people, both males and females, are able to earn a regular paycheck every week. So that the level of poverty, in fact, is being reduced automatically, and the people in general are living a happy, healthier and more prosperous living.

In my own constituency again, Mr. Speaker, because of the assistance which I get from the Petrocaribe program, and my only regret with respect to that is that I don't think that I am getting enough but I understand that there is always a limitation. But what I have been able to do, and I feel so happy about it, Mr. Speaker, is that, because of this program, I have been able to keep on continuous employment, as many as 40 persons in my constituency, primarily, single parent, unwed mothers. (Applause) And what they have been engaged in is landscaping the Pickstock Division. Now I'll tell you something about landscaping and how important it is.

You know my mentor is Lee Kuan Yew, and he said in his book, once he came into the country, he flew into the country, and he drove to his office, and the thought came to him that from the airport to the office is the most important ride that any executive could have coming into his country because the first impression is the best impression. So he decided that, in fact, he would landscape the entire path, from the airport to his office. Today Singapore is perhaps one of the richest countries in the world, and it is described as the Garden City. It is the most beautiful and perhaps most landscape, and it has attracted all kinds of investors. The beauty with landscaping is that it does not require any formal education. Anybody who has a desire to work can do it, and it transforms the appearance of the society overnight.

And I will tell you that the transformation that is taking place in Pickstock is so great, Mr. Speaker. It does not only have to do with the appearance, physical appearance of the place, but the appearance and the attitude of the ladies who are involved in the program. Only yesterday, when I was with them, they were telling me how excited they were for they themselves to go and find plants to collect the plants and to bring them in the division and plant them. So that they have pride in themselves. It gives them independence, and it transform the society, the physical appearance of the division as well as the attitude of the ladies who are involved in it.

So I want to see this Petrocaribe program continued. That was really the design and intent of Hugo Chavez when he, in fact, made it possible, and this program exists in all the regions in the Caribbean as well as in Latin America. The intention was to help the countries to develop to foster the integration and to create a culture of development and to get away from poverty. In Belize, there is

no doubt that we are still a very poor country. We are still a highly indebted country. The Petrocaribe program is simply helping us to get out of that culture of poverty, get out of that culture of despair and helping us to enhance the physical appearance of our country and also to provide for the well-being of our citizens. And the more monies that we can spend with respect to the social programs the better we'll be.

Yesterday, Mr. Speaker, in relation to the same matter, I attended a conference which is being spearheaded by the first ladies of the region, and the topic of that conference was, it was the adolescent pregnancy in the region. And the question is, how do you deal with adolescent pregnancy? It is a scourge that is, in fact, affecting the entire region. And the conclusion really is that adolescent pregnancy is a scourge because we, as a region, are not spending enough money on our adolescent young ladies. When we get them pregnant, when they get pregnant, they are normally ostracized both by the family, as well as by the school, as well as by the church because it is considered to be sinful. And so no monies are put into their care and attention or very little. But these are the people who become the mothers of our children, the same children who when they get 12, 13, 14 and 15 create havoc in the society and commit the murders and the other despicable acts that we are now suffering from. So that the logical conclusion has to be that we have to spend more money on these people in particular.

Indeed, and, in fact, our human population is just about the most important asset we have. They are described in some quarters as human capital. In other quarters they are described as human infrastructure. But we can't spend too much money on our people, and, because of our historical slavery and colonial experience, we have generally been neglected. We have come out of a culture and a history where we, as a people, were neglected. There was no money that was actually put into us. So that it is imperative and it is important that we find the resources to put into our people and as I heard the Minister from Collet comment on the criticism that has been heaped upon him, I am minded of how really backward we are when we are going to criticize a Minister for trying to enhance the status of his people and to try to give them some kind of enlightenment and some kind of pleasure and some kind of different experience.

At this time, all over the world, especially the developed world, you see children and adults in droves going to different countries to experience the culture, the system, to socialize and fraternize with people who are, in fact, their counterparts in the different countries because that is the way you develop. That is the way you learn. That is the way you interact. We are not able to do that. How good it would be if, in fact, we were in a position to send our kids to Paris, or send them to Venice, or send them to Africa, or send them to Brazil, or send them to Uruguay on an exchange visit. We can't do that because we don't have the resources; but that is done normally in the middle class countries. And it is expected that we'll do that because that is how we learn and develop. But here, even to take members of your constituency out of Pickstock or out of Collet, where they have never gone further from the bridge or further than the airport and take them to Corozal and give them a day out at the beach, that is something that we are going to criticize. It's really primitive and it is really backward. That is the kind of thing that Hugo Chavez was seeking to change when, in fact, he devised upon this Petrocaribe program.

And I think that we need to give no apology for transforming the country the way we are utilizing. (Applause) My only regret, as I am saying, is that I am not able to employ much more ladies in my constituency, and I make that be privately and publicly to the Prime Minister and to the nation because it is the ladies in our society, historically who care for the family. If you have ladies who are independent, financially independent, who can manage their own affairs, I guarantee you we would have much less of this delinquency that we now experience. When they get their monies, generally speaking, they don't take it to the bar room. They become the best economists and try to see how they could make it last to feed the five, six, seven, and eight children which they have, and they do a fantastic job about it. (Applause) So that it is my own view that, if we have to prioritize, priority must first go to the ladies, and that is how I operate in my constituency. I say that publicly and privately. I tell the young men who when they come to me I say, "Look, my first preference is to assist the ladies", and then what is left go to the men because the ladies are going to keep the children safe and protected, and, when children are safe and protected, all of us are safe and protected. It is when they are not safe and protected that we have problems.

So it is my hope and trust that now we are doing physical infrastructure in large measure, and that is absolutely necessary. Physical infrastructure is going to enhance the creation of wealth unquestionably; but you can't create wealth with physical infrastructure alone. You have to create wealth by the people who utilize the physical infrastructure. So that every initiative to enhance the human capital, the tablets for the schools, the free education, the trips abroad, whatever it is, employment for people, all those initiatives have to be encouraged, and I am certainly committed to giving the Prime Minister and the Government a hundred percent support for all those initiatives. (Applause)

In closing then, Mr. Speaker, I'd simply like to reiterate that the Petrocaribe program is progress in progress. We are making tremendous strides, tremendous progress. Only this morning I spoke to one of my nephews who said to me, he says, "Uncle Sedi, Belize is beginning to look like Chetumal." How can anybody oppose the progress that is being made? And so we are not going to stop the progress. I agree with the Prime Minister a hundred percent when he says, "Nothing is going to stop the progress."

Going to court is a right of any body, any person, any organization, and I will tell you that, when the New Deal was being introduced, there were so many court challenges to the legislation made that President Roosevelt thought that he would want to change the nine Supreme Court Justices that sat on the court. As a matter of fact, he sought permission to be able to increase the amount of judges to 12 so that he could get judges on the court who are more sympathetic to his position. He was not able to do that. But what he was able to do was to win four terms in office because the people were so happy with what he did under the New Deal program. There is no doubt that our administration will win three terms in office because our people are so happy. (Applause)

But, Mr. Speaker, I will end with a question, is it conceivable that our Government could be, in fact, voted out of office if you had a hundred percent employment in Belize between now and when we go to election? I have no doubt that with even greater employment there is going to be more success, and we'll not only have a three-peat, as people are saying, but certainly a fourth term. I

thank you, Mr. Speaker. (Applause)

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): That's it, Mr. Speaker. If we could just proceed, no wrap up.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is that the Bill for an Act to amend the Petrocaribe Loans Act (No. 4 of 2015); to clarify certain provisions of the Act; and to provide for matter connected therewith or incidental thereto, be read a second time.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Bill read a second time.

2. Cruise Ship Passenger Tax Bill, 2015.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, I move the second reading of a Bill for an Act to levy, charge and collect a tax on each manifested cruise ship passenger on a cruise ship entering and leaving Belize and tendering its passengers to the Fort Street Tourism Village; to validate the imposition, collection and distribution of a tax on each manifested cruise ship passenger on a cruise ship entering or leaving Belize and tendering its passengers to the Fort Street Tourism Village; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is that the Bill for an Act to levy, charge and collect a tax on each manifested cruise ship passenger on a cruise ship entering and leaving Belize and tendering its passengers to the Fort Street Tourism Village; to validate the imposition, collection and distribution of a tax on each manifested cruise ship passenger on a cruise ship entering or leaving Belize and tendering its passengers to the Fort Street Tourism Village; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, be read a second time.

All those in favor, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Bill read a second time.

3. Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre Bill, 2015.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, I move the second reading of a Bill for an Act to give effect to the Agreement Establishing the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, the objectives of which are, to protect the climate system of territories that are members of the Centre for the benefit of present and future generations of their people, to enhance regional institutional capabilities for the coordination of national responses to the negative effects of climate change, to provide comprehensive policy and technical support in the area of climate change and related issues and spearheading regional initiatives in those areas, to perform the role of executing agency for regional environmental projects relating to

climate change; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is that the Bill for an Bill for an Act to give effect to the Agreement Establishing the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, the objectives of which are, to protect the climate system of territories that are members of the Centre for the benefit of present and future generations of their people, to enhance regional institutional capabilities for the coordination of national responses to the negative effects of climate change, to provide comprehensive policy and technical support in the area of climate change and related issues and spearheading regional initiatives in those areas, to perform the role of executing agency for regional environmental projects relating to climate change; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, be read a second time.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Bill read a second time.

IV COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE HOUSE ON BILLS

MR. SPEAKER: Honorable Members, the House will now resolve into a Committee of the whole House to consider the Bills that were read a second time.

I would like to ask the public in the galleries to kindly leave during this portion of the Sitting.

Mr. Speaker left the chair.

[In the Committee]

The Deputy Speaker in the Chair.

1. Petrocaribe Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2015.

Clauses 1 to 3 agreed to.

Bill to be reported back to the House without amendment.

2. Cruise Ship Passenger Tax and Validation Bill, 2015.

Long title agreed to with the following amendments:

Insert before the words “imposition, collection” the word “purported”

Clause 1 agreed to with the following amendments:

In the short title, delete the words “and Validation”

Clause 2 agreed to with the following amendments:

Insert the following definitions in the appropriate alphabetical order -

“cruise ship” means a passenger ship employed in the carriage of passengers primarily on international voyages;

“Fort Street Tourism Village” means the land designated by the Government as the official port of entry of cruise ship passengers to Belize District, under and by virtue of a contract with the Government of Belize and the Belize Tourism Board;

“Fort Street Tourism Village Limited” means the company duly formed and established under the laws of Belize that owns and operates the Fort Street Tourism Village;

“manifested taxable cruise ship passenger” means a cruise ship passenger whose name appears or would be entitled to appear on the passenger manifest for the voyage on which the passenger is carried, and who is not excluded from the payment of cruise ship passenger tax under section 4(5);

“passenger” means any person carried on a ship other than -

- (a) the master, an apprentice, a member of the crew or a person employed or engaged in any capacity on board the ship on the business of the ship;
- (b) a child under one year of age; or
- (c) a person carried on the ship in pursuance of the obligation laid upon the master to carry shipwrecked, distressed or other persons, or by reason of any circumstances which neither the master nor the owner nor the charterer (if any) could have prevented or forestalled;

“passenger ship” means a ship carrying or capable of carrying more than twelve passengers;

“ship” includes every description of vessel used in navigation.

In Clause 2 in the Definition of “Resident Passenger” delete the word “Belizean” and substitute the words “citizen of Belize”.

Clause 3 agreed to.

Clause 4 agreed to with the following amendments:

In Clause 4(1), delete the words “cruise ship passenger tax” and substitute the words “tax to be known as the “cruise ship passenger tax” is hereby imposed, which”

Clause 5 agreed to with the following amendments:

Insert immediately after the words “Fort Street Tourism Village” the word “Limited”

Clause 6 agreed to with the following amendments:

Amend this Clause to read as follows:

“ 6. Without prejudice to the generality of the foregoing provisions or any other law to the contrary, the purported imposition, and collection, in good faith and in the absence of statutory provision therefore, of a cruise ship passenger tax during the period commencing on the 20th day of December, 2000 and immediately preceding the commencement of this Act, and the distribution of the purported tax collected between the Fort Street Tourism Village or its predecessor and the Government of Belize or its nominee, are hereby validated and all such taxes levied or collected or purporting to have been levied or collected and distributed during that period are hereby declared to have been validly , properly and lawfully levied or collected and distributed as if done lawfully and in accordance with this Act.”

Clause 7 agreed to with the following amendments:

Delete the words “take effect retrospectively” and substitute the words “have taken effect”.

Bill to be reported back to the House with amendments.

3. Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre Bill, 2015.

Clauses 1 to 9 agreed to.

First and Second Schedules agreed to.

Bill to be reported back to the House without amendment.

MR. SPEAKER in the Chair.

V BILLS FOR THIRD READING

1. General Revenue Supplementary Appropriation (No.2) (2014/2015) Bill, 2015.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, I move the third reading of a Bill for an Act to appropriate further sums of money for the use of the Public Service of Belize for the financial year ending on the thirty-first day of March, two thousand and fifteen.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is that the Bill for an Act to appropriate further sums of money for the use of the Public Service of Belize for the financial year ending on the thirty-first day of March, two thousand and fifteen, be read a third time.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Bill read a third time.

2. **General Revenue Supplementary Appropriation (2015/2016) Bill, 2015.**

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, I move the third reading of a Bill for an Act to appropriate further sums of money for the use of the Public Service of Belize for the financial year ending on the thirty-first day of March, two thousand and sixteen.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is that the Bill for an Act to appropriate further sums of money for the use of the Public Service of Belize for the financial year ending on the thirty-first day of March, two thousand and sixteen, be read a third time.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Bill read a third time.

3. **Petrocaribe Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2015.**

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, I rise to report that the Committee of the whole has considered the Petrocaribe Loans (Amendment) Bill, 2015, and passed it without amendment.

I now move the third reading of that Bill.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is that the Bill for an Act to amend the Petrocaribe Loans Act (No.4 of 2015); to clarify certain provisions of the Act; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, be read a third time.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Bill read a third time.

4. **Cruise Ship Passenger Tax Bill, 2015.**

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, I rise to report that the Committee of the whole has considered the Cruise Ship Passenger Tax Bill, 2015, and passed it with amendments.

I now move the third reading of that Bill.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is that the Bill for an Act to levy, charge and collect a tax on each manifested cruise ship passenger on a cruise ship entering and leaving Belize and tendering its passengers to the Fort Street Tourism Village; to validate the purported imposition, collection and distribution of a tax on each manifested cruise ship passenger on a cruise ship entering and leaving Belize and tendering its passengers to the Fort Street Tourism Village; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, be read a third time.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Bill read a third time.

5. Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre Bill, 2015.

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, I rise to report that the Committee of the whole has considered the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre Bill, 2015, and passed it without amendment.

I now move the third reading of that Bill.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is that the Bill for an Act to give effect to the Agreement Establishing the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, the objectives of which are, to protect the climate system of territories that are members of the Centre for the benefit of present and future generations of their people, to enhance regional institutional capabilities for the coordination of national responses to the negative effects of climate change, to provide comprehensive policy and technical support in the area of climate change and related issues and spearheading regional initiatives in those areas, to perform the role of executing agency for regional environmental projects relating to climate change; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, be read a third time.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

Bill read a third time.

ADJOURNMENT

HON. D. BARROW (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economic Development): Mr. Speaker, I move that the House do now adjourn.

MR. SPEAKER: Honourable Members, the question is that the House do now adjourn.

All those in favour, kindly say aye; those against, kindly say no. I think the ayes have it.

The House now stands adjourn.

The House adjourned at 2:15 P.M. to a date to be fixed by the Speaker.

Speaker.

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