



THRONE SPEECH

By

HER EXCELLENCY DAME CALLIOPA PEARLETTE LOUISY

GCSL, GCMG, D.ST.J., PH.D, LL.D (HON)

GOVERNOR GENERAL OF SAINT LUCIA

on the Occasion of the Formal Opening of the Second Session of the

EIGHTH PARLIAMENT OF SAINT LUCIA

Tuesday, 20 April 2002

THE SPIRIT OF THE TIMES

Mr. President and Members of the Senate, Mr. Speaker and Members of the House of Assembly,

It would not be an overstatement to suggest that the Opening of the Second Session of the Eighth Parliament, finds our nation in the throes of arguably a most difficult period. Indeed, our society and economy have been rocked by a succession of earth shaking events, to which we must now add the war in Afghanistan and the escalating of hostilities in the Middle East. These events threaten a most unwelcome oil price increase. Should this latter scenario take root we could see an inflationary spiral which the world economy hardly needs at this time.

These developments have severely tested the resilience of the mightiest economies such as the United States of America, Japan, the United Kingdom, Singapore and Taiwan. Nearly every international news item these days, announces either a rash of bankruptcies or painful job losses, or steep declines in share values of some of the most prosperous companies in the world. This global downturn was surely, unusual. Over 10,452,000 jobs were lost, worldwide. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, it has been said that the "synchronization of business cycles made this one of the worst global downturns in the postwar era".

Lacking the insulation enjoyed by larger countries, our society has suffered the full brunt of these recessionary forces. Nevertheless, we have survived, and we will continue to survive.

Planning for development in our small, open economies is at the best of times, an onerous exercise. In this climate of anxiety and acute uncertainty, planning becomes even more difficult and sometimes, frustrating.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, not only does this experience reinforce the fragility, or if you prefer, the vulnerability of small island states like ours, but it has also highlighted the virtual powerlessness of Governments to predict and react adequately to such "externalities". During this stressful period, My Government has attempted to protect jobs, contain inflation, and control expenditure whilst ensuring continued access by the poor and needy to basic social services. This strategy has met with some success. But the fact that Government has had to drastically scale back its public sector investment programme, will present additional difficulties to our already battered local economy.

While My Government is relieved to learn of the revised projections of the World Bank and the IMF for an early return to positive growth in the global economy, My Government wishes to caution all Saint Lucians that some particularly difficult times still lie ahead. These will demand a continuation of the belt-tightening measures which were instituted nine months ago. However, My Government will continue to seek out creative ways of energising the economy. In particular, My Government will continue to improve the climate for private investment and will actively explore opportunities to establish secure public-private partnerships.

NATIONAL ECONOMIC COUNCIL

In our quest for more meaningful development, we must rely increasingly on our own internal relationships. Accordingly, we try to redefine and improve them, and in some cases we reinvent them altogether in the cause of national development. In so doing however, we do not start with a blank canvas or an empty page. We find a work in progress, with its elements already in motion, with long established perspectives, and relationships forming and reforming. Such is the nature of an evolving economy in a global system of radical change.

Though we might desire radical change, we cannot discard our systems blindly. Instead, we acknowledge and build upon what already exists, embracing and reinforcing these, through greater interaction, cooperation and consensus. For these reasons, my Government has been engaged over the past three years, in a process of strengthening its functional relationships with social partners. The most extensive work has been done with the private sector, where institutional strengthening and capacity building have taken place with support funding from Government.

The next phase of this process is now set to begin, and will be heralded by the commissioning of the National Economic Council of Social Partners. This Council resembles the tripartite structure normally used to bring Government, Labour and Private Sectors together. However, the particular model which My Government has adapted is designed to be more representative of civil society while preserving an essential economic focus. Accordingly, the terms of reference for the National Economic Council have been drafted and approved by Cabinet to include representatives of the major Social Partners as well as persons with broad national experience and sectoral expertise.

This Council will take a national approach to economic and social issues which influence the economic transformation that St. Lucia now requires in the light of our

internal and external circumstances. The principal objective is to enhance our ability to sustain development, reduce poverty, and improve productivity and international competitiveness. The Council is mandated to co-opt additional expertise as required, undertake research and analysis, and recommend policies and initiatives that will achieve these objectives. The Council is also expected to have its own funding which it may deploy on its own or in conjunction with other entities working in the national interest. The Council will have an independent and capable Chairman in the person of Mr. Richard Peterkin, former President of the St. Lucia Chamber of Commerce and Partner in the Accounting Firm of Price Waterhouse Coopers. The National Economic Council will be officially commissioned on June 20, 2002.

Mr. Speaker, My Government recognizes that while we must try to insulate our economy from major international shocks, unilateral action by Government is an exercise in diminishing returns. No Government can spend its way out of structural problems facing the entire economy. A new and effective interaction must take place between major players if we are to bring all our resources to bear upon the problems that we face. There is within our societies much of which we should be proud. Our people are capable. They have shown themselves to be so. We have within us, both the will and the power to transform our society into a better place to live and conduct our affairs. We must now do so with the conviction and dedication that this task demands and deserves.

QUIET RESOLVE AND RESILIENCE

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, as tumultuous and as uncertain as the future may be, My Government's confidence in the ability of our people to respond to the changing times, has not diminished. Rather, My Government's confidence has been bolstered by the quiet resolve displayed by our people from virtually all walks of life. Our farmers, hotel workers, manufacturers, taxi drivers, teachers, civil servants and artists continue to demonstrate a remarkable fortitude which has earned the admiration and plaudits of representatives of many foreign governments and international organisations.

RENEWED SENSE OF COMMUNITY AND CARING

A particularly encouraging feature of the past year has been the renewed sense of community and caring. This can be seen in the growing army of philanthropists - those who awake at the crack of dawn to prepare meals for the poor; those who like the creators of the Janice Francis Memorial Foundation are raising funds to assist the

poor and needy to obtain medical treatment; and those who manage the growing number of homes for our elderly.

My Government is encouraged by the decision of the National Insurance Corporation to support these efforts. During the course of this session of Parliament, My Government will introduce legislation into this Honourable House to establish a National Community Development Foundation which will be anchored by contributions from the National Insurance Corporation and the private sector. This initiative will strengthen the work of the Poverty Reduction Fund and allow it greater versatility in managing its resources.

Misyé Pwézidan , Misyé Speaker, An koumansman dézyenm sèsyon wityenm Paleman sala, Gouvèdman ka envité tout moun péyi-a pou wéfléchi sèwésman asou tout sa ki ka fèt oliwon latè-a; asou tout sé chanjman-an ki ka pwan kou a, pou konpwann ki manyè tout sé aksyon sala ka afèkté Sent Lisi, epi pou decide èk dako asou se demach-la nou ni pou pwan an pou genyen about se difikilte sala. Se pa jodi ni ye nou tann pale di WTO ek globalisation, epi sitou manye se awanjman sala ka afèkté manye tout peyi kay ni pou fe biznis api yonnalot an sé lanné-a ki ka vini an. Nou ja wè manye sé pwensip sala ja afèkté lendoustwi fig peyi-a. An laplas entènasyonal-la, pa ni pwatik anko. Tout moun ka chaché valè pou lajan yo a yo ka dépansé a. Si nou pa sa founi kalité podwi-a ében sèvis-la yo vle a, yo kay tounen ayè. Sé fo nou konpwann epi apwesye wealite nèf sala, epi chanjé manyè nou ka fè biznis, swé an lendoustwi fig nou, ében lendoustwi touris pêyi-a.

Gouvedman pa toujou adan posisyon pou kontwole sa ki ka fet an dewo peyi yo, sitou si yo ka mennage lekonomi an piti peyi. Tout se peyi Kawaib-la pa eksanmp we ki manye twistès-la ki pwan kou an New York-la li yonz septanm lanne pase-a afekte lendoustwi touris yo a. Dènyèman nou tann palé di loganizasyon-an yo ka kwiyé OECD-a, êpi disisyon-an yo pwan an ki pé destabilizê lendoustwi sevis finansye nef se piti peyi Kawaib-la. Se konmsi, la toujou ni an jab pou anpeche lopesesyon nou an pase; toujou an anpechman tout kote se ti peyi nou an tounen. Apa di sa, nou p ni toutswit an hosman an pwi petrol a cos di konfli-a ki ka pwan kou ant Israel épi péyi Palestine-lan. Misyé Pwezidan, Misyé Speaker, i sanm pli an pli sé pli.

Me pèp peyi-a ja moutwé ki yo ni lafos-la ek kouway-la pou genyen about se kalite difikilte sala. Nou ja éwisi a plisyè wepwis an tan ki pase. Se fo nou kontine. Epi la volonte di pep epi la benediksyon di Dye, pa ni anyen ki enposib.

Gouvedman mwen ka aplodi lefo-a an pil moun ja koumanse fè a pou sovè péyi-a. Plantè fig, moun ki ka twavay an hotel, chofè taxi, titja, moun ki ka twavay an sèvis piblik péyi-a, moun biznis - tout moun ja koumansé mété tèt yo ansanm an lantéwé péyi-a. Nou ni anchay twavay pou fè toujou pou wivé koté nou vlé wivé a, mé layout sé tjè. Pou asiwé patisipasyon otan moun ki posib pou twansfomé lékonomi péyi-a, Gouvèdman kay mété an plas an Konsit Ekonomik Nasyonal pou fè wékonmandasyon asou sé démach-la ki nésésè a. Konsit-la ka konté asou sipo tout jan péyi-a.

PROTECTING THE NATION'S YOUNG AND ELDERLY

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, My Government has always regarded the youth of our fledgling nation as the trustees of its posterity. My Government is aware that many of the concerns and issues confronting our youth are a reflection of the problems facing the wider society. These concerns carry serious implications for the under-realisation of the potential of our youth. Young people are particularly vulnerable to the evils of crime, drugs, sexually transmitted diseases and the like, all of which can contribute to a sense of powerlessness and alienation from the shared norms and values of our society.

My Government remains firmly convinced that the best response to these problems is to continually listen to our young people; to invest in their future, to empower them to rise to their true potential and to encourage their peers to do the same. This philosophy is manifested in the unprecedented investments made by My Government in the National Skills Training Centre and in sporting facilities, such as the Philip Marcellin Pavilion in Vieux-Fort, the National Cricket Ground and the National Stadium. The performances of our young athletes such as our Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year - Darren Sammy and Lavern Spencer respectively, at the various national, regional and international tournaments, suggest that these investments have already begun to rekindle interest in sports. My Government is confident that this interest will increase following the commissioning of these facilities.

My Government is also deeply encouraged by the explosion of youth groups across our island, who have taken up the challenge of helping to build a better society. My Government warmly applauds those youth groups involved in promoting healthy lifestyles, environmental protection, and HIV/AIDS prevention and control. But what is especially pleasing to my Government, Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, is that increasingly, our young people are offering themselves as role models to their peers. These are among the highly encouraging trends that My Government will continue to applaud, encourage and support.

ZERO TOLERANCE FOR DRUGS

In this regard, and in tribute to their efforts, we need to galvanize our entire society in the fight against drugs and crime. We must remember that we are indeed our brothers' keeper and the society we build - or fail to build - will be the legacy we all inherit. Our society therefore must exhibit and maintain zero tolerance for drugs and crime. We cannot and must not compromise on the use of drugs. When these evils spill over into the mainstream of our lives they become more than law enforcement issues, they become concerns of civil society affecting education, employment, health, security, community development and business. We must therefore all be part of the solution. The consumption of drugs is not a problem solely for the police. It is a problem for every youth, every parent, every friend and every victim. Every day someone loses a loved one to the scourge of drugs. So many march to their demise. We must, collectively, say "no" to this evil that stalks our land.

NATIONAL POLICY ON ELDERLY

My Government is also conscious of the peculiar challenges facing the elderly in our society and has mandated the Ministries of Social Transformation and Health and Human Services to embark on the design of a comprehensive National Policy for the Elderly. It is anticipated that this policy will, amongst other things, emphasise ways of fulfilling the health and recreational needs of the elderly and of using their vast experience and acute cultural awareness to inspire and strengthen the protection of the nation's heritage.

Misyè Pwezidan, Misyè Speaker I ni de seksyon popilasyon peyi-a ki ni bizwen atansyon spesyal: se jennes-la epi se vye moun-lan. Si nou aksepte ki lavenni nou ek lavenni peyi-a ka depan asou jennes peyi-a, nou kay apwesye wespansabilite-a nou chak ni an pou asiwe ki nou fe tout sa pe pou byen elive ich nou, pou bay yo bon edik, pou poteje yo kont se maladi sosyal-la ki ka tjwe lavi se jenn moun-lan se jou sala - kwim, dwog, maladi sekswel kon SIDA (HIV/AIDS) -; nou kay apwesye wespansabilite-a nou ni an pou enkouwaje yo fe di byen bay fanmi yo, bay konminote yo epi bay peyi yo. La ni an moso pawol ki di ki se wespansabilite konminote-a pou elive an timanmay: pa selman wespansabilite manman ek papa. Konsa Gouvedman ka plede tout moun pou lite kont tout se kwim-lan epi se move pwinsip-la ki ka gate lavi se jennes nou-an. Si nou tounen do nou asou se jenn moun peyi-a jodi-a, se kla nou menm nou ka sonnen. Paski sa nou simen, se sa nou kay wekolte.

Se vye moun-lan pami nou an mewite pase denye jou yo- an an wipo epi adan yon pli meye kondisyon pase yo ye a atjwelman. Yo ja twavay ban nou, bay peyi=a. Se asou laswe yo peyi-a bati. Gouvedman ka apwesye kontwibusyon se moun sala - manman, papa, tonton, tantant nou tout - epi se pou wezon sala, i ja bay Ministe Twansfomasyon Sosyal epi Ministe Sante ek Sevis Familial wesponsabilite-a pou pwan demach pou mete an plas an politik nasyonal pou wegle zafe se vye moun peyi-a.

RENEWING OUR FAITH IN REGION AND COMMUNITY

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the impact of many of the international events that I have described earlier, have been magnified by the structural implications of our small size. My Government has always been and will remain resolutely committed to protecting the rich patrimony that is so intricately woven into our sovereignty and our independence. However, the constraints of size have deepened the realisation that the task of protecting our patrimony and independence may be greatly advanced within a foreign policy framework that emphasises greater "inter-independence" between Saint Lucia and its counterparts within the OECS and the wider CARICOM region.

Mindful that trade and economic development policies are rapidly being circumscribed by a rules-based multi-lateral trading system governed by the WTO, My Government will continue to support the work of the Regional Negotiating Machinery (RNM) as a mechanism for developing unified CARICOM positions with regional and international bodies and in relation to third countries. Further, My Government will, in next few weeks, re-activate the Council on External Trade as a means of keeping Social Partners informed of changes within the multilateral trading system and to plan responses to these changes.

NEW CO-OPERATION ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Speaker, as the economic environment evolves around us, it brings with it new challenges as well as new opportunities. Sometimes those opportunities are not just here at home but in neighbouring economies as well. Increasingly, the role of Government as development partner is to help shape that environment in which such opportunities can manifest themselves. The potential for such opportunity has now been significantly enhanced by a new cooperation environment created between ourselves and the French Departments of Martinique and Guadeloupe. The people of

Martinique and Guadeloupe are part of our Caribbean family. Geography, history, colonization, culture, trade and commerce all bring us together in a shared destiny.

In a move consistent with the removal of visa requirements for St. Lucian nationals, the Government of France has now accorded exceptional powers to local authorities in those islands to enter into economic cooperation initiatives with St. Lucia. These powers are not temporary, but enshrined in a national policy which grants greater autonomy to the French Overseas Departments.

Our dialogue with the French authorities has already begun, and it envisages several initiatives to enhance business opportunities for St. Lucian entrepreneurs, private sector agencies and Government. These include electronic communication, joint studies and ventures, coordinated tourism promotion, initiatives in language and culture, trade procedures, market access and maritime transport. Moreover, the Government of France has also committed financial resources to this policy initiative so as to facilitate its actualisation. Martinique in particular, looks to St. Lucia to take a lead role in developing this new relationship and My Government would therefore wish to engage the Private Sector in defining a national approach to this new trade and cooperation opportunity.

Monsieur le President, Monsieur le Speaker, Le nouvel environneman economique mondial presente des defis aussi bien que des opportunités. Parfois ces opportunités se presentent non seulement dans l'economie domestique mais dans celle des pays voisins. A cet egard, un nouvel environnement de cooperation a ete cree recemment entre Sainte Lucie et les departements francais d'outre-mer de la Martinique et de la Guadeloupe. Les Martiniquais et les Guadeloupeens font partie de la famille antillaise. La geographie, l'histoire, la colonization, la culture et le commerce nous rasemblent dans un destin commun. Mon Gouvernement salue chaleureusement donc ces initiatives dans le domaine de la communication electronique, la promotion du tourisme, dans la promotion de la langue et de la culture, dans le commerce et le transport maritime, parmi plusieurs d'autres.

Misye Pwezidan, Misye Speaker,

Si nou ka pale kopewasyon, se pou nou pawe pou negosye, pou bay ek pwan. Se pou nou aksepté osi, ki dele nou kay ankontwe desapwentman; moun pa kay tjenn pawol yo dele. Bagay kay ale two lantman, silon nou. Me se fo nou ni konfyans. Se fo nou pesivwe. Gouvedman ka apwesye ki dan lenvironnman global sala, linion se lafos.

Sent Lisi kay patisipe adan nenpot pwogwam wejyonal, depi pwogwam-la an lentewe nou, epi si nou asiwe ki lezot kay agi onnetman ek fwanchman.

INTEGRATION NEEDS CONFIDENCE

Along the road to deepening co-operation and integration there will be disappointments, broken promises and failure. These events will, sometimes, dampen our commitment and enthusiasm towards our Caribbean family. If confidence in integration is to grow then we must minimise failure and disappointment. For that reason, Saint Lucia believes that integration must be constructed block by block, step by step. Cheap expediency must be avoided. Likewise, nostalgia cannot be allowed to become the philosophical foundation of our efforts. Integration must be approached with realism.

My Government, therefore will actively participate in any sub-regional or regional development programme that is well-conceived, that is consistent with its values and interests and that is underpinned by reciprocity, and good faith.

CONTRIBUTING TO HUMAN RIGHTS, CIVIL LIBERTIES AND DEMOCRACY

My Government believes that its national interests will best be promoted by a world that is at peace, that is secure and prosperous and that is committed to the values of human rights, civil liberties and democracy. My Government believes that it can and must play an active role in fostering these positive global attributes. Consequently, My Government will use all available channels to promote international stability through measures aimed at countering the menace of terrorism, drugs, money laundering, violence and crime; ensuring respect by all states for the principles of international law governing relations among states and promoting and preserving sustainable human development.

These are all features of a new External Relations Policy and Strategy which My Government intends to place before this session of Parliament for review.

JUBILEE YEAR OF THE ARTS

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, this Second Session of the Eighth Parliament coincides with the observance of the Golden Jubilee of Her Majesty the Queen's accession to the throne. Throughout the course of this year therefore, Saint Lucia will be joining other Commonwealth Member States and Her Majesty's other Realms and Territories in

paying appropriate tribute to Her as she celebrates this significant milestone. But it is Her Majesty's wish that the Jubilee should not only be about Her, but that the citizens of Her realms use this opportunity to celebrate their own achievements to renew and rekindle community spirit and to stimulate among the people an awareness of their own strengths and confidence in dealing with the challenges ahead.

My Government has always insisted that our ability to deal with future economic shocks, depends in large measure on the level of creativity which we bring to the development effort. In spite of recent commendable progress, in this regard, there is still a critical need for imaginative approaches and honest self-reflection in our efforts at readjusting our development strategies. But this does not negate the central truth that we have the resources and advantages, material, intellectual, spiritual and cultural. These resources however, must be put in the service of a goal that emanates from a societal vision; a vision that liberates us from perceptions of victim hood and powerlessness, to which we have too long succumbed.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, throughout the course of history, it has been recognised that the Arts has been, by far, the strongest liberating force. It is for this reason that My Government has answered Her Majesty's call to celebrate Her Jubilee in a significant national way by declaring this, the "Jubilee Year of the Arts". As beings who seek to understand our mysterious existence, and who seek to experience life as a harmonious entity, the Arts have a special place in our lives. We celebrate or lament or fear or wonder in the languages of bodily gesture, sound, colour and shape. As we struggle to shape the society in which we as a people can flourish, it is the Arts that will keep us in touch with our deepest feelings, so that we can know, by the "images" provided for us in the different art forms, when we are truly shaping and when we are not.

In these increasingly difficult times, the Arts must be understood as being concerned not only with entertainment, but also as embodying thought, reflection analysis, criticism and the holding up of a mirror to society. It is this enduring philosophy of the Arts as a liberator and creator that will guide the programmes organised in celebration of the Jubilee.

Two main events will be undertaken this year, namely: the introduction of a Biennial National Arts Festival and Awards and the observance of the twentieth anniversary of the National Festival of Lights. The first Festival of Lights was a national event and the Jubilee affords us an excellent opportunity to breathe new life into our celebration of the event; to recapture, nurture and sustain that original fervour and real sense of

community; to bring the nation together under the motto "The Land, the People, the Light." The vision which inspired the first celebration twenty years ago is captured in the words of the Chairperson of the first Committee:

"when Saint Lucians light their lights, perhaps they will think, not only of the pleasure this will give them, but they will also think of some way in which they can make a contribution, however small to their country and their fellow Saint Lucians. If we all try to do this, it won't be long before we shall have a country of which we can all be very proud".

PROTECTING OUR DEMOCRACY

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, since its election into office in 1997, My Government has placed unyielding emphasis on the establishment and preservation of an open, democratic and accountable system of governance. This has been manifested in unprecedented levels of public consultation on a range of reforms including reforms of the health sector, the cultural sector, the public sector, local government and education.

My Government is greatly encouraged by the growing interest which is being shown by our people in on-going community consultations on local government reform. My Government is committed to introducing Local Government Elections by June of 2003, to ensure that our communities are empowered to make decisions about their future.

REVISION OF VOTERS LIST

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, the last General Election emphasised the need for Government to urgently embark on a revision of the voters list. For some time now, My Government has felt that the voters list was inflated. Following the 1997 General Elections, Mr. McClair Daniel, then Chief Elections Officer, recommended in his "Report On The General Elections of 23rd May, 1997" that "The Revised List of Voters should be purified immediately as a post-election activity". The last General Election which coincided with the completion of the Population Census confirms a statistical inconsistency between the Voters List and the Preliminary Census Results. According to the Voters List, there were 119,844 eligible voters. The Census Results indicated a population of 156,635 persons. The total estimated population of persons over the age of 18 and thus qualify to register to vote is approximately, 116,850 persons. Clearly, the Voters list is inflated, a conclusion previously drawn by

Professor Reginald Austin of the Commonwealth Secretariat in his 1998 Report, Saint Lucia: Constituency Boundaries Commission Assignment. Since the last enumeration exercise, in 1979, thousands of voters have relocated to new communities. Many have not bothered to change their addresses and continue to vote in the former constituencies of residence.

In order to cleanse the Voters List, it would be necessary to undertake a house-to-house enumeration and to issue new identification cards. An enumeration exercise must be conducted fairly, with unquestioned integrity. It must inspire and draw confidence from Government and the Opposition. My Government will engage the Opposition in early discussion to ensure that the exercise is conducted with the blessing and support of both political parties.

LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, My Government has consistently set for itself an ambitious legislative agenda for each session of this Honourable Parliament. Law is not the sole response to the many challenges we face, but My Government understands that the platform for a stable economy and a positive social order rests upon good, strong and fair law applied in a firm and non-discriminatory manner.

Democracy is enhanced by ensuring that the rule of law remains the cornerstone of governance. My Government will continue to enact laws designed to create a balanced playing field for the conduct of our nation's business. We will seek to ensure that in the framing of important legislation, the voice of the little man and woman gets as much attention as that of persons or institutions of greater influence. It is our view that all persons subject to legislation should play a part in the framing of legislation.

During this session of our parliament, My Government will focus its legislative efforts on the areas of greatest economic importance to our country; that is tourism, agriculture and investment. This is not to say that other areas will be neglected. Rather, it is to emphasize that our limited legislative drafting resources must be applied to strengthening the platform upon which economic growth will take place.

REDESIGN OF TOURISM LEGISLATION

For some time now My Government has been concerned that the existing legislation to regulate the tourism industry is failing to accommodate the needs of the sector. Through the on-going process of dialogue between the government and the industry, a

number of concerns have been articulated. It is My Government's intention to address these in its legislative programme during this session of Parliament.

Specifically, My Government intends to introduce, following the appropriate consultation, a Tourism Hospitality and Development Bill. This measure will seek to, inter alia,:

1. Provide acceptable standards for the industry;
2. Define and regulate the activities of the various sub-sectors;
3. Overhaul the present system of concessions and replace it with a more flexible and responsive system designed to achieve specific investment, employment and environmental objectives.

Careful attention will be paid to the different sub-sectors which make up the tourism sector such as, yachting and other water-based activities, land transportation, small vendors and land and sea tours among others.

My Government also proposes to review the Tourist Industry Development Act. No. 4 of 1981, to ensure that the Tourist Board is more responsive to the needs and perspectives of the stakeholders of the industry.

It is My Government's hope that all tourism stakeholders will work together with the Ministry of Tourism and the Attorney General's Chambers to produce Bills that will respond to the needs of all in a fair and balanced fashion and thus strengthen our competitive capacity in global Tourism.

MODERNIZATION OF LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR AGRICULTURE

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, almost all of our agricultural laws are outdated and in need of modernization. In this era of trade liberalization, where the rules of engagement between traders depend as much on the parameters established by multilateral arrangements like the World Trade Organization (WTO) and its myriad agreements, as they do on buyer-supplier interactions, we are confronted by legislation that was not designed to address the challenges of a modern and globalized environment.

This has become painfully obvious in recent times as the Ministry of Agriculture has sought to resolve issues of pest and disease control in bananas and other commodities;

veterinary public health concerns that impact on our ability to ensure that the health of our population is not compromised by sub-standard meat products; issues regarding water abstraction and riparian rights for those persons who have responded to the call to introduce on-farm irrigation infrastructure; and the scourge of praedial larceny, which is perhaps the single greatest disincentive to agricultural development. Therefore, during the coming year, My Government intends to conduct a comprehensive review and modernization of all agriculture, fisheries and forestry-related legislation.

The Plant Protection Bill

A draft harmonised Plant Protection Bill has been prepared by the CARICOM Secretariat, which seeks to establish standard procedures for addressing plant quarantine and crop protection issues. This Bill will be adapted to St. Lucia, to give My Government greater authority to address threats posed by exotic plant pests and diseases, and more importantly, to provide Saint Lucia with the capacity to prevent debilitating pests such as Black Sigatoka from destroying our economic base. This new Bill will also allow Saint Lucia to fulfill our obligations under the WTO's Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS).

The Animal Health Bill

Similar to its plant counterpart, a model Animal Health Act has been developed by CARICOM and is being reviewed for adaptation. Last year, our islands were in a state of high alert due to the massive outbreak of Foot and Mouth Disease in Europe. We witnessed live on our television screens the impact that this disease had on the UK livestock industry, and we prayed that our farmers would never have to confront such a horror story. My Government is anxious to ensure that we have a legislative and institutional framework in place that will allow us not only to safeguard ourselves from animal diseases such as Swine Fever, Foot and Mouth Disease, and Mad Cow Disease, but also, to ensure that the products being consumed by our people are wholesome, nutritious and do not predispose them to the numerous cancers and other ailments to which increasingly, we are falling victim. The new Animal Health Bill will be designed to fulfill these needs.

Praedial Larceny And Sale of Produce

Our ability to penetrate and maintain a presence in agricultural markets will depend on the consistency of the quality of the produce that we supply to those markets. Our

experience in the banana industry has taught us that much. Therefore, My Government will draft legislation that will promote and facilitate the orderly marketing of a consistently high quality of fresh agricultural produce. This Bill will be underpinned by a series of standards for fresh agricultural produce.

The other element of legislation will address what is perhaps the greatest disincentive to agricultural production - praedial larceny. Very early in the financial year, My Government intends to introduce new legislation to deal with this problem. This legislation will target not only the thieves who steal the produce but also the persons who purchase stolen produce. Additionally, the Bill will introduce identification cards that will clearly indicate those persons who are bona-fide producers and traders, strengthen the capacity to monitor the areas most affected by praedial larceny, and embark on a comprehensive public education campaign to sensitize persons of the economic damage and health risks posed by praedial larceny.

Fisheries Legislation

Last year, the Government sought and obtained the assistance of the FAO to review our fisheries legislation. The Report of this Review Mission has highlighted many areas where the legislation needs to be modernized and made more congruent with present day administrative procedures. Therefore, in the coming financial year, the 1984 Fisheries Act and the 1994 Fisheries Regulations will be revised to allow them to address the myriad issues pertaining to our fisheries sub-sector.

Banana Industry Bill

Mr. Speaker, Mr. President, My Government has decided to answer the calls of Banana Companies and farmers and enact legislation to govern operations in the banana industry. My Government believes that the time is ripe to do so especially as co-operation has replaced acrimony and disagreement.

Legislation will be developed, following full consultation with all stakeholders, to clearly define the parameters within which the various operators in the banana industry should interact. Among other things, this Bill will establish clear criteria for the operations of banana buying companies, marketing companies, pest control operators, input suppliers, service providers, and banana producers. The Bill will also provide for the setting up of a Regulatory Commission, will articulate clear guidelines for the operations of the Banana Industry Trust, and will facilitate the establishment of a Universal Service Fund that will finance essential common services in the industry.

ENHANCING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR INVESTMENT

Fundamental to my Government's approach to the economic revitalization of our country is its commitment to enhancing the environment for investment by local, regional, and international interests. My Government intends to institute a comprehensive programme of activities designed to stimulate the climate for investment in productive sectors.

To do so, the legislative framework within which investment activities, and indeed commerce as a whole must take place has to be streamlined, made more certain, predictable, and more responsive to change.

In this regard, My Government will review the Trade Licenses Act, the Aliens (Licensing) Act, and the Fiscal Incentives Act to create a more facilitative and responsive climate for investment and commerce. Full and frank discussions will be held with legitimate interests in the manufacturing, banking, insurance, technology, and trade and service sectors to ensure that this review reflects the genuine needs of all concerned.

Misye Pwezidan, Misye Speaker, Gouvedman mwen, diwan sesyon palman sala, kay kontine twavay asou se lwa-a ki kay gouvène peyi-a, me sitou asou se lwa-a ki ni pou fe epi twansfòmasyon ekonomik peyi-a: lwa ki kay wegle lendoustwi touris, agrikilti epi envestisman. Pami se lwa-a ki kay gouvène lendoustwi agrikol-la, Gouvedman kay pwezante yonn ki kay pini pa selman se moun-lan ki ni labitid vole podwi jaden lezot, me osi se moun-lan ki ka achte lanmen yo an. Pou wegle zafè sala, lwa-a kay intwodwi kat idantite spesyal pou moun ki ka plante jaden epi pou wivandez. Gouvedman kay pwezante osi an lwa ki kay gouvène lendoustwi fig peyi-a. I kay ni lwa pou konmpani ki ka achte fig; sa ki ka vann fig; sa ki ka vann matiwo fig; sa ki ka plante fig; sa ki ka kontwole dizis fig. En ling di lendoutwi touris, la kay ni lwa pou wegle tout se difewan sekte-a pou asiwe ki sa ki ni lentewe en lendoutwi-a, a nenpot nivo, kay sa fe biznis yo adan an fason ki jis epi wezonab.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, I have merely mentioned the most important pieces of legislation pertaining to the economic sectors identified. I do not wish to impose upon you a lengthy list of the laws and regulations which will indeed be addressed. For example, I have made no mention of the Timesharing Act which will also receive attention during this session of Parliament. Suffice it to say that a holistic approach will be adopted in My Government's efforts to create a sound legislative framework for the development of these sectors.

I hope Mr. President, Mr. Speaker that I have not created the impression that My Government's legislative activities in this new Session of Parliament will ignore all other areas save those economic sectors which I have identified. That is certainly not the case.

STRENGTHENED LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR ILLEGAL DRUGS

My Government intends to pay special attention during this session to the laws and administrative mechanisms, relating to dealings in illegal drugs, money laundering and arms trafficking. The Proceeds of Crime Act and the Money Laundering Act are presently under review in order to make these more workable.

A Financial Intelligence Unit Bill has been considered by Cabinet and forwarded to Parliament for enactment. Further, my Government is considering the enactment of an omnibus bill, provisionally entitled National Intelligence Bill, to deal with all aspects of intelligence (collection and communication, analysis, investigations and operations) pertaining to trade in drugs, money laundering, arms trafficking and the trafficking in humans as well as in relation to cases of financial fraud and computer crimes.

VERTERINARY MEDICINE AND PHARMACIES

My Government shall also be inviting Parliament to consider new legislation for the regulation of the practice of veterinary medicine and the business of pharmacies. The updating of laws to cure deficiencies identified in the course of their implementation will continue.

It will be evident to you Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, that My Government has set itself an exceedingly ambitious legislative agenda for this new Session of Parliament. We fully expect that the Attorney General's Chambers will rise to the challenge as it has done in the past. With the cooperation of relevant government ministries and departments, and with positive collaboration by our Social Partners, My Government is quietly optimistic that we will attain all our legislative objectives.

CONCLUSION

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker, the policies and programmes that I have just outlined, reflect My Government's determination to push ahead with the business of the development of our people and our country, in spite of the difficult times which confront us. We all accept tribulation as an essential part of life. This is the first step in confronting our challenges. As St. John Chrysostom has noted "...if there were no

tribulation, there would be no rest and if there were no winter, there would be no summer". But My Government's determination knows no bounds. My Government is convinced that its will and that of the people of Saint Lucia are more powerful than any adversity which may lie ahead.

Misye Pwezidan, Misye Speaker, sa se se demach-la Gouvedman mwen an ka envite tout moun sipote pou avanse devlopman pep-la ek peyi nou an, an se tan difisil sala. Ewezman, listwa nou se listwa an pep ki konnet soufwans epi twibilasyon, me ki ewisi bati an peyi solid kan menm. Nou apwann ki si la pa te ni lapenn, I pa te kay ni lajwa; epi si i pa te ni kawenm, i pa te kay ni livenaj. Konsa mwen ka pwedye Bon dye pou bay nou lafos ek kouway pou entanme twavay-la ki ni pou fet la. Mwen ka pwedye benediksyon di Dye asou peyi-a, epi lape, pwospewite ek lajwa asou tout Sent Lisyen.

May the Good Lord continue to shine his light upon our nation and give our people happiness, prosperity and peace.

Mr. President, Mr. Speaker...I thank you. And I now take great pleasure in declaring open this Second Session of the Eighth Parliament.