

OFFICIAL HANSARD REPORT
THURSDAY
29 SEPTEMBER 2011
11.04 AM
Second Sitting

The Speaker: I will call this morning on the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, Third Elected Member for George Town, to say prayers.

Town, who is also absent for some very serious reasons.

PRAYERS

Hon. Alden M. McLaughlin, Jr., Leader of the Opposition: Let us pray.

Almighty God, from whom all wisdom and power are derived: We beseech Thee so to direct and prosper the deliberations of the Legislative Assembly now assembled, that all things may be ordered upon the best and surest foundations for the glory of Thy Name and for the safety, honour and welfare of the people of these Islands.

Bless our Sovereign Lady, Queen Elizabeth II; Philip, Duke of Edinburgh; Charles, Prince of Wales; and all the Royal Family. Give grace to all who exercise authority in our Commonwealth, that peace and happiness, truth and justice, religion and piety may be established among us. Especially we pray for the Governor of our Islands, the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, Official Members and Ministers of Cabinet and Members of the Legislative Assembly, that we may be enabled faithfully to perform the responsible duties of our high office.

All this we ask for Thy great Name's sake.

Let us say The Lord's Prayer together: *Our Father, who art in Heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*

The Lord bless us and keep us. The Lord make His face shine upon us and be gracious unto us. The Lord lift up the light of His countenance upon us and give us peace, now and always. Amen.

The Speaker: Proceedings are resumed.
Please be seated.

**READING BY THE HONOURABLE
SPEAKER OF MESSAGES
AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Apologies

The Speaker: I just want to continue with the message on the absence of the Deputy Premier this morning, and the Second Elected Member for Bodden

**PRESENTATION OF PAPERS
AND OF REPORTS**

Report of the Auditor General on the Financial Performance Reporting—Progress Update as at 31 March 2011

The Speaker: First Elected Member for Cayman Brac and Little Cayman [Chairman of the Public Accounts Committee.]

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell, First Elected Member for Cayman Brac and Little Cayman: [*Microphone not turned on*] Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House the Report of the Auditor General on the Financial Performance Reporting—Progress Update as at 31 March 2011.

The Speaker: Excuse me, is your microphone on?
Would you repeat that for me please?

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House the Report of the Auditor General on the Financial Performance Reporting—Progress Update as at 31 March 2011.

The Speaker: So ordered.
The second report?

Report of the Auditor General on the Financial Performance Reporting—Progress Update as at 31 July 2011

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House the second report, Report of the Auditor General on the Financial Performance Reporting—Progress Update as at 31 July 2011.

The Speaker: So ordered.

Does the Member wish to address these reports this morning?

Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell: Yes, Madam Speaker, just a few short comments that will summarise both reports for the honourable House.

Madam Speaker, the March 31, 2011, Report indicated that whilst further progress had been made, concerns that further delays by certain entities could impact their ability to prepare financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2011 within their statutory deadlines. There was also a concern that these delays in clearing the backlog could impact the timelines of the Auditor General's Office for the audits of financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2011, and meeting the reporting deadlines for tabling required by the Public Management and Finance Law (PMFL).

Madam Speaker, when the July 31, 2011, Report was brought it showed that further progress had been made in addressing the backlog. However, this has continued to be slower than hoped. The impact of this is that it would affect the Government's ability to prepare financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2011 within the statutory deadlines.

However, Madam Speaker, the Government decided to take a strategic approach and concentrate their plans and resources between the end of June and 31 August 2011 on preparing financial statements for 2010/11 and addressing the issues of the remaining backlog afterwards.

Madam Speaker, the Auditor General supports this more strategic approach as an important step in restoring financial accountability. I like to say that the Public Accounts Committee agrees with this approach. The office will look to concentrate efforts on the audits of 2010/11 in support of this. They will continue to clear backlogged financial statements in conjunction with work on the 2010/11 financial statements where possible, whilst recognising that Government's resources are focused on the current 2010/11 year.

The Government's plan to prepare all financial statements for 2010/11 in line with the statutory deadlines is challenging. It requires strong leadership and pragmatic decision making about what can be achieved. Issues from the backlog will continue to cast a shadow over the progress and impact of the 2010/11 financial statements. It is also clear that the ongoing impact of auditing the backlog will impact the Auditor General's timelines for the completion of the audit of the financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2011 and meeting the reporting deadlines for tabling required by the Public Management and Finance Law, which has been recognised by Government.

Madam Speaker, the Public Accounts Committee will continue to monitor the progress and the completion of the audits on the backlogged financial statements as well as the financial statements for the 2010/11 year. The Auditor General intends to provide a progress update in December 2011 and a full report in the first quarter of the New Year on the outcomes of

these audits, at which time the Committee will consider what further action it needs to take to ensure that progress is maintained in restoring accountability across the Cayman Islands Government.

Madam Speaker, a lot of work has been done in bringing the accounts up to date. The focus of the Committee has been to work in that support role with the Auditor General's office. I see success here, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the past Chairman, the Member for North Side, for the work that he did in championing and bringing these accounts up. We have some more work ahead of us, but we will continue to monitor it because the Committee believes that one of the most important things that we can do is have the accounts of the country up to date.

I would also like to thank members of the Committee, the Third Elected Member for West Bay, the Fourth Elected Member for George Town, the Third Elected Member for Bodden Town, and the First Elected Member for George Town, for their support and work with the Committee.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you First Elected Member for Cayman Brac [and Little Cayman.]

Public Service Pensions Board Annual Report for the period ending 30 June 2009

The Speaker: Honourable Premier.

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, because the Government has done so well, and we believe so strongly in public accountability, I am pleased to lay another report on the Table of this honourable House, the Public Service Pensions Board Annual Report for the period ending 30 June 2009.

The Speaker: So ordered.

Do you wish to speak to the report?

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Just briefly to say, Madam Speaker, much of what I would have said this morning was said yesterday in the course of a question, so it is already public knowledge. Again, I would just like to thank the Civil Service for getting all of these reports on the Table. As I said, Madam Speaker, this is well over one hundred and twenty-something since we have taken over Government, particularly seeing that there were no reports, no accounts since 2005, or between 2005 and 2009.

Our Government believes in openness and transparency and fairness.

The Speaker: Thank you, Mr. Premier.

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: Please, not across the floor, through me.

Madam Clerk.

Annual Report of Office of the Complaints Commissioner for the 2008/2009 Financial Year

The Speaker: Third Elected Member for West Bay.

Hon. Cline A. Glidden, Jr., Third Elected Member for West Bay: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I beg to lay on the Table of this honourable House, the Annual Report of Office of the Complaints Commissioner for the 2008/09 Financial Year.

The Speaker: So ordered.

Do you wish to speak to the report sir?

Hon. Cline A. Glidden, Jr.: No, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you.

STATEMENTS BY HONOURABLE MEMBERS AND MINISTERS OF THE CABINET

The Speaker: I have no notice of statements by Honourable Members and Ministers of the Cabinet.

OTHER BUSINESS

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Private Member's Motion No. 4/2011-12—Removal of Duty from Medicine and Medical Supplies

The Speaker: Elected Member for North Side.

Mr. D. Ezzard Miller, Elected Member for North Side: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I beg to move Private Member's Motion No. 4/2011-12, Removal of Duty from Medicine and Medical Supplies:

WHEREAS the Customs Law now provides a duty of twelve per cent on medicines and medical supplies;

AND WHEREAS the Government has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with at least one investor that allows a reduced duty on medicines, medical supplies and lifesaving equipment;

AND WHEREAS most Caymanians are feeling the economic pinch and especially senior citizens who are on fixed incomes;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly requests the Government to consider the removal of the duty on medicines and medical supplies effective 1st January 2012.

The Speaker: Is there a seconder for this Motion?
Elected Member for East End.

Mr. V. Arden McLean, Elected Member for East End: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I beg to second the Motion.

The Speaker: The Motion is open for debate. Does the mover wish to speak thereto?

Mr. D. Ezzard Miller: Thank you.

Madam Speaker, many persons in my constituency, and in particular the retired persons who do not have CINICO health insurance, are struggling to pay for medicines and medical supplies on a monthly basis.

While a 12 per cent reduction in price may not seem like much, if you are spending \$200 per month on medicine and medical supplies on a fixed income the savings of \$24 per month can be a substantial savings to some people.

Madam Speaker, I would encourage the Government to support the Motion. Thank you.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? [pause] Does any other Member wish to speak? [pause] Does any other Member . . .
Minister of Health.

Hon. J. Mark P. Scotland, Minister of Health, Environment, Youth, Sports and Culture: Madam Speaker, thank you.

I rise to briefly speak to the Motion tabled by the Elected Member for North Side, and seconded by the Member for East End. I will start by saying that not only has the Government been considering this and many other measures to reduce the cost of healthcare for seniors, and, in fact, all members of the population, but we have been looking at it quite actively and intensively in the last few years to the point where we have appointed the Healthcare Cost Review Committee. The committee has been looking at not only this aspect of it, but many other components of healthcare costs for Civil Servants, the general public, and everyone in general in terms of costs incurred for healthcare.

Already existing are some medical supplies and medicines that have duty free status. Some of them are particularly for the elderly and infants as well. So not all items considered medicine and/or

medical supplies currently attract that duty, Madam Speaker.

When we look at healthcare, what are the components that make that up which would lead to the high cost the Member is speaking about? Look at professional fees when persons have to go to the doctor or to the hospital; hospitalisation, if they actually have to stay there for any extended period; diagnostic procedures that go along with that. The administrative costs, overhead for the facility they go to for their healthcare; medical equipment, medicines, drugs, utility costs, all of those things can lead to the high cost of healthcare.

So, when the Member speaks about the cost per month that someone incurs for medicines or supplies—and I am not sure of the figure, I think he mentioned maybe \$200 that would attract a savings of \$24 per month—that is not completely accurate, Madam Speaker, because the duty that would be payable on that would be the duty on the imported cost to the supplier; not the cost that the patient, or person, is paying at the pharmacy or hospital for the drugs. So the savings of \$24 on \$200 worth of medicine per month would not be exactly accurate either.

While there would be some savings, Madam Speaker, and that is to be acknowledged, the other side of that would be a revenue loss to Government. While some might say that is not to be considered, it certainly has to be put into the whole equation now, particularly in the middle of a budget year and the fact that we just approved some increases in expenditure including the one that the whole House approved last week for increase in the appropriation to the police for crime fighting. We know that is a total of over \$5 million. The headline in the paper today talks about \$11 million in crime fighting, of which over \$5 million was approved by this House just about a week or two ago. So that's increased expenditure that we have to find funds for—part of it in this current budget year, Madam Speaker.

So, any reduction or elimination of duties on medicine would lead to a reduction in revenue. And whether or not a reduction in duties on medicine would lead to such a significant reduction in the healthcare costs for the senior citizens particularly, as referred to in the Motion, is to be seen, Madam Speaker. In fact, we think the reduction would be so little, so minimal, that it would almost be negligible in terms of the overall scheme of things.

Madam Speaker, some of the things we are doing in the review as well, include looking at the overall costs for healthcare, as I said earlier. One of the points raised in the Motion is the MOU which was signed, as he referred to, with the Shetty Group which allows for reduced duty on medicines, medical supplies, and lifesaving equipment. We don't look at that in the same light as being a revenue loss because

that is a project that is not here yet. So we are not starting to see revenue from that project.

The main reason we encourage that project, Madam Speaker, by giving those concessions is to incentivise them to come here to be able to provide those services which the residents will be able to access as well at reduced costs. That, in itself, will be a reduction in healthcare costs, Madam Speaker. Not only access to the procedures that we can't get now, tertiary care procedures which are not available here on Island now, but access to be able to have those procedures done here at a lower cost and be here with family and access that care at a lower cost.

Madam Speaker, many of the senior citizens that the mover refers to in the Motion, currently access healthcare free of cost as government pensioners. And there is also an output which the Ministry of Health purchases from the HSA (Health Services Authority), an output which the previous Minister of Health (the Second Elected Member for Bodden Town) implemented, which allows for elderly persons over 60 who are not insured or underinsured to access healthcare through the HSA. Through that means they are also able to access their medications. That's another way that some of those persons are able to access healthcare.

Madam Speaker, another improvement that was made by this Government in the past couple of years has been the enhancements or amendments to the Health Insurance Law where insurers are less able to exclude persons because of age. As it is now, or prior to the amendments to the Law, insurers were cutting elderly people off by age 55 or 60. At this point, with the amendments to the Health Insurance Law, seniors are now able to continue to access health insurance. Yes, they still have to pay for that health insurance, but at least they are able to access it—those who are able to afford it. Prior to that, insurers were cutting people off at age 55 or 60 just because of age.

So, Madam Speaker, as I was saying, the mover of the Motion seeks to reduce duties on medicine and medical supplies. The Government has been actively looking at this aspect of it for a very long time, along with many other aspects of healthcare costs with the view to reducing healthcare costs overall, not just through reducing or removing duties. As I said, the question is what effect will reducing 10 per cent or 12 per cent of duties have on overall healthcare costs to individuals outside when you consider all other aspects?

So, Madam Speaker, very briefly in closing I just want to say that at this time the Government doesn't see the need to support this Motion as we already have many things afoot in working to reduce healthcare costs in general. Thank you.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Minister.

Does any other Member wish to speak?
Elected Member for East End.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I entered these hallowed halls in 2000. Even prior to entering these hallowed halls as the Representative for the wonderful district of East End, I understood that the meaning of politics was to enhance the lives of people, particularly the vulnerable within the communities. And those categories just happen to be the young and the old.

Madam Speaker, I have heard that song, sung from many platforms. In particular in recent times I have heard it sung from the platform of the sitting Government, that their objective is to try to enhance the lives of people. However, Madam Speaker, I find it quite amazing that this Government, since entering office, has sung that song and turned around and increased cost on the people.

Madam Speaker, I will concede that times were not good for the Government to provide the services when they came into office. There is a global recession and some things have to be done. But the amount of taxes that this Government has placed upon the people of this country, which certainly does not enhance their lives, says something about the objective of this Government, which is contrary to what they said and what they promised the people of this country, which was that they would enhance their lives.

Madam Speaker, I am a prodigy of Warren Conolly. Mr. Warren said to me on many occasions: "If the country has, the people should have; if the country doesn't have, the people will not have." Now, this Government has said that they have turned the economy around—one of the few countries in the world that can brag that. One of the few countries, globally, that can brag that we have turned the economy around. And the people are suffering. And we are getting no relief.

Madam Speaker, something is wrong with that. We are today asking . . . Yes, Madam Speaker. May I say that the Member for North Side and I may be from the rural districts of this country where it is that much harder for those people, particularly the elderly, to survive. And we are asking them for 12 per cent off of medicines for the older folks. Even if they don't want to say the young ones, because they have working parents, or they get free medical, that is fine.

The Minister talked about the many things that the Government is doing to try to reduce healthcare overall. That is all well and good. But there are many who do not fall in that category that he is trying to reduce, such as those who are insured; such as those who are covered under CINICO and the likes. But there are many others that we have to think about too.

Madam Speaker, this is the only country in the world, or, I dare say that it is probably the only country in the world, where seniors are unequal with every-

body else. Our seniors have to pay the same thing everybody else has to pay—the same people who paved the way for us. And we can't assist them?

It is not only the Government, not only the Members here in these hallowed halls who treat our seniors poorly; the businesses in our community do the same thing. Anywhere else in the world seniors get certain discounts when they walk in. When you walk into a business in this country they think the grey hair means you have plenty of money. They should be laying red carpets out for seniors in this country!

Madam Speaker, the irony of this is that there are very few in here who are not bordering on that grey hair.

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: The Leader of the Opposition says I should speak for myself! Wasn't it him the other day that had a full page in the paper about him turning 50?

[Inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Somebody did it for him? Well tell him, "surprise, surprise," senior citizen is he!

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Madam Speaker, I implore this Government to look for some way at the very least to say that senior citizens will get exemptions.

Madam Speaker, I know that is a convoluted process because if you take it off certain categories ensuring that that benefit gets passed on is the problem we have, and we have always had. As a Member of Cabinet I was frustrated with how that process was carried out because people tend to cheat you and do not pass on that benefit.

However, there are not that many pharmacies in this country. I am sure that the pharmacists who dispense the medicine for senior citizens will be honest enough to submit to Government proper records at the end of the month to refund a senior citizen. Madam Speaker, that is the least the Government can give to the people of this country. Show a little compassion. Show a little heart. Show us that we respect and honour those who came before us and who are now in their twilight years, which is when we most need medication.

That is when the young and the middle-aged are invincible, many times, when it comes to their health. It is after you have worked your years away for someone and, in particular, most of our retirees now come from the Civil Service because that was the only means of employment we had for many, many years during the youthful years of our seniors. And they all worked in government at some stage or the other.

Yes, Madam Speaker, many of those are covered. But I am saying that there are many who also worked for government that did not work long enough to get sufficient pension and benefits from government to cover their medical and their CINICO coverage. Their pension does not allow for it.

Madam Speaker, I believe it is fair, and I believe it is reasonable. If we started as a Parliament to extend that sympathy and those benefits to the senior citizens of this country we will be leading the way for businesses to start doing the same thing.

Every now and again I see a business advertise that seniors are special—"A special day for seniors" or something. But it must be a consistent thing that once you . . . A lot of people turn 50 and you don't see any grey hair on them (because they dye their hair and the like), but the fact is that once you can prove you are at a certain age by virtue of identification, then I believe the community will come together, the business community will come together and extend these things as well and will make it that much easier for senior citizens.

Yes, Madam Speaker, the districts of East End and North Side have ageing populations. They do. That is the reason why I supported my colleague in bringing this. The benefits that will go to them will assist them. And certainly, Madam Speaker, we know that the pharmaceutical industry is extremely, extremely expensive.

Madam Speaker, I was just in Miami with my mother. One month of a drug for my mother was over \$1,000. Do you think that's easy? She worked all her life for the government. But that was not covered there. Over \$1,000! She had to take two injections per day for a month. It was not covered in Florida. Do you think that is not expensive? That's extremely expensive.

I know when my sister was in Washington 14 years ago. She too was a civil servant. The medication was not covered, and it was over \$6,000 worth of medication for one month. This was 16 years ago; that's not today. So, Madam Speaker, there are circumstances under which seniors are having difficult times. There are difficult times all around now. My appeal to the Government is that every little bit helps. One/one, full basket!

Madam Speaker, do you think I don't know that the Premier understands this? He has been one of the biggest champions of poor people in this country in this honourable House for the last 28 years. He and the former Leader of the Opposition, the First Elected Member for George Town, have been here longer than all of us. They know; they understand. But we all do. Every little bit helps, particularly when it comes to our seniors.

Madam Speaker, the Pension Law came into place in 1999. The private sector was 1998; the public sector was 1999. Now, Madam Speaker, that is 12, 13

years ago. We know there were no provisions for retirement prior to that. So all those who were in the private sector, because Government had defined benefits, but all those in the private sector . . . if there wasn't a private pension in place, and even those that were in place, in many instances they put a freeze on those at that time and started under the new regime, new requirements.

Now, Madam Speaker, we know that from 1998/99 until now many Caymanians have retired. I have heard the horror stories, Madam Speaker. We have all—15 Members here now, the 15 [Members] prior . . . keep going back. We have all had to assist those people in one way or another, right to the sitting Government. We assist them; we put our hands in our pockets or whatever the case may be. Madam Speaker, it is even worse now that this Government has put taxes on them other than this. Times are hard.

I implore the Minister to reverse his position and assist these people. Prove to this country how sensitive the UDP Government is to their plight. That's all we have to do. Why have \$25 million when our people are suffering? People are suffering.

Madam Speaker, my cousin who used to be here, always championed the cause of the "little man," as he used to call them. Madam Speaker, there are many of us in here who know who the "little men" are. Yesterday we approved a Bill here to give millions of dollars of concessions to the special economic zone, CEC (Cayman Enterprise City). We all voted yes. All of us! Why can't we all vote yes to remove the duties on medicines for seniors?

Are we that heartless? Are we that hard? I think I know differently. We all feel it. All we have to do is think for a bit and every one of us in here, Madam Speaker, has senior parents. Every one of us! Many of us have a lot of siblings so we can all join together and come up with the money, yes. But we know what they are going through, each and every one of us.

Now, we need to be a little compassionate. And that is my plea to the Government. And they can't say that they haven't put taxes on to try and balance the books. They can't say that. They have. They promised that whenever things got better they were going to start backing off on those taxes. The time has come. The Premier went out and he was very braggadocios about the \$25 million surplus.

The time has come. Let's start with the seniors. Let's just start with them. That is the right direction; that is the right thing to do. That is the noble thing to do. That is the charitable thing to do, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I hope the Government changes their mind. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak?

The Premier is on his feet.

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I had a meeting waiting, but I thought I should be here to make some point based on what is being said. I know there will be others behind me—you can believe that—and [there will be] others behind them.

Madam Speaker, much is being said about what the UDP has done. Firstly, Madam Speaker, yes, we had to put on fees. We had to increase fees. If we hadn't increased fees, Madam Speaker, probably Members would have taken a greater cut than 3.2 per cent, and myself 10 per cent and the Leader of the Opposition 10 per cent. Probably civil servants would have had to have taken much more. Probably the United Kingdom would have gotten away with what they wanted to do, which was to cut 20 per cent of staff and cut 20 per cent salaries and other things.

We had to do this. It is not something that we wanted to do. And, yes, we promised that when things get better we would look at cutting it. Now you hear all sorts of things—lower work permit fees now, rebate on taxes, cut costs. Madam Speaker, we want to do that, but we have an agreement. Not because we have . . . he said I went out to brag about the surplus. We do have a surplus. But we don't have complete control of that—the United Kingdom still has control.

For instance, the 3.2 per cent that we are trying to put back, the United Kingdom has said, *Oh, you can put it back; but you must find a replacement for it.* Any revenue that is cut, there has to be a matter put forward to replace it. So, if you can make that suggestion today, let's see. I have no problem, Madam Speaker, in replacing it with something else, if that thing is as workable.

So, I give you that challenge, as the Minister of Finance: Please, please, if you want something cut, you think it's worthwhile—and certainly this is worthwhile to do—but we have to look at the realities of all of this.

Madam Speaker, I can agree with all that has been said, particularly by my good friend from East End, about the elderly. There is no . . . and he is right, and I will take many taps on my own shoulder this morning because I know the battles that I have had, not just with Members in the House, but the public, in increasing benefits for the elderly.

When I came here the old people's benefit was \$25. It is now \$600 per month. And every Government since I took the initiative in 1992 has done some increasing. So we are all together in this. None of us, Madam Speaker—I would dare say none of us here—wants to see anyone hurt in any shape or form. All of us in some way, shape or form, have to deal with the elderly in our communities. We all have elderly parents. Some of us have both parents still, are blessed with that. Others only have one. But we know what it costs. We know what it means just to take care of them. It is not easy.

Madam Speaker, while they say they didn't put up any fees, they certainly didn't take any off of what they are asking us now. And even if they were asking us to do what we did, we left it at the amount . . . and I think, I don't know if 2 per cent went on in some things—

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: No, it didn't go across. I will soon point that out to you. It was not across the board for medical supplies.

Madam Speaker, if the other side had come and said, *Take off the 2 per cent that you put back on*, even that. But no, Madam Speaker, they didn't wipe it out. These old people are not old people today, Madam Speaker; we have had old people in this country for years, including the four years that they were there.

[inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, they want us to prove how sensitive we are. The world knows that. We don't need to prove anything to this House, Madam Speaker. Our record speaks for itself, for anybody who wants to tell the truth. We didn't cut their benefits. Of all the cuts in this country that we had to make so that the UK could give us a budget, we did not cut the benefits for the senior citizens in this country. We did not.

Madam Speaker, I can say that when things do get better, to a point where the UK is not telling me what to do with the Budget, I will have more say. Right now they tell me what to do.

So, Madam Speaker, let us not do things because they know that this is something people will look at from the outside and say, *The Opposition is really right, you know. The Government can do better.* They know the position the country is in, they know that we would not do this unless we had to do it. Which politician is going to put on fees if they don't have to?

Madam Speaker, when we give a concession it is with a hope—because you are not losing anything there . . . you're not getting anything, in fact. When you give a concession it is to make the country work better, get more out of it, or get something out of it. And when we give a concession it is to get other business in. And that business means revenue to pay all the bills, including healthcare, including our salaries. That is why you give concessions. You don't give concessions to people just to say they are going to make the money. We gave concession to a condominium group; I can't remember how much it was. Two million [dollars], I think. But we are going to get \$19 million when it's all done. That's good business sense, Madam Speaker.

The Ministry of Health is moving in the right direction with the work that they are doing. Currently, the customs import duty charge on the import of most medicines and pharmaceutical goods is 12 per cent of their cost, insurance, and freight value. But, Madam Speaker, things like insulin, vaccines and anti-toxin medications are duty free. And that's a lot, particularly for people who have diabetes—which is a growing concern in this country.

Madam Speaker, medical equipment and appliances for the relief of the seriously bodily disabled are also duty free. Included in this category are items such as wheelchairs, walkers, pacemakers, artificial respiration devices, hearing aids, and artificial limbs. The very poor in the country all get their medical free, including overseas—which is mounting and mounting and mounting. And they not only get hospitalisation, but they get millions of dollars of free medical care.

So, let us not stand in this House today, or any other day, to make the world believe that this Government has torn apart all of the benefits for the elderly, Madam Speaker. As I said, I will have to check to see whether that 12 per cent was on there before or whether that got put on. So, that 2 per cent went on to medical pharmaceutical goods not elsewhere specified. That's what the Customs Tariff Law says.

Also duty free are invalid carriages, vehicles to transport handicapped persons not for commercial purposes. They are all duty free. Equipment and appliances for the relief of the seriously bodily disabled (as I said) are duty free. I would like to be able to offer all duty free items in this country.

The one ambition that I had in being a legislator was to try to cut back on all custom duty. That's about \$89 million a year. Where would we replace that, and how would we replace that? That is always my concern.

My concern also in giving duty free items in this country is that there is really no mechanism for Government to check whether that is being passed on. And I am not trying to smear anybody here, but that is a fact. It is a concern that I have always had. And you can go in the record and you can find where I have voted against the removal of duty for several items because there are no mechanisms for government. And I have seen where government has removed duty from items and the cost escalated!

So, Madam Speaker, a good comparison when they talk about what the UDP did, we cut back on the garbage fees of this country (and this was the comparison and the rationale we gave) that we were never collecting, in fact, we waived garbage fees for a tremendous amount of the elderly. That is much more sometimes per month than what people pay. The very sick . . .

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: *[Addressing the inaudible interjection]* No, no, no.

The very sick, of course, pay because they have to pay for many more different kinds of medication and purchase many more kinds of medication at times. But that is not across the board. That is not across the board for every senior citizen in this country.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Never mind once a year. They can't pay it. And we took it out. We took it out. That was the rationale.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: *[Addressing the inaudible interjection]* No, you all didn't support that, because you have to find something to grumble about, as you are doing out there. You can get up after I leave, because I am going to a meeting outside, and you can quarrel.

The Speaker: Yes. The back and forth has begun again, though.

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: They can quarrel, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: You say it to me, right?

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: That's what I am saying. I am saying they can quarrel.

[Laughter]

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: I didn't want to say that you quarrel, Madam Speaker.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Madam Speaker, the Minister brought to Cabinet (some months ago now, I guess) a Cost Review Committee that they have set up. On top of that, Madam Speaker, the committee between the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Community Affairs is working to arrive at a comprehensive approach to healthy ageing for our senior citizens. That is the aim for better access to health care. That is one. Two, to have coordinated activities for seniors; and for the community workers to be more in contact with the senior citizens of this country.

Madam Speaker, I wish that we could accede and agree to what they are asking. But the Minister has been working on this. And we have said that before, and we have to give the committee time to get its

work done. And when that is done, if the Member for North Side, or the Member for East End, or anybody on the Opposition has a better proposal, then we would hear it. If they have a better solution right now that can say, *Look, while we are going to wipe out the revenue* (which the UK will have to agree on), *here is the replacement*. Tell me that and then we will consider that altogether.

We are not passing your Motion because we are already doing it. And I am certainly not going to cast any vote to appease the other side when I know that the Minister is working hard at doing something.

Madam Speaker, I think when they talked about concessions they threw the Dr. Shetty project into it. But what they are not saying is that we have in that agreement organised or agreed that seniors in the country will have a much reduced charge. And I believe that with the technology and expertise that will be available our healthcare bill in the country is going to be reduced. It is going to be reduced because the expertise which we have to travel to the United States and elsewhere for tertiary level care would be available at that hospital, and at reduced rates.

Look at what anybody (not just the elderly) pays for a heart operation. I am still paying for my mother's from the 1990s, her triple bypass surgery. I am still paying for it. That is going to be a tremendous boon to the healthcare bill in this country that the Government now has to face. We have bills now, Madam Speaker, that have been outstanding for years that people can't pay that we are probably going to have to wipe out in the region of, what? Twelve million dollars?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeewa Bush: More than that! People can't pay, but we are going to have to take it off the books. And that is something that we have done in the past.

As Minister of Finance, I said so here the other day and they did not take it up, of course, because it was something that we did which was positive. But constantly I am waiving fees, even in healthcare for people in the country. These are not multimillionaires we are doing this for, you know. These are local, small Caymanians whom we are trying to help; many who are ill.

Madam Speaker, that is why I am trying my best to diversify our economy, because the bills that Government faces are huge, to say the least. And vast amounts of them are not decreasing; they are increasing. And we are trying to diversify so that we can have a revenue base that can take up these things.

The Member for East End is right. All of us here want to ensure that our elderly are given the best possible treatment, because, as I keep saying, it is

they who built this country. It is our ancestors who built it, brought it and made this available for us. I am only too happy to try and prepare and provide something for them. Those who can provide for themselves, let's just praise the Lord for them! And those that have children who are most attentive to their parents. And the Member for East End knows what I am saying, because I see what he does for his family.

Madam Speaker, it is not easy for Government and they know that. It is not like they have been out of Government for 10 or 15 years; they just left Government. They know what [we] are faced with. So there is no reason for them to get up here and try to make the people believe that the United Democratic Party is a Government that is not sensitive to the needs of the elderly.

What they have to accept on the other side is that there is a problem, and that we are managing it. And they can't say—well, they might say, but they can't say with any facts from any factual point—that we are not. And what they must accept is that when there is a problem, if a Minister says he is working at it, he is working at it trying to get to a better position.

[Addressing the First Elected Member for George Town] Don't look at me like that . . . I see the Member, Madam Speaker, my good friend, the former Leader of the Opposition, looking at me. But I remember his words so often standing where I am standing.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeewa Bush: Yes you were.

Madam Speaker, he used to use the words "as we speak." That was his favourite terminology; "as we speak." No matter what I asked, [he'd reply] "as we speak, we are doing it." "We are doing something about that." "As we speak, we are doing it." "You are doing something about that down the road?" "As we speak, we are doing it."

What I am talking about is that when the Minister says he is working on something, give him even half the benefit of the doubt that he is doing something about it.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: As we speak!

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeewa Bush: No, I am not saying "as we speak" because he started that a long time ago. That didn't start this morning.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeewa Bush: *[Addressing the interjection]* Yes. You go there.

Madam Speaker, as I said, we are on all fours with them about costs in the country. And we are doing as much as we are allowed to do right now. And

they might make light of it, but the fact is that the UK is not making light of it. They have their demands, their pressures, and many pressure points they know of and are putting it on and they want it in writing at times.

The Speaker: Thank you, Honourable Premier.

Does any other Member wish to speak?
[pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?
[pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

If not, I will call on the mover of the Motion to conclude the debate.

Member for North Side.

Mr. D. Ezzard Miller: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, I must express my disappointment that the Government has not seen fit to consider reducing the duty on medical supplies, yet their whole argument for not accepting the Motion is that they are currently considering it!

Now, Madam Speaker, I first raised this issue in this honourable House in December 2009 when I filed a series of amendments to the Government's Customs Tariff Bill, which was introduced in December 2009. One of those amendments at that time asked the Government to, at the very least, not increase the duty on medicines and medical supplies as they were proposing to do, but to consider making it duty free at that time.

They refused to do it then because they were going to consider it. This is the last of September 2011, and they are still considering it. Almost two years later.

Madam Speaker, one of the big concerns of the Government in not accepting this Motion was the amount of revenue they are going to lose. Now, Madam Speaker, the information that I have is that the total revenue collected on duty from medicines, medical supplies, is somewhere in the region of about \$3 million a year, which represents .0005 per cent of the projected revenue for this financial year 2011/12.

Madam Speaker, a review of the Customs Tariff Law (2010 Revision) will identify among the multitude of things that are duty free, four things related to medicine and medical supplies that are duty free—87.03, invalid carriages; 29.03, lymph for human vaccine, free; 29.01, insulin, free. If we want to include, as the Premier has just done, vehicles to transport handicapped persons, not for commercial use (87.04), as being medically related, we can do that.

And then [we have] the caveat under [Schedule 2], "Duty free imported goods", which the Premier also mentioned; [item 7] "Equipment and appliances for the relief of the seriously bodily disabled."

But, Madam Speaker, the Government wants a recommendation on how to get this \$3 million, and maybe even more. Here are a few things that are currently duty free, that we can put duty on:

- Gold bullion and kind, free
- Coins and bullion of gold, free
- Pearls, natural, cultural, artificial, black or pink coral, free
- Articles of precious metals or rolled precious metals other than jewellery, free
- Metal mosquito netting, free
- Portable radios, record players and portable tape recorders valued at less than \$100, free
- Agricultural tractors and accessories thereto, free
- Boats for local use up to 18' free
- Binoculars, optical microscopes and telescopes, free
- Spectacles, including frames and mounting contact lenses and other similar items, free
- Cameras (still, cine and video) including spare lenses and attachments, free
- Lights, floods and flash for cameras, free
- Musical instruments, electric and non-electric, free
- Jewellery cases, free
- Antiques, being [articles], one hundred years of age or older, free.

The Speaker: Are you quoting from the Customs [Tariff] Law? Is that where you are quoting from?

Mr. D. Ezzard Miller: Yes, Ma'am. I identified the Customs Tariff Law (2010 Revision).

The Speaker: Okay, thank you. I wasn't quite sure.

Mr. D. Ezzard Miller:

- Animals, live: stud male and breeding stock, free
- Poultry, live, free
- Birds, live (pets), free
- Other domestic pets (not fish), free
- Salt beef, free
- Poultry carcasses and parts of poultry, fresh, chilled or frozen but not cooked or further prepared, free
- Fish, fresh, chilled, frozen, pickled, salted or dried, but not cooked or further prepared or preserved, free

And, Madam Speaker, they are talking about they are concerned about people's health care. But, Madam Speaker, one of the things that Government's taxes should do is drive people's behaviour for a better lifestyle. And while we are going to charge the people the 12 per cent for medicine, we have lard free—one of the worst things that we could use in terms of contributing to cardiovascular disease [if] we are concerned about that.

Even plants, live plants, trees or plant tissue for propagation or cultivation are free. But we can't make medicines free. And Madam Speaker, they may say . . . and I never raised any of the other, or complained that they had reduced any other benefits to seniors, or that people were not getting other considerations in healthcare. All I am trying to do is add this benefit.

Madam Speaker, in this country when it comes to benefits from Social Services, political patronage is rampant. And, Madam Speaker, just within the last six months I have recommended three people from my constituency who I know are deserving, even for short term, of CINICO coverage, and they were turned down. And two of them have chronic illnesses and have difficulties.

Madam Speaker, we talk about the changes we made to the Health Insurance Law. We haven't made the changes that will make the difference yet, because we are still allowing the private health insurance to cherry-pick good people and turn bad people down. And many of the people administering these benefits are subjectively deciding who gets and who does not get.

And, Madam Speaker, I don't believe that the Government's decision not to consider removing the duty from healthcare here today . . . and even if it were done (which I would hope it could be done) the amount of revenue lost is going to be so significant that it cannot be readily replaced by placing even 10 per cent or a 22 per cent duty on those things—and I could have gone on, you know, because even things like wool we allow to come in this country duty free—such, that the British Government is going to object, and that the loss of revenue is going to be so significant that they are going to cause any huge problems with our financial commitment to the UK Government in terms of how we are going to manage the budget.

So, Madam Speaker, I hope that the Government's processes of consideration does not endure for another two years before any relief is brought to removing duty for medicine and medical supplies to help the people of this country.

Thank you, Madam Speaker.

The Speaker: Thank you Elected Member for North Side.

The question is: BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED that this Legislative Assembly requests the Government to consider the removal of the duty on medicines and medical supplies effective 1st January 2012.

All those in favour please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes and Noes.

Mr. D. Ezzard Miller: Madam Speaker, may I have a division please?

The Speaker: Yes.
Madam Clerk.

The Clerk:
Division No. 11–2011/12

Ayes: 5	Noes: 8
Hon. Alden M. McLaughlin, Jr.	Hon. W. McKeever Bush
Mr. D. Kurt Tibbetts	Hon. Rolston M. Anglin
Mr. Moses I. Kirkconnell	Hon. Michael T. Adam
Mr. V. Arden McLean	Hon. J. Mark P. Scotland
Mr. D. Ezzard Miller	Hon. Cline A. Glidden, Jr.
	Capt. A. Eugene Ebanks
	Mr. Ellio A. Solomon
	Mr. Dwayne S. Seymour

Absentees: 2

Mrs. Juliana Y. O'Connor-Connolly
Mr. Anthony S. Eden

[Inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: We haven't suspended yet.
While you all diagnose each other, would you mind—

[Laughter and inaudible interjections]

The Speaker: We have 5 Ayes; 8 Noes. There are 2 Members absent.

The Noes have it. The Motion has failed.

Negated by majority on division: Private Member's Motion No. 4/2011-12 failed.

The Speaker: I believe this is a good time to take the lunch break before we begin the next motion. I am going to suspend until 2.00.

Proceedings suspended at 12.29 pm

Proceedings resumed at 3.10 pm

The Speaker: Proceedings are resumed, please be seated. I am glad the sense of humour is still continuing.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' MOTIONS

Private Member's Motion No. 5/2011-12—To reduce Duty on Gasoline and Diesel

The Speaker: Elected Member for North Side.

Mr. D. Ezzard Miller: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I wish to move Private Member's Motion No. 5/2011-12—To reduce Duty on Gasoline and Diesel:

WHEREAS gasoline and diesel are being sold at record high prices in the Cayman Islands;

AND WHEREAS the fuel component on the electrical and water bills of Caymanians and residents has been dramatically increased in recent months;

AND WHEREAS the Government in the current financial year increased the duty on both gasoline and diesel;

AND WHEREAS the Cayman Islands remain in dire economic difficulties;

AND WHEREAS the Government has recently announced that this financial year will end in a surplus;

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED THAT this Legislative Assembly requests the Government to consider reducing the duty on both gasoline and diesel by fifty cents.

The Speaker: Is there a seconder for this Motion?
Elected Member for East End.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Madam Speaker, I beg to second the Motion.

The Speaker: The Motion is open for debate. Does the mover wish to speak thereon?

Mr. D. Ezzard Miller: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Madam Speaker, the cost of gasoline and diesel is affecting our everyday lives and the cost of living for all of the people in the Cayman Islands. It is even affecting our leisure activities. It affects our going to work and everything that we do.

We all see the impact that fuel cost has on our electric and water bills. The information that I have indicates that a reduction of 50 cents on the cost of diesel should translate to approximately an 8 per cent reduction in the fuel factor on our electric bills.

Madam Speaker, a reduction of 50 cents per gallon on gasoline would lead to the gasoline price being reduced from, I think currently it is \$5.63 (or around there) down to \$5.13 per gallon. Again, [this would be] representing a reduction in the cost of transportation, a reduction in the cost of living because electricity and transportation affect everything that we do in our daily lives.

So, Madam Speaker, I would encourage the Government to support the Motion. Thank you.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? [pause] Does any other Member wish to speak? [pause] Does any other Member wish to speak? [pause]

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Madam Speaker, thank you very much for your indulgence.

Madam Speaker, the Motion calls for the Government to reduce duty on both gasoline and diesel by 50 cents. The important problem with the Motion, Madam Speaker, is that which I told this House in the Budget process. So, having failed there, they come back here again to repeat their call. The important problem is the financial impact or effect of what is being asked.

Madam Speaker, the Custom Tariff Law shows the duty on motor gasoline as 75 cents per gallon. I think there must be about 10 million gallons of gas imported. Duty on diesel oil, for those not involved in electricity generation, is 85 cents per gallon. And duty on diesel oil for those involved in electricity generation is 75 cents per gallon. And there are some 35 million gallons imported.

The Motion states that the Government should reduce duty on both gasoline and diesel by 50 cents. If the Government did this, then the duty on motor gasoline would become 25 cents per gallon, duty on diesel oil to those not involved in electricity generation would become 35 cents per gallon. Duty on diesel oil by those involved in electricity generation would become 25 cents per gallon. In other words, Madam Speaker, the Government's revenue from duty on fuel imports would be significantly reduced by the adoption of this Motion.

In the year that just ended 30 June 2011, the Government received \$34 million from duty on fuel imports. Madam Speaker, I don't know how they think that we could go back now just having passed the Budget, after I have explained. And they full well know the situation, Madam Speaker. So, how they would expect us to almost eliminate such a significant source of revenue? There would be a tremendous adverse impact on Government's ability to deliver much needed services required by the public, much of which this \$35 million pays for. Madam Speaker, there would be a tremendous impact.

I will not dwell on it, Madam Speaker, but the House should note that there is an inaccuracy, small as it is, in the Motion. The Motion is inaccurate when it says that "**the Government in the current financial year increased the duty on both gasoline and diesel.**" That is not so. The current financial year started on 1 July 2011—

Mr. D. Ezzard Miller: The Motion was submitted in the last financial year.

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: —and the Government has not increased duty on fuel imports in the current financial year.

The Motion that was tabled here in office of the Clerk, was on 14 September—

Mr. V. Arden McLean, Member for East End: For the umpteenth time!

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: That is what my understanding is.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: The umpteenth time!

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Well, whether it is the “umpteenth” or nineteenth or twentieth, it’s wrong! So, you should take care when you are making it . . . but it is a small matter. I’m not dwelling on that.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: The lack of attention to detail, though, Madam Speaker, and this lack of attention to care indicates that the movers of the Motion only had the political objective in mind. And anyone who is voting . . . that’s all they are doing—playing politics!

They have a political objection in mind. This is the easiest kind of motion in such an environment in the downturn of the economy that we have. This is the easiest way to beat up on the Government and beat your gums and talk amongst yourselves and say that the Opposition doesn’t want anything done, and they are hard on poor people.

Any one of you!

[Inaudible interjections]

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Hmm-mm.

So, what they are going to say, Madam Speaker, when we reject the Motion is, *We tried to do something, you know. But the Government rejected our efforts.*

Hon. Alden M. McLaughlin, Jr., Leader of the Opposition: Heartless!

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Of course, Madam Speaker, as I said, those people who are responsible for the deterioration of the finances can sit down there and talk about “heartless.”

So, even though I believe that the movers of the Motion know that what is being requested . . . yes, it is politically wise for them but it is revenue-foolish for the Government.

When we look at the costs in this country . . . let’s deal with electricity, because that is the one I am concerned about. That is one, really, that we can’t do much about under the circumstances. People can do a lot of things to save on their driving, but electrical costs in the country are huge. Outrageous! Madness, Madam Speaker! But no one is going to sit here today and make me believe that in a country not paying income tax or property tax or payroll taxes, or any kind

of taxes, that the 50 cents we put on—which is helping to pay all the bills in the country, going towards them—has caused these high electrical rates. Nobody can make me believe that, because it is not true!

This is being done because they can do it, because they have the right mechanisms to do it, because they have the right agreement to do it. In this country some people are paying electrical bills that are more than their mortgages. Which country is doing that? Which country is doing that? And who are we to blame? Blame the UDP, because the UDP is getting 50 cents out of it? The UDP is getting 50 cents for the country out of it. The country deserves to get something out of it.

Madam Speaker, for them out there to come and bring this kind of motion, they are doing it for political reasons. As I said, in a time when electrical bills are high they would love the public to believe that we are all responsible for that.

We understand, Madam Speaker, that the large increase in diesel costs over the last two years is a problem. That is a worldwide problem. Around July 2009 it was something like \$3.40 per gallon, July 2010 it was around \$4.00 per gallon, and currently it is nearly \$6.00 per gallon. So the price doubled in just over two years. But that is a huge problem for the country; it is a huge problem for our national airline that we have to subsidise millions of dollars because of it. So we have to get revenue somewhere to pay for it.

Look at how much it added on to the cost for the national airline.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: *[Addressing inaudible interjection]* No, that is not CUC, Opposition.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: *[Addressing interjection]* Mm-hmm. You can go ahead and defend CUC.

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: *[Addressing interjection]* Uh-uh; only being kind to them.

Madam Speaker, the Opposition is highly irresponsible. Only for political reasons are they bringing this, because they were the people who were paying CUC millions of dollars after the hurricane—thirteen-or-something-million dollars. And the people had to pay that back to them while CUC was insured and people were not! But people had to pay that money. And we encouraged them to take it off! They didn’t care about the public then. No!

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Madam Speaker, how much harder times were right after the hurricane? Can people remember?

[Inaudible interjection]

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: *[Addressing interjection]* Yes, you all can go back and talk anything; not because you have the last say that you're right, you know! Just know that. You get up and talk. You just leave me alone. *[shouting]* REST ME! Just rest me!

Madam Speaker, you can easily get hot under the collar when you have been in office long enough and you see the shenanigans over the years that have been played by oil companies and CUC. You can easily get hot under the collar because you know that our people have been taken for a ride.

No one can complain about the good service we get, Madam Speaker. No one! We get good service, to an extent, particularly when I say that you have [electrical] current at all times. But we are paying a very heavy price. I am saying, Madam Speaker, that I think it is time that as the Leader of my party and as the Premier of this country, that I take a second look at this situation.

They can make their notes and reply, but what I am about to say here will happen unless legally it cannot be done. But the Government has had a number of representations—hundreds of representations—from consumers relative to the bills they have been receiving on a monthly basis from CUC. Under the last Administration the agreement for CUC to provide electricity from a monopoly position was renegotiated. Unfortunately, the bill which consumers have been receiving in many cases now exceeds (as I said earlier) their mortgage payments, and the Government has made a decision that it will retain experts to review the agreement entered into. It will review the current calculations which form part of the present bills being sent to customers. And it will advise the Government on what steps can now be taken to ensure that the electricity bills are calculated on a basis which is reasonable and which CUC could charge in a competitive market.

The Government is prepared, subject to the advice which it receives from the experts, to invite CUC to enter into a meaningful negotiation to address the current untenable situation.

In this production of electricity, Madam Speaker, many things have to be taken into account—engines, types of fuel, whether you are hedging or not, and whether you lost on that hedging and now expect to come and take it back from the people of this country if you took a loss on your hedging.

Madam Speaker, the Opposition is doing what they have always been able to do best. And that is to create confusion, smear, and these kinds of tactics, Madam Speaker. So when I shout, it is because I get hot under the collar when I see the kinds of bills that we have to be paying in this country. And, yes, that I know that my people cannot afford it much longer.

So, Madam Speaker, I did make it clear in my Budget Address for the 2011/12 year that the Government is introducing one new revenue measure which should come to this House shortly, during this year, in order to provide a means by which to give some relief to residential electricity consumers. That is the best that we can do for right now. The Government intends to honour its word. As I said, I will bring that revenue measure to this House soon. So, Madam Speaker, I would like to hear what they have to say then.

Madam Speaker, the Government is unable to accept the Motion; but we have made it clear that the Government will provide relief to residential electricity consumers in more ways than one.

The Speaker: Does any other Member wish to speak? [pause] Does any other Member wish to speak?

Member for East End.

Mr. V. Arden McLean, Member for East End: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

It seems like there is always a waiting game in here. People do not want to speak because they are afraid someone will come behind them.

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: *[laughter]*

Mr. V. Arden McLean: But—

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: That's why you sat so long just now?

And Hon. Member: Exactly.

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: *[laughter]*

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Madam Speaker, I—

[inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: —I am—

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeever Bush: Now we know.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: I am compelled to answer some of the things that the Premier said in his contribution to this Motion.

[inaudible interjections]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: I know, Madam Speaker, they will answer, but what they will do is get up there with their personal attacks on me. That is what they will do! And they will get away with it too, in most instances. But they have to be careful. I would advise them to be careful, because I do not personally attack people in here. But they have a tendency over there; they love to personally attack people. They love to personally attack people's families. They need to stop it. Some of them . . . that is all they are capable of doing! They have to be able to face the facts. But this personal attack on people is going to stop in this honourable House. They need to stop it!

Madam Speaker, the removal of 50 cents duty on fuel . . . this is not the first time a call has been made to do so. The call was made from the then Opposition to me, as the Minister, for the removal of the 50 cents which would have been the total amount of duties on diesel at the time to CUC. It was made by the Premier, the current Minister of Education, the current Deputy Premier, and the Third Elected Member for West Bay. My response to them at the time was the same response they are making now—that we would have to find someplace else to look for revenue.

Madam Speaker—

The Speaker: Ah, the back and forth is going to stop. The Member for East End is speaking and I want to hear what he is saying.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: I heard their call and after serious consideration we changed our position and took 20 cents out of the 50 [cents] off so that people could be eased up, leaving 30 cents.

Immediately following the General Elections, the now Government added [that] 20 cents back. They accused me of giving CUC the money in a cheque each month. Madam Speaker, by the time the Budget came for that financial year that they came into Office, 2009/10, they added 25 cents more. And at this Budget they promised the same thing I did, which is to reduce it. But it has not been done yet.

I don't know if sufferance in 2007 is any different to sufferance in 2011. Madam Speaker, they have made the promises. They called for it when I was there. I did not make any promises. It was action time and I did it. Now I want to see this Government do it now.

Madam Speaker, the Premier also said that no one can tell him that it is only the cost of fuel that is causing the high bills in Cayman. [And] it is because CUC has the right agreement—meaning that we gave it to them to put pressure and, willy-nilly, or at their own pace, put price on the consumption of electricity. Madam Speaker, if that is true, then why doesn't the

UDP Government, the Premier, tell us why the same people—with whom I had negotiated on that licence—currently sit on the ERA (Electricity Regulatory Authority) Board? Why does he not tell the people why that is?

I have had enough of this! The same people that I trusted with the future of this country as Caymanians . . . but more importantly, Madam Speaker, the same consultant that they used out of the United States, I used! You talk about playing politics? That is politics that they are playing!

[inaudible interjection]

Mr. V. Arden McLean: They say that does not make it right because I used the same consultant. Well, take them off the Board now! Take them off the Board!

Madam Speaker, the people I used will agree with me that they are trustworthy Caymanians who feel the same pinch we feel, and understand the same people that we understand, and understand the plight of the same people that we serve! They were, Mr. Charlie Farrington from West Bay; Mr. Sammy Jackson from West Bay; and Mr. Olivaire Watler from East End. But they still used them. They are still using them. But there is something wrong with those people.

The Speaker: There was not anything said about those people. And I would prefer if you didn't say that, because it gives the impression that somebody found something wrong with those honourable people who you have just named. Please do not do that.

[inaudible interjection]

The Speaker: Please be quiet over there. I'm talking.

Member for East End, please continue; just please do not make any asides on the matter.

Mr. V. Arden McLean: Madam Speaker—

The Speaker: You have named the Members and I respect that. Just leave it at that.

[CERTAIN WORDS WERE ORDERED BY THE HONOURABLE SPEAKER TO BE EXPUNGED FROM THE RECORD]

Proceedings suspended at 3.56 pm

Proceedings resumed at 8.00 pm

The Speaker: Proceedings are resumed.

Please be seated.

Before the suspension was taken, there was debate offered on the Floor of the House by the Member for East End who made repeated accusations against the Fourth Elected Member for George Town,

stating that he had attacked his family, demanding that he should desist from doing so.

I have searched the records of this House available to me and have been unable to find any evidence to justify those statements made by the Member for East End.

I am therefore ordering that all such references and statements up until the time of the suspension be expunged from the record, and hereby order the press to respect that order as well.

Now I will call for a motion for adjournment.

ADJOURNMENT

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, I adjourn this honourable House until 10 am
...

[inaudible interjection while the Premier conversed with another Member]

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: Madam Speaker, we had better adjourn until 10—

The Speaker: You are making a motion for adjournment.

The Premier, Hon. W. McKeeva Bush: —making a motion for adjournment until 10.30 am tomorrow.

Madam Speaker, we expect that the business on the Order Paper today will be carried forward. We will be dealing with Government Business tomorrow, including the Immigration (Amendment) Bill.

The Speaker: The question is that this honourable House do adjourn until 10.30 tomorrow morning.

All those in favour, please say Aye. Those against, No.

Ayes.

The Speaker: The Ayes have it. The House is hereby adjourned.

At 8.15 pm the House adjourned until 10.30 am, Friday, 30 September 2011.