



# NATIONWIDE

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# MAJOR REVIEW OF THE CONSTITUTION

**P**reparations are well under way for the launching next weekend of the Constitutional Review Commission.

The Commission will be launched at the National Insurance Conference room next Friday, November 18, where and when representatives of both sides of the House of Assembly will give effect to the first commission to review the island's independence constitution of 1979, which has been in effect for over 26 years.

The feature address at the commission's launching will be delivered by Mr Parnell Campbell, CVO, QC. Mr Campbell, a lawyer who is also a former Government Minister under the New Democratic Party (NDP) administration of former Vincentian Prime Minister Sir James Mitchell, is also Chairman of the Constitution Review Commission of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The ceremony will also hear from the Chairman of the St. Lucia Commission for the review of the Constitution, Hon. Justice Suzie d'Auvergne, who is a retired



**Justice Suzie d'Auvergne  
Chairperson of the Constitutional Review Commission**

Judge of the OECS Supreme Court.

The new commission will also get bipartisan blessings from the Government and Opposition during the ceremony, which will also be addressed by Prime Minister Dr Kenny D. Anthony and Leader of the Opposition Hon. Marcus Nicholas.

Speaker of the House of Assembly Hon. Joseph Baden Allain will also address the official ceremony launching the commission.

The commission is the fruit of a bipartisan parliamentary agreement initiated by Prime Minister Anthony two years ago, in keeping with his government's promise, on taking office in 1997, to make Constitutional reform a priority.

The members of the commission will not include Members of Parliament, but will be laden with representatives of national organisations.

The Terms of Reference of the Commission give it two years to complete its work, which will commence immediately following its official launching.



**Prime Minister Dr. Kenny Anthony meets senior citizens, some of whom wore medals at the recent regional games in Barbados**



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# Improving Access in Telecommunications

**S**aint Lucia and other countries in the eastern Caribbean have received financing from the World Bank to finance a major project in telecommunications and information and communications technologies (TCIT). The project aims at improving access, quality and use of telecommunications and ICT services to achieve socio-economic development in the member states of the OECS.

It was officially launched in Saint Lucia last month following a major launch in Dominica early in October. Among the main components are the strengthening of the national and regional regulatory frameworks – the National Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (NTRC) and the Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority (ECTEL); promotion of additional competition in the sector; review of current universal access to telecommunications services and development of guidelines for the establishment of a Universal Service Fund (USF). Another major component is the improvement of growth and competitiveness in

ICT-enabled services through the utilisation of broadband infrastructure.

The TICT Project will continue with a regional approach for development of the telecommunications and ICT sector. The project includes continuing support for the Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority (ECTEL) and for the respective National Telecommunications Regulatory Councils (NTRCs) of the OECS States participating in ECTEL, namely: The Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The project is to be implemented at a total cost of US\$ 3.39 million over a period of four-and-a-half (4 ½) years. Financing for the project is being provided through a combination of loans and credits from the World Bank along with contributions from each of the participating OECS States

The project will be implemented by ECTEL and comes on the heels of a successful implementation of the OECS Telecommunications Reform project (1998 – 2004), also funded by



**Hon. Felix Finisterre and OECS officials at the launch**

the World Bank, which set the foundation for the formation of ECTEL. In its final report the World Bank stated “The objective and performance targets of the project were met or surpassed and the overall outcome of the project is satisfactory. This rating reflects the significant transformation, changes and impact brought by the project through the introduction of competition and the establishment a functioning and competent regional telecommunications authority, the Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority (ECTEL),

which became the world’s first regional telecommunications authority”

Among the gains of liberalisation which have been noted by the World Bank include lower prices for fixed and mobile telephone services, and the establishment of a price cap regime for some telecommunications services in the member states of ECTEL.

Five countries – The Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines are members of ECTEL.

## Government Ratifies Tobacco Control Convention



**Hon. Damian Greaves addressing Parliament**

**T**he Saint Lucia House of Assembly has approved the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Bill, which creates the necessary social environment for the implementation of the convention signed in 2004. The decision means the Government of Saint Lucia has given it official legal backing to the World Health Organization (WHO) Convention dealing with the control of tobacco and the effects resulting from its use

Minister for Minister Health, Human Services, Family Affairs and Gender Relations Honourable Damian Greaves, says smoking of cigarettes and its resultant second hand smoke have become major public health issues around the world. Statistics from the WHO indicate that tobacco use results in the death of one person every six seconds. In the Caribbean region, figures from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) reveal that 5,600 persons die each year from tobacco related diseases.

Minister Greaves says the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Bill contain measures that addresses tobacco use, cross border is-

suess like tobacco taxation, advertising restrictions and the control of second hand smoke. In piloting the Bill, he told the House, “It is the right of people to ensure that their social space or their air space is not encroached upon simple because people think they can stand up anywhere and smoke.”

Addressing members of the House of Assembly last week, the Member of Parliament for Dennery South Hon. Greaves says, “In as much as there is a tendency to suggest that it is my right as an individual to smoke, it does not take away from the right of the other person who does not want to be a victim of the inhalation of second hand smoke and thus become a victim of cancer or any other diseases as a result of second hand smoke.”

Locally, statistics from the Saint Lucia Cancer Society reveal that 14 percent of students from grades 6-9 and forms 1-4 have used some kind of tobacco product. The Society says several of the cancer cases diagnosed on the island like cancer of the bladder, kidney, pancreas, liver, stomach and mouth are associated with smoking and tobacco use.

## Alcohol Abuse and Crime

**T**he link between alcoholism and crime has been highlighted as one of the issues which should remain in focus for young persons, so they could better understand their role in the fight against crime.

Acting Director of the Substance Abuse Advisory Council Secretariat Mrs. Elizabeth Serieux Wilson told the young persons present at the recently held National Crime Commission Youth Symposium the acceptability of alcohol use does not reduce its harmful effects.

She warned that although prevalent, such trends should not be allowed to define young people’s behaviours or lifestyles.

“There’s a serious, strong relationship between alcohol and crime. And alcohol in our society is so pervasive, the use of it every where, and nobody is exempt from it. And we see the effects but we loathe to take responsibility and realise that we contribute to it

- that our attitudes make it alright for young children to be buying to be selling, alcohol or makes it alright for us to be fighting in the street and makes it alright to make it for domestic violence to occur because it’s part of our culture.”

Mrs. Wilson says most young persons do not fully understand how drastically alcohol use could alter their normal personalities. “This is due to the disinheriting effect of alcohol. What that means is it predisposes you when you use it to engage in behaviour that you normally would not do and to engage in behaviour that normally you will not engage in. Perhaps you have the propensity towards a certain kind of behaviour but you have kept it under control. Alcohol abuse will bring it closer to the surface.”

She says the far reaching impact of alcohol abuse among the youth including students needs to be more actively dealt with at the community level.

## Director of Audit New Secretary General of CAROSAI

**T**he Caribbean Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (CAROSAI) Act, passed in the House of Assembly on Tuesday, 2nd November 2005, has given CAROSAI the authority to operate as a legal entity in Saint Lucia.

The Government of Saint Lucia came to the assistance of the Secretariat by approving a request to house the CAROSAI Secretariat in the SAI of Saint Lucia. This means that the Director of Audit of Saint Lucia, Mrs. Arlette Hyacinth is the new Secretary General of CAROSAI.

As Secretary General, the Director of Audit is responsible for moving forward the mandate of the organi-

zation which has as its main objective, the institutional strengthening of the Caribbean Government Audit Institutions.

CAROSAI is a regional grouping of Caribbean Government Audit Institutions established in August 1988 in Port-of-Spain, Trinidad and Tobago by nine founding members, one of which was Saint Lucia. Since then, the CAROSAI Secretariat has been housed in the Office of the Auditor General of Trinidad and Tobago.

After approximately seventeen (17) years of service, the Supreme Audit Institution (SAI) of Trinidad and Tobago expressed the view that another SAI should take over the management of the Secretariat.

# QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HEALTH - A PRIORITY

**W**ork on a Quality Management System for the island's health sector is said to be at an advanced stage. The Quality Management System provides a scientific step-by-step mechanism to ensure, within the health sector, the achievement of continuous improvement, reduction of errors, and reduction of variation of service which will cause wastage.

A Quality Assurance Committee headed by the Director of the Bureau of Standards Dr. Allison Plumber is facilitating the formulation of the health standards by advising and making recommendations on systems that would allow for sustainable quality care in the island's Health Sector.

Dr. Plumber says quality can no longer be an attribute of competition but is required for basic survival. She says the Quality Management System that is being promoted to the health sector is being used as a vehicle on which services in health will be improved.

"The standards that we are promoting are not different from what is available internationally—and by all means we want to ensure that the services that are offered to our patients within St. Lucia, meet the same level of standards as those they will access overseas. Likewise those that will be put on the overseas list—that they meet acceptable standards," Dr. Plumber said.



**Dr. Allison Plumber**  
Director SLBS

The formulation of the Quality Management System, according to officials of the Ministry of Health, Human Services, Family Affairs and Gender Relations, will enhance the process of overall reform of the island's health sector and the formulation of a National Universal Health Care Programme. The system, according to Chief medical Officer Dr. Stephen King, has to

thrive on an established framework that includes regulatory aspects relating to professionals, service providers and protocols of treatment and proper health information system.

"Our nurses, our doctor, our lab technicians, X-ray technicians and even cleaners are all professionals—what they are lacking is that framework that keeps them driving down a line that has management engaged in driving and giving them the resources and training that is necessary to keep them in a continuous quality improvement. It takes years but the health sector more than any other sector is ready now," The

Chief Medical Officer said.

The Universal Health Care Programme when established will ensure that Saint Lucians have access to quality health services, regardless of their financial status. The new system will be funded with a fixed consumption tax on goods. That proposed flat tax is a 3.5 percent - 4 percent increase on the environmental levy, which now stands at 1 percent - 1.5 percent. Basic goods such as food and clothing have been exempted. The tax will raise an estimated 30 million dollars, with government matching that amount as part of its overall contribution to health care.



**Victoria Hospital - Largest medical facility**

## New Rock Hall Road



**Hon. Philip J. Pierre**  
MP for Castries East

**M**ember of Parliament of Castries East and the Japanese Ambassador to St. Lucia on Wednesday last week officiated at a ceremony to mark the completion of a community access road in Castries East.

The Baulieu Community Access Road will service residents of the Upper Rock Hall area and was undertaken by the East Castries Zonal Council, which is a registered non-governmental, non-political organisation dedicated to the

development of the Castries East constituency.

The project was aimed at providing easy access to residents of the Baulieu community, who had previously had difficulty getting to and from their homes. The area was also inaccessible to emergency units in case fire or other man-made or natural disasters.

The residents approached Castries East MP, Hon. Philip J. Pierre, who approached the Japanese Government, which agreed to fund the project at a cost of over EC \$65,000 under the Japanese Fund for Grassroots Human Security Projects.

The Japanese Ambassador and the Parliamentary Representative visited the area earlier in the year and a formal ceremony took place on June 30, during which the Interim President of the East Castries Zonal Council, Mr Julian Charles, and the Japanese Ambassador, signed the agreement.

Construction of the new access road began in July, under a plan developed by the East Castries Zonal Council.

The project was completed on time and within budget. The project also benefited from previous self-help assistance from residents of the area.

The new access road was declared open by the Japanese Ambassador and the Hon. Philip J. Pierre who was also acting Prime Minister.

## CRICKET GOVERNANCE



**Prime Minister Dr. Keith Mitchell of Grenada with cricket officials**

**M**embers of the West Indies Cricket Board, representatives of West Indies Players Association and CARICOM leaders met in Saint Lucia on Friday November 04th to discuss a wide range of issues related to the development of West Indies cricket. Among the topics discussed were the governance of West Indies cricket, mechanisms for dispute resolution and greater involvement of the West Indian public charting the way forward for West Indies Cricket.

The representatives of the government of the region led by prime minister Dr. Kenny Anthony of Saint Lucia who chaired the meeting, reiterated the need to ensure that notwithstanding the difficulties at the with the team, at pres-

ent, all parties work steadfastly towards preparing the West Indies to host matches in the ICC Cricket World Cup 2007.

In addition to Prime Minister Anthony, Prime Minister Dr. Keith Mitchell of Grenada and Hon. Reginald Farley, Minister for Sports of Barbados participated in the meeting. Other delegates included Dr. Jimmy Fletcher, chairman of the Saint Lucia LOC, Mr. Ken Gordon of the WICB and Mr. Dinanath Ramnarine of the West Indies Players Association.

The meeting followed a decision of the CARICOM heads of government conference which was held in Saint Lucia in July 2005. The government representatives reiterated their role as facilitators and not any expression of interest in the day to day management of West Indies Cricket.

# CONVERSATION WITH THE NATION

# Will There Be Enough Construction Skills

**An economy on the rebound**  
**Good Morning, St. Lucia, here is a question for you to think about. With all the existing and planned construction in St. Lucia in the next eighteen months, will we experience a shortage of labour – particularly skilled labour?**

Already, some persons are talking about the possibility that the local economy may overheat. What they mean is that the economy may, in the short term, grow too rapidly, causing inflation and other problems. For example, if – and I say a big IF – there is a shortage of labour, then the price of labour may increase, thus contributing to an overall increase in construction costs.

There can be little doubt that the St. Lucian economy is showing solid signs of recovery. The latest assessments carried out by regional and international financial agencies have confirmed that St. Lucia's economy is on the rebound.

In my Budget Address in April 2005, I indicated that our economy had experienced an improved growth rate of 3.6% for 2004. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) reported a few weeks ago that "real GDP growth" in St. Lucia for 2004 actually rose to 4% -- that is, 4% more than I had announced (?).

As the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) reported last month, the positive growth rate in St. Lucia – and indeed in the rest of the OECS – has been driven largely by construction and expansion in the tourism industry. The Central Bank has also predicted that, barring unforeseen or uncontrolled events like natural or man-made disasters, the growth rate in St. Lucia and the rest of the OECS will continue to be driven and fuelled by further growth in tourism and construction. Much of the growth in construction is explained by the construction of infrastructure for the hosting of the Cricket World Cup in 2007. Indeed, the Central Bank estimates that the region's economies, including St. Lucia, will collectively grow by 5.6% this year. An even higher growth rate of 7% is forecast for next year, 2006. If that happens, then this will be the highest growth rate achieved by the OECS in over a decade.



Prime Minister of Saint Lucia Dr. Kenny D. Anthony



Public sector workers

**A construction boom**

There is solid evidence that tourism-related construction activity industry is driving economic growth in St. Lucia.



Breaking ground for new hotel project on the east coast

Several local hotels, companies and individuals have made good use of the incentives being offered by the Government of St. Lucia to provide accommodation for the visitors expected for the Cricket World Cup.

New hotels are going up and some existing hotels are expanding; new small and medium properties are also taking off at a rapid rate as the World Cup approaches.

Our workers can be seen at work in the north, where several of these new investments are changing the shape of the landscape. The Plantation at Cotton Bay – a brand new hotel – is nearing completion. The former Wyndham Hotel, Windjammer Landings and Tropical Homes at Cap Estate are all undergoing renovations and expansion. Bay Gardens Hotel is also due for expansion. And, lest we forget, there is construction activity at Discovery at Marigot Bay, which is nearing completion.

Then, there are those other construction sites where workers are also employed. A number of new buildings are

being constructed in and around the City of Castries and the Rodney Bay/Gros Islet belt -- and indeed, in other parts of the island – by local entrepreneurs.

But if you think that is all, just imagine what's on the horizon. Major new hotels and resorts are to be constructed in the coming months. These include the Landings at Rodney Bay (which is being undertaken by local investors), the Cap Estate Villas and Town Houses Project, the Cap Maison (at Cap Estate), the Harbour at Rodney Bay, Chateau Village at Beausejour, Stephen's Apartments and Bel View Resorts.

In the South, there is expected to be even more expansion at the Coconut Bay Hotel, the former Club Med. That hotel is likely to expand by two hundred rooms. Anse Chastanet is nearing completion of its expansion programme. Hundreds of jobs are expected to be provided when construction begins on Le Paradis at Praslin Bay and Sapphire Cove between Laborie and Choiseul.

But it is not only in the tourism sector that the construction industry is buzzing. Just take a walk and look around Castries – or between Castries and Gros Islet – and you will see the number of business places that are expanding, renovating, relocating, or building anew. Here again, some of these companies are taking advantage of incentives being offered by the Government to business places that wish to modernise, refurbish or relocate their premises. Truly, a construction boom is under way in St. Lucia.

**Public sector construction**

The construction boom in the private sector will be matched by major expansion in construction activity in the Public Sector. Consider for a moment the following. Drainage projects are under way in Dennery, Castries and Anse La Raye. Health centres are undergoing major repairs. A school repair and expansion programme is under way. Construction of two new secondary schools will commence before the end of the year. Construction of the new psychiatric hospital is due to start



Worker at Port Castries

later this year. Construction of the new national hospital will hopefully start in May or June 2006. Rehabilitation of the East Coast Highway has commenced. Rehabilitation and expansion of the Castries to Gros Islet Highway should start early next year. There is the major water improvement project to improve the supply of water to the north. Then too, there is the expansion and related ancillary work at the Beausejour Cricket Ground. Amidst all of this will be the projects managed by the Poverty Reduction Fund and the Basic Needs Trust Fund.

**Shortage of skills?**

With the construction industry taking off as it is, there are concerns. Some ask whether there would be enough building materials, especially after the hurricanes which affected New Orleans and Florida. In fact, for quite some time now, we have been experiencing shortages of cement – even though the price has gone up.

But of late, a more interesting question is being asked. Will there be enough skilled persons in the construction industry to facilitate the rate and pace of the construction boom?

Already, contractors have noted a shortage of highly skilled workers, such as carpenters and masons, electricians, tilers and other so-called "finishers". One explanation for this is the departure of some of these persons to Grenada to help in the reconstruction of that island after Hurricane Ivan. But even before Ivan, St. Lucian workers had gone abroad in search of opportunities. Following the contraction or the economic downturn in 2001, several St. Lucian workers headed to the Turks and Caicos Islands, Anguilla and the British Virgin Islands. Their departure has reduced the pool of skilled workers.

**Will we have to import labour?**

If, for argument sake, we might experience a shortage of skilled labour, will we have to import labour in the near or distant future?

It's a relevant question, but the answer is an emphatic "no" – not for the time being, at least. There continues to be a serious surplus of unemployed labour. If employment works accord-

ing to the basic principle of supply and demand, then as the supply of jobs increases in the months ahead, so will the demand be reduced? We cannot begin



Expansion of residential housing - more skills required

to think about importing labour from neighbouring countries, until our pool of surplus labour is reduced.

With local contractors crying out for skilled labourers, it is becoming necessary for us to begin to think in terms of establishing skills banks and increasing skills training. I am told that the need right now is for plumbers and "finishers" – those who specialise in putting the final touches – roofs, windows, doors, tiles, pipes, etc. It is to be hoped that those without skills will take steps to learn new skills to increase and improve their chances of employment in the construction boom that is under way. We may have to turn to Sir Arthur Lewis Community College to design new programmes to train skilled workers.

**The spectre of inflation**

But there are other concerns. If the demand for labour rises and shortages are experienced, then the competition

for scarce skills may well lead to increases in the price of labour. To use more technical language, increases in labour rates could feed inflation. This could have several unwanted consequences. For example, the overall price of construction will increase. Contractors may push the Government to intervene to legislate rates. Some may even wish to work for cheaper labour elsewhere in the region. All of this means that the Government will have to monitor the emerging situation very closely.

**Building new economic pillars**

But there are other benefits to this burst in construction activity. By revitalising the construction sector, the Government is also building new economic pillars.

However, we must not lose our focus on the other sectors. While we continue to do all we can to encourage the diversification of our agricultural base, the expansion of our tourism sector and the continued viability of our manufacturing sector, we must also continue to build



Hon. Kenny D. Anthony

and strengthen the Services and Information Technology sectors of our economy. There is untapped potential in this sector, once we get the right formula.

**Conclusion**

In effect, exciting times lie ahead. I have not even bothered to speak about those who will be employed when the new hotels are completed.

You see, I have reason to be excited and confident about the future. It has been a long journey, but I believe we are on our way. The next few years will present great opportunities and confirm our economy as tourism and services-driven economy. But we cannot behave like the proverbial ostrich and bury our heads in the sand. We will not enjoy the benefits unless we solve the problem before our eyes, for example crime. But that's another topic for another time.

Until next week, do have a very pleasant and productive day, and God Bless!



Construction sector will also call for more building materials

# TRADE REGIMES ON THE STATUS OF

The following address was delivered by No. Menissa Rambally Minister for Social Transformation, Local Government and Culture at the Tenth Historical Global Summit of Black Women Business Owners which was held in the United Kingdom from October 28 – 29, 2005.

## The Uniqueness of the Topic

It is pleasing to be invited to participate in such a forum not just because it affords me the opportunity to meet and interface with so many women who have excelled in their individual spheres of activity, but it enables me to add my voice to a subject that traditionally would have been presented by a minister of Trade or Commerce and not a Minister with responsibility for Social Development.

Trade Regimes are seemingly 'those complex set of issues that are beyond the scope and comprehension of everyone, except the economists and financial experts'.

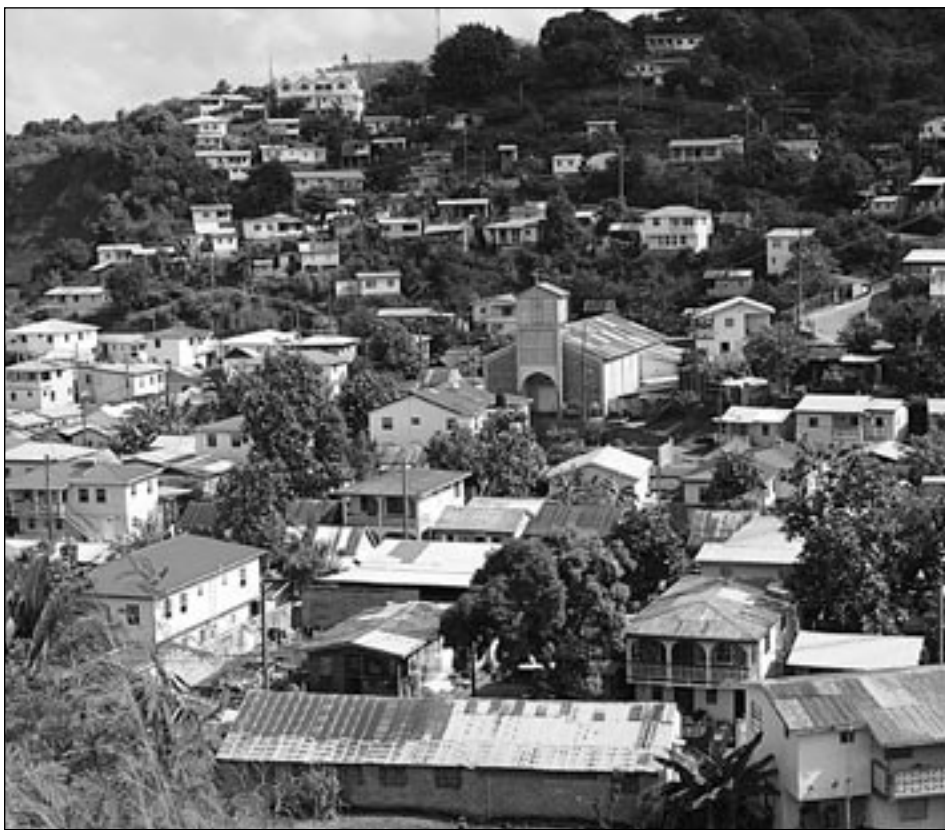
In the western hemisphere, we have created a phobia surrounding WTO, FTAA and the like that ensures that the real debate and decisions emanating from such discussions are confined to a select few, who know what is good for us all.



**Hon. Menissa Rambally**  
Minister for Social Transformation,  
Culture and Local Government

## Why Trade is so Important to Women

There are a number of reasons why Trade is a women's issue. In the first instance, women represent a significant percentage of the labour force and in



**Expanding populations in rural communities**

I hope that my presence today is recognition of the fact that no matter how complex and technical they may appear to be, trade regimes ultimately impact on the lives of people, especially the vulnerable.

Trade is a people issue. Regimes and systems developed to facilitate trade must therefore be rooted in the realities and relationships between people and the organizations and institutions that they either represent or interact with and not be considered as the end product.

Trade is a tool, a vehicle through which a country, a group, a family, an individual, can develop and aspire to maximize its full potential. We have to begin to utilize it for that purpose. The goal of trade must not solely be that of increasing profits and economic growth, but also it must embrace issues of justice and respect for fundamental human rights.

some specific sectors (e.g. craft, informal sector, light manufacturing/assembly) women account for in excess of seventy percent (70%) of the labour force.

Secondly, as mothers, women's unpaid labour of caring for children is the "voluntary social capital" that provides the foundation for the next generation to become productive members of society.

Thirdly, and perhaps most obvious, women are consumers and as such decide what to buy (or obtain) in order to provide their families with food, shelter, clothes and other requirements.

Despite their contribution to trade, through labour and consumption, it is a fact that women account for well over half the world's poorest and this statistic is even more acute in the rural communities. It seems almost inconceivable that such a disparity has been overlooked when trade regimes are being conceptualized and constructed.

## Characteristics of rural women worldwide

Various reports over the years have enabled us to establish a profile of rural women and the findings make very interesting reading in the context of this topic: Rural women represent more than one quarter of the total world population; Women produce on average more than half of the food grown in the world – in Africa it is 80%, compared to 60% in Asia and between 30 – 40% in Latin America and the Western countries; Women own only 2% of the land and receive only 1% of all agricultural credit; Only 5% of all agricultural extension resources are directed to women; The number of rural women living in poverty has doubled in the past twenty to thirty years.

In Saint Lucia, the rural landscape can be characterized as follows: 39% of households in rural areas are headed by females; The rural poor have the highest self employment rate among all groups (42% compared to the national average of 29%) and comprise the smallest group of paid employees (53% compared to the national average of 66%), reflecting their greater participation in small landholding agriculture; The majority (66%) of the rural poor who report being under-employed, are self-employed - 57% of them are in agriculture.

In summary, what is evident is that rural women have and continue to play a major role in ensuring food security and in the development and stability of rural communities, yet continue to lack access to vital services and lack the power to secure land rights.

We continue to categorize women in rural society in terms of being an invisible work force, not fully recognizing their role.

It should not be lost on any of us that it is ten years since the WTO was formally established and it is also ten years since the last World Conference on Women was convened in Beijing.

It provides us with the perfect platform to at the very least explore whether the two have been mutually reinforcing or indeed contradictory and counterproductive.

Some specific observations on the impact of trade regimes on rural women

The impact of trade liberalization has been most evident in the area of employment and this is the case across the world. The loss of a comparative advantage in the wake of the new trade and tariff regimes has affected employment in the manufacturing and light industrial sectors where traditionally women have formed the significant pool of the work force.

Larger enterprises have relocated in order to take advantage of the reduction in tariffs, cheaper labour and lower operational costs. This is not just a text book response, it is real. Permit me to highlight some vivid examples of such impacts.

A Study by the Women's Edge Coalition on the effects of trade liberalization on Jamaica's poor highlighted some revealing case study findings.

In agriculture it was observed that women accounted for more than half of the poultry workers on the island and that the appeal of such an enterprise was based on the low start up costs as well as the fact that the activity could

be undertaken at or near home thereby facilitating their child care and other household responsibilities.

Under the WTO agreement, Jamaica granted high levels of market access to imported agricultural products, lowering its duties from 200% to 40% and facilitating the influx of cheaper poultry from the US. It is estimated that nearly half of the poultry farmers, the majority of whom are rural women, were forced out of the sector.

The loss of preferential trading arrangements for banana farmers of the Windward Islands represents another classic example of the seemingly heartless consideration that is inherent in the current trade regimes.

In Saint Lucia, the Cargill Report (1995) estimated that during the period 1993 – 2000, between 3000 and 4,000 farmers were lost to the industry, which, inclusive of family members, means that between 12,000 and 16,000 persons have been directly affected by the restructuring. Moreover, a further 10,000 part time farm worker jobs have been lost.

As predominantly farm workers, rural women have been forced out of the industry in droves.

As managers of families who have



**Women - preserving the rich cultural traditions**

been affected by the restructuring, they feel the backlash in all its manifestations; from loss of income and resources available to satisfy the every day demands of the household, to the abuse that is often associated with the frustrations of the dislocated male farmer and land owner, all of which emanate from the loss of dignity.

We have witnessed the growth of the "new poor" as a direct consequence of new trade arrangements.

Those who subscribe to the feminization of poverty have ample material from the recent experience within the banana industry from which to base their arguments.

How do you explain to a farmer and rural family that its entire livelihood and way of life has been wiped out by the introduction of a new trade regime?

The issue of trade and its overemphasis on establishing a particular mode of market access is another area of concern to me, since it does not appear to be rooted in the realities of the lives of people.

The focus on ensuring that trade liberalization paves the way for the

# RURAL WOMEN

unfettered flow of exports from other countries has clearly not identified the impact on the ground.

How do you tell a vendor that a free market is a good thing? How does she survive the onslaught of the flooding of the market of products that are cheaper than the ones that she is selling to keep her family alive and functioning?

How is free trade ever going to impact on her and her family in anything but a negative way?

There is a tendency in my view to treat rural women as objects of trade, rather than subjects. They are acted upon rather than being actors. In this regard, rural women: Produce and re-produce goods and services for trade; Earn the least; Lack access to trade related resources; Are small scale traders, economically active but still invisible.

We need to reverse this approach and examine ways in which women can take advantage of the opportunities that trade can provide.

### General Conclusions

There is no doubt that on balance trade regimes in their various guises



**New employment in the manufacturing sector**

and forms have had a negative impact on the lives of the poor and we can include rural women in that category.

There is no doubt too that all across

the world it has perpetuated inequalities that have existed for rural women. But, there is hope. There must be hope. After all, we are meeting in this august forum and this issue is on the table for discussion!

For me, the saving grace is that the approach need not be the one that we are currently adopting. In fact it is imperative that we abandon such a dogmatic and insensitive approach, precisely because it is having and will continue to have, an adverse effect on vulnerable countries, communities and socio-economic groups.

At the global level, we have quite rightly promoted trade liberalization as a key strategy to reducing poverty and enhancing sustainable human development.

But we have been operationalizing

this strategy through a "trade at all cost" approach. This is what is wrong!

The current inherent focus on liberalized markets and associated trade regimes squeezes out the small and marginalized, entirely; never offering them an opportunity to take advantage of the benefits that trade can offer.

Small can indeed be beautiful and meaningful, and in the context of rural women we need to begin to take steps to make trade liberalization not just pro-poor but pro-women...rural women in particular.

This is a perfect forum to initiate such action, because as successful business people, you have the power and drive to advocate for a group that is in desperate need of support.

I look forward with eager anticipation and optimism to our discourse.



**Rural women participate in communities discussions**

## OECS Countries Consolidate Fisheries

**Collective solidarity has been cited as the sub-region's best defence against multi-lateral pressures on their fisheries sector. This issue was the focus of a two-day OECS forum on Fisheries and Trade which began at the Bay Gardens Hotel on Thursday October 3rd 2005.**

Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Saint Lucia Honourable Ignatius Jean said it has been proven the consolidation of efforts in fisheries and other areas of trade forces the international community to pay attention to the region.

"That is something that we must continue, and of course continue to work closely, to consolidate our efforts and have the kind of caucuses that we can discuss issues prior to going to the international fora, so that we go there with one position—as an OECS or a CARICOM position which will strengthen our negotiations when we go to the international arena," Minister Jean said.

The two-day exercise will serve to raise the awareness among stakeholders of the key issues involving discussion on International Trade and Fisheries. Director of the So-

cial and Sustainable Development Division of the OECS Secretariat Dr. Vasantha Chase said it is hoped that as a result of this intervention private sector stakeholders will become advocates for the articulation and safeguarding of their interests at the highest levels.

"The workshop, we hope, will serve as an opportunity to allow for the type of cross fertilization between fisheries and trade officials and that this fertilization will provide the basis, not only for greater familiarity with perspectives of each other, but also as a basis for a joint OECS position on the issues and the nexus between fisheries and trade," the Fisheries Minister Said.

Fisheries have been considered the lifeblood of coastal communities in Saint Lucia, contributing in excess of 19 million EC Dollars to the island's economy. Recognizing this valuable contribution, government has provided incentives to the industry through duty free concessions on boats, engines, equipment and other related materials. The incentive package which is estimated at three million dollars annually also includes a 75cents per gallon fuel rebate to fishers.



**Modernization of the fisheries sector**

## Greater Efficiency Created Via Customs Control Management Bill

**Legislation has been passed in Parliament allowing for the reform and modernization of the island's Customs' processes in order to create greater efficiency. The 'Customs Control Management Amendment Bill' also seeks to satisfy Saint Lucia's obligations as party to international trade treaties.**

Prime Minister and Minister for Finance Honourable Dr. Kenny Anthony piloted the bill, at a recent sitting of the Saint Lucia House of Assembly. He says the new system, dubbed "ASYCUDA – PLUS-PLUS," is currently being implemented on a small scale in the south of the island, as part of an OECS pilot initiative.

Dr. Anthony says ASYCUDA ++ will allow for a number of innovative changes and brings with it significant benefits. Among them are the quick collect and retrieval of data, reduced time in the customs clearance process, improve revenue collection by cracking down on under-invoicing and the provision of vital trade statistics to government.

"ASYCUDA ++ will now allow us to have a better sense of the movement of goods as they come into the country," says Dr. Anthony. He told the House, "via the system, you will not only be able to make the necessary projections and have a clearer sense of revenue intake down the road, but more importantly the fin-



**Prime Minister Dr. Kenny Anthony speaking at the House of Assembly**

est statistical data that you need to have a sense of the changing patterns of consumers in terms of the items they purchase and items that business persons are investing in for import and retail."

Dr. Anthony expressed the view that the ASYCUDA ++ system will play a key role as the OECS sub-region takes serious steps towards an economic union treaty and the wider implementation of the CARICOM Single Market.

The Customs Control Management Amendment Bill also provides the legal framework for dealing with the area of computer fraud.

## CRICKET PITCHES FOR THE WEATHER



A Prime Minister's Team faces Media and Communications Team on one of the all weather roll-out cricket pitches presented by Cable and Wireless Ltd. in support of cricket development in the Caribbean

## Saint Lucia NTRC receives Spectrum Equipment

Saint Lucia and other countries in the eastern Caribbean have received financing from the World Bank to finance a major project in telecommunications and information and communications technologies (TCIT).

The project aims at improving access, quality and use of telecommunications and ICT services to achieve socio-economic development in the member states of the OECS.

It was officially launched in Saint Lucia last month following a major launch in Dominica early in October. Among the main components are the strengthening of the national and regional regulatory frameworks – the National Telecommunications Regulatory Commission (NTRC) and the Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority (ECTEL); promotion of additional competition in the sector; review of current universal access to telecommunications services and development of guidelines for the establishment of a Universal Service Fund (USF). Another major component is the improvement of growth and competitiveness in ICT-enabled services through the utilisation of broadband infrastructure.

The TICT Project will continue with a regional approach for development of the telecommunications and ICT sector. The project includes continuing support for the Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority (ECTEL) and for the respective National Telecommunications Regulatory Councils (NTRCs) of the OECS States participating in ECTEL, namely: The Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

The project is to be implemented at a total cost of US\$ 3.39 million over a period of four-and-a-half (4 ½) years. Financing

for the project is being provided through a combination of loans and credits from the World Bank along with contributions from each of the participating OECS States

The project will be implemented by ECTEL and comes on the heels of a successful implementation of the OECS Telecommunications Reform project (1998 – 2004), also funded by the World Bank, which set the foundation for the formation of ECTEL. In its final report the World Bank stated “The objective and performance targets of the project were met or surpassed and the overall outcome of the project is satisfactory. This rating reflects the significant transformation, changes and impact brought by the project through the introduction of competition and the establishment a functioning and competent regional telecommunications authority, the Eastern Caribbean Telecommunications Authority (ECTEL), which became the world’s first regional telecommunications authority”

Among the gains of liberalisation which have been noted by the World Bank include lower prices for fixed and mobile telephone services, and the establishment of a price cap regime for some telecommunications services in the member states of ECTEL.

Five countries – The Commonwealth of Dominica, Grenada, St. Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia and St. Vincent and the Grenadines are members of ECTEL.



Technicians operating the spectrum equipment

## A Home for Children at Risk

Government is set to manifest its commitment to the youth of Saint Lucia via the establishment of a Children's Home that will bring a sense of security and safety to children who are victims of abandonment and abuse.

Director of Human Services and Family Affairs Ms. Clementia Eugene says a home for children who are at risk is on the list of social protection priority areas currently being addressed by the Ministry of Health, Human Services, Family Affairs and Gender Relations.

Ms. Eugene said the project is being spearheaded by the Department of Human Services and Family Affairs. She explained that the concept is to provide an in-transit home for at

risk children. She says at this juncture, the Ministry is engaged in the initial phase of identifying a suitable site to establish the home.

“The process has been long but we are hoping very soon we will identify a suitable location which will be intended for only children between zero to 18 years.” Ms. Eugene went on to explain that the home will encompass the boarding of both males and females, but not young people who are in conflict with the law.

“There is a difference between children who are at risk because of care and protection and those who are deemed at risk because they are at conflict with the law and that’s two different target populations. The Ministry of Health has sole responsibility for those who are in need of care and protection.”

Ms. Eugene said the home will provide a therapeutic environment. “It will be a place that children can go for a very short term so that they could be provided a therapeutic space for recovery and healing after having being a victim of the different types of abuse whether it is neglect, abandonment, physical or sexual abuse.”

Children may be reintegrated with families after suitable interventions such as the Parenting Programme has been successfully undertaken in order to ensure children will be able to return to a healthy environment. However this should not be a likely option, the Department of Human Services and Family Affairs Director says they will explore the possibilities of placing the children with foster families.

## STUDENTS FLOCK COLLEGE FAIR



Several students from secondary schools in the island participated in the annual college fair which took place at the newly renovated Civil Service Association auditorium in Sans Souci. Twenty six colleges

and universities from the Caribbean, Canada, United States and the United Kingdom provided students and young working persons with the opportunity to engage in face to face discussions about the curriculum and

non-curriculum activities at these institutions which included the University of the West Indies. The fair has been organised by the Ministry of Education Human Resource Development Youth and Sport.

### NTN THIS WEEK ON NTN

Sat. Nov. 12th - Fri. Nov. 18th, 2005

- The GIS discusses Universal Health Care - Sat. Nov. 12th –9:15 a.m.
- Miss St. Lucia/World Reality Show 2005 - Sun. Nov. 13th, 12:00 Noon.
- The GIS sheds light on the Country Poverty Assessment currently taking place in St. Lucia - Mon. Nov. 14th, 6:15 p.m.
- Spotlighting Diabetes as the world honours World Diabetes Day - Mon. Nov. 14th, 8:00 p.m.
- CaribNation TV portrays Caribbean Artists in the Diaspora – Tues. Nov. 15th, 7:30 p.m.
- LUCELEC – 40 Years Later - Wed. Nov. 16th, 6:30 p.m.
- Fitness and Its Impact on Productivity – Thurs. Nov. 17th, 8:00 p.m.
- RBTT Young Leaders School Debate 2005 – Fri. Nov. 11th. 6:30 p.m.

Remember to tune in for:

- GIS News Breaks and Kweyol News daily from 6:30 p.m.
- Issues & Answers/Mondays at 8:00pm:
- Interview/Tuesdays at 6:15pm :
- Konsit Kweyol/Tuesdays at 8:00pm (Kweyol Discussion):
- Your Right to Know/Thursdays at 6:15 p.m. (Min. of Ed. Prog).
- Take 2/Fridays at 6:15pm (Week in Review)
- Weflechi/Fridays at 6:40pm - (Week in Review—Kweyol)

For the complete programme guide, log on to our website at [www.stlucia.gov.lc](http://www.stlucia.gov.lc) and then click on the NTN icon.

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