



OPENING DESBARRAS
PROUD DELIVERS
NEW ACCESS ROAD

It was a simple ceremony but it had a lot of meaning for the residents of Desbarras, a tiny agricultural community nestled in the hills of the Quarter of Babonneau. It marked the official opening of a brand new road linking the 28 lots making up the community.

Debarras used to be a chaotic settlement of squatters. But thanks to the six year old Labour Government's landmark Programme for the Regularisation of Unplanned Developments (PROUD), the community has been transformed into a neat network of houses on clearly demarcated lots, complete with modern infrastructure and utilities.

The land on which the residents live was never theirs. But through PROUD, the brainchild of Prime Minister, Hon. Dr. Kenny D. Anthony, they will change their status from squatters to land owners.

PROUD took root as an idea as Dr. Anthony traversed St Lucia's 17 constituencies in 1997 during the campaign for general elections which voted his St Lucia Labour Party (SLP) into government. As he went through the countryside and the urban ghettos, Dr. Anthony was moved by the appalling conditions in which so many people lived. Houses were built virtually upon each other. There were no amenities or public utilities.

It was because hundreds of landless St Lucians had simply conquered land and built the most rudimentary structures with the least comfortable living and sanitary conditions. In most cases, they squatted on Government land but, in many cases, on private land as well.

Dr Anthony thought long and hard about what could be done to improve the quality of life for these marginalized St Lucians. The result was PROUD which was (cont'd on page 3)



DOING THE HONOURS: Parliamentary Representative, Hon. Felix Finisterre, and a resident unveil a sign naming a section of the road.

SIX YEARS OF FAMILY COURT
STRIVING FOR EQUAL JUSTICE FOR ALL



Family Court director, Rumelia Dalphinis-King: "It has been a hard journey ... but a good journey."

Despite its gender-neutral designation, the perception somehow persists among St Lucians that the Family Court is a woman's court.

Perhaps it's because the overwhelming majority of clients happens to be women. Needless to say, men are just as welcome to come with their grievances. They too are always guaranteed a fair and impartial hearing.

Today, men are increasingly using the Family Court's services compared with previous years. However, the unfortunate label which has been around almost from the court's inception back in 1997 is seen as a barrier to more men coming forward.

As the Family Court marked its sixth anniversary last month, it welcomed the opportunity to address the lingering misconception. Equal access, impartiality

and fairness are core principles which always guide the court's operations; a senior official is reminding the public. "Let's take the Domestic Violence Act that comes under the jurisdiction of the Family Court," says Director, Rumelia Dalphinis-King. "Nowhere does it speak about the gender of the applicant. It is gender-neutral..."

Besides domestic violence, the Family Court adjudicates cases specifically related to juveniles and young persons charged with criminal offences, child support by delinquent parents, separation and maintenance, and attachment of earnings.

It does not handle child abuse cases. When they come up, they are always referred to the Department of Human Services. If, however, there is need for care and protection of the abused child, it is dealt with by the Family Court.

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EDITORIAL

MORE THAN JUST FETE!

For the vast majority of St Lucians, carnival is about having fun. A grand fete! There's absolutely nothing wrong with seeing carnival from this perspective. Given the many stresses of contemporary life, everyone needs an occasional de-stressor. And carnival, Caribbean-style, is surely one of the best de-stressors to be found anywhere in the world.

To limit ourselves to this narrow perspective of carnival, would be to limit our unlimited potential for development as a people with skills and talents to make a unique contribution to the world.

For the Caribbean, carnival represents an excellent platform, in the new economic environment shaped by globalization, for nurturing a new industry with considerable scope for making a significant contribution to future growth and prosperity at the national and regional levels.

We are referring to the development of a cultural industry — an objective of the the Cultural Development Foundation (CDF).

The CDF was set up to take carnival to a new level of organisation and success — most commentators agree this is already happening — and to oversee the general development of St Lucian culture.

To grasp the magnitude of the contribution of culture to economic development, one only has to look at the United States. Did you know that cultural products — music, movies, books, magazines, etc. — are America's second largest export earner after the aerospace industry? Well, it certainly is!


So carnival represents much more than fete. The designs of our band leaders, the compositions of our musicians, and the other creative talents that come to the fore at carnival time all represent a strong foundation for the development of some exciting products for the world.

We can do it! As America's experience shows, we only have to come up with the right marketing.



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SIX YEARS OF FAMILY COURT

Besides domestic violence, the Family Court adjudicates cases specifically related to juveniles and young persons charged with criminal offences, child support by delinquent parents, separation and maintenance, and attachment of earnings.

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As a support service, the Family Court offers a coaching service in court etiquette and procedure for child abuse victims. It's to help them feel at ease in the rigid court room environment and to be effective in giving evidence when their matters come up before the criminal court.

Confidentiality

Evidence is never discussed at these sessions. Therefore, the Family Court cannot be accused of telling the children what to say during the trial of their abusers.

Mrs. King, a British-trained social worker who has been with the Family Court from its inception, says the experience of the last six years does provide a case for the court's jurisdiction to be extended, beyond the current five subject areas, to other family issues requiring social support.

It's a matter, no doubt, that will be taken up with the relevant authorities.

Basically, anyone with a family-related issue can walk into the Family Court in the old Peter & Company building on Manoel Street and seek assistance. Access is that easy and simple.

The applicant is first seen by a qualified social worker – serving in the role of intake counsellor - and will be advised whether the Family Court can be of assistance or if the matter will have to be referred to another social agency.

“It’s the social support service, run by a team of four in-house social workers, which makes the Family Court truly unique within the local court system.”

Sometimes, the matter goes before the presiding magistrate the same day. This is usually what happens in very serious cases of domestic violence where the applicant's life may be in danger.

“If the client is at high risk, a protection order will be sent into the court and the person's case will be heard almost immediately,” Mrs. King explains.

“Before (the existence of the Family Court), that would not obtain,” she adds. “You would have had to wait for a day in the regular court system and that may have taken some time. If the case is not high risk, that case could be heard within the following week.”

It's the social support service, run by a team of four in-house social workers, which makes the Family Court truly unique within the local court system. Besides screening persons who walk in seeking assistance, Family Court social workers provide counselling in cases where it is ordered for clients.



THE COURTROOM: *The lay-out allows participants to sit on the same level during the hearing of cases.*

They conduct social investigations into cases relating to child custody and maintenance. And they also serve, among other things, as mediators, particularly in cases of visitation or access to parents who are separated from their children.

The Family Court owes its uniqueness to several other reasons. All cases are held in camera, that is, behind closed doors, out of the reach of the general public. And the court room environment is rather informal compared with other courts.

The presiding magistrate does not sit on an elevated podium, as obtains in other courts, but is on the same level as other participants. The prosecutor wears civilian clothes and everyone sits. And the emphasis is more on providing effective solutions to family problems than ordering punishment.

Handling Domestic Violence

Considerable court time is taken up dealing with cases of domestic violence, a serious social problem on the island. Ninety per cent of cases are brought by women, generally against men. But an increasing number of men is now openly admitting to being at the receiving end sometimes.

For example, they are beaten up by women who claim to be acting in self-defence. In other cases, they are beaten up by their women for gambling or drinking out money that was meant for the family.

Domestic violence, however, is not limited to physical beatings. It can be verbal, it

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can be psychological, etc. It is not limited to age, race, or class.

Mentioning the case of a woman in her 70s who had remained in an abusive relationship with her partner for 50 years, Mrs King says a lot of elderly persons out there are victims of domestic violence, sometimes at the hands of children.

“These people are silent in their pain,” she says. “They hardly ever come forward and you hardly ever hear about them but it is there.”

The 70 year old woman was an exception. After her half century of suffering and quietly hoping it would end one day that never came, she finally mustered the courage and came to the Family Court for help.

Her case was a success story because she was determined to bring the sorry episode to an end. It was the correct attitude because getting out of an abusive situation ultimately depends on what the victim wants for him or herself, notwithstanding the intervention of the Family Court.

Often, counselling for at least six months is what the Court orders to break the cycle of violence through re-education. Sometimes, counselling can last for up to a year. Generally speaking, an acceptance

of violence as the way to resolve disputes in the family is what feeds the abuse.

In many cases, the behaviour has been passed from generation to generation. Little wonder that some abusers describe their skirmishes with partners as “a little disagreement”. Their thinking does not allow them to see it as a big problem.

“Cases of domestic violence are there because we don't know our inner strengths of control and tolerance and it is because we lack control and tolerance, we lash out,” explains Mrs. King, who previously practised social work in Britain.

“A whole re-education has to occur to break the cycle,” she explains. “I think with our interventions, we have started a ripple in the big sea that is the problem. We hope this ripple will continue and that as awareness increases we will see a steady reduction as time passes.”

Child maintenance is another big issue that comes before the Family Court. Cases are brought mostly by mothers against

delinquent fathers. If, however, for some reason which can be proved in court, a father believes the money he's providing is not benefiting his child, he has a right by law to seek redress.

And some men are beginning to do so. In some cases, they are applying for custody of the children. “Their cases have always been heard,” says Mrs. King. “We have never turned those cases away and say because you are a man, you can't apply for custody of your child.”

Six Years of Success

Some men refuse to pay mothers child maintenance because of doubts that they are the biological father. In such cases, the Family Court offers a solution. Have a DNA test done right here in St Lucia to determine the paternity. Sure proof that the court is in step with the times!

Looking back at the last six years, Mrs King is satisfied the Family Court has made a difference and is full of praise for her staff of 12. She lists the expeditious handling of cases among the successes, taking into account what transpired before.

In fact, the Family Court has been so effective that its workload is ever increasing as more and more St Lucians come in for help.

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OPENING DESBARRAS

(from page 1)

launched on April 3, 2000 targeting 11 squatter communities around the island in the first instance.

Desbarras is the first of these 11 communities where work under the initiative has been completed. The project had several components – carrying out of boundary surveys, relocation of residents, and the construction of 1,924 feet of roads and 3,848 feet of drains.

A Milestone

At the late afternoon ceremony on Tuesday, July 29, to mark the official opening of the Desbarras Road, PROUD Coordinator, Mrs. Delia Didier-Nicholas, disclosed it was done “within budget”.

She explained that “the construction and drainage were approved by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) for the total sum of EC\$410,993.56. However, it was constructed at a cost of \$403,130.59.”

Describing the project as “a significant milestone in the social life of St Lucia”, Mrs. Didier-Nicholas told Desbarras residents they now had to take care of their new road, ensure proper garbage collection, plant flowers along the way, “and pay your bills”.

Parliamentary Representative for Babonneau, Hon. Felix Finisterre, told the gathering it was the Prime Minister’s idea “to raise people’s honour and improve their quality of life in every area of St Lucia, so that they could not consider themselves or be considered second class”.

Land at \$1 - \$1.50 per square foot.

He noted that Government was offering Desbarras residents the land on which they live at a price within their reach. “The land that has been made available through the project at a cost of \$1 and \$1.50 per square foot can be worth \$10 per square foot anywhere else,” he pointed out.

Finisterre, who is also the Minister for Communications, Works, Public Utilities and Transport and a former head of the St Lucia Heritage Tourism Project, said Desbarras residents have been able to help themselves through the successful turtle watch programme on nearby Grand Anse beach.

They’ve also benefited from a special CDB-backed programme executed by the National Research and Development Foundation (NRDF), which targeted persons from the area who are involved in the production of handicraft.



IMPROVED ACCESS: The new road for the residents of Desbarras.

Martin Satney, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Physical Development, Environment and Housing which administers PROUD, said it’s “one of the most important projects undertaken by this Government”.

“Its value,” he pointed out, “is in the fact that it seeks to empower people with access to land and title to that land.”

Desbarras has indeed been transformed; stone and muddy tracks have given way to roads with names like Turtle Drive, Hilltop Road, and Spot Avenue.

Residents no longer have to use two pairs of shoes or walk bare feet to get to the main road. Children now ride bicycles where they previously twisted ankles. Construction of new homes is taking place, and motor vehicle owners are happy.

PROUD touching lives.

But Desbarras isn’t the only part of Babonneau benefiting from PROUD. Similar works are also underway at Pays Perdu, also known as Resina, where a new road is under construction.

PROUD is also touching lives elsewhere on the island. Boundary surveys and other works are in progress at Bexon, from the area south of the Catholic Church extending to include communities such as Sarrot, Labayee, Cendre de Feu, and Ravine Poisson.

In Vieux Fort, work continues in several areas. At Derriere Morne, procurements are in progress for boundary surveys pending CDB approval. At La Tourney, boundary surveys have been completed and residents are being relocated to new lots.

Construction work is also in progress on roads and drains at La Ressource.

In the south as well, boundary surveys are expected to commence in La Croix, Laborie by August 11. At Piaye, boundary surveys are complete and the collection of data will commence during the second week of August in preparation for title deeds.

The ceremony in Desbarras was clearly a moment of nostalgia for Prime Minister Anthony. He recalled when it all started – during his first visit to the area while campaigning for the 1997 election with the then SLP candidate, the late Kenneth John.

He told the residents gathered: “You complained about your conditions – about your houses, about the land, about your roads. I promised to do what I could if I were elected.

“We didn’t get to do it in the first five years and you could have turned your backs. But still you kept your trust and confidence. It is I, therefore, who now must thank you for that trust reposed in my government.”

Still addressing the residents, the Prime Minister sought to put the ceremony in its proper context: “This project has touched and changed your lives”.

“The new life you now have is a lesson that no matter where you are in St Lucia, this Government will help you. No one lives too far to be helped ...,” he remarked.

“We all in St Lucia should have the same honour and dignity of being St Lucian. What’s available in Castries should be available to everyone else, everywhere else.”

Enhancing the value of land

Dr. Anthony urged those who now own or are purchasing lots through PROUD to improve the value of their property. “You must elevate and beautify your community, plant flowers near your house and keep your little community,” he urged.

“If this is done, it will enhance the value of your land and with your title to your land, you will now have the power to do so much more for your future,” he pointed out.

The Prime Minister indicated that funding had already been secured for the much-anticipated road from Garrand to Desbarras, to be constructed with a loan from the French Development Agency

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ALL EARS: Whatever this Desbarras resident is saying has the full attention of the Prime Minister. Looking on in the background is PROUD Coordinator, Mrs. Delia Didier-Nicholas, and Permanent Secretary Martin Satney.

SLREP was launched in 1997 to assist in providing income-generating alternatives for rural residents, especially those displaced by the decline of bananas.

Whenever the topic of agricultural diversification is discussed, not just here in St Lucia but practically anywhere else in the Caribbean, you often hear a common complaint. There hasn't been sufficient progress!

While that may very well be true, considering the adjustment challenges facing traditional export agriculture as a result of globalization, the tendency to dwell on this particular shortcoming does cloud any simultaneous successes.

Following the virtual decimation of bananas by the onset of trade liberalization in the 1990s, diversification not only of agriculture in St Lucia, but of the economy as a whole, has assumed highest priority as a strategic objective for Government.

It's part of an extensive economic restructuring and repositioning exercise quietly taking place, to help St Lucia cope not only with the challenges of globalization but also to take advantage of new business opportunities which may come along.

Agricultural Diversification

Over the past six years, the St Lucia Rural Enterprise Development Project (SLREP) has played a key role in advancing this broad national objective. As it winds down operations after reaching the end of its project life earlier this year, SLREP is leaving behind solid evidence that agricultural diversification has indeed made encouraging headway.

"We have been able to build the capacity of rural people through our many interventions," says Project Coordinator, David Demacque, summing up the experience of the last six years. "To really maintain and sustain rural people to help

DIVERSIFICATION

St Lucia Rural Enterprise Development Project



SLREP Project Coordinator, David Demacque: *"We have been able to build the capacity of rural people"* them counter the effects of globalization, you really need to strengthen their capacity."

Jointly funded by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Government of St Lucia, SLREP was launched in 1997 as a six-year, EC\$12.7 million project to assist in providing income-generating alternatives for rural residents, especially those displaced by the decline of bananas.

While bananas still dominate the agriculture sector and is expected to remain the island's principal cash crop for some time to come, a few promising alternatives have started to emerge as a



PEOPLE EMPOWERMENT: *Farmers engaged in crops used in agro-processing*

result of SLREP's wide-ranging initiatives. More importantly, they represent either new or potential foreign exchange-earning opportunities for the St. Lucia economy.

Hot peppers are one good example. Currently, about 100 farmers are growing the commodity primarily for export to the United States through River Doree Holdings, a Choiseul-based farm enterprise which has taken a leading role in reviving the cultivation of hot peppers for export. This opportunity arose after SLREP sent a small trade mission to Miami to visit importers and carry out an assessment of the hot pepper market to determine if there were any possibilities for business out of St Lucia.

Reaching New Markets

There was! And what worked in St Lucia's favour was the fact that its credentials as a producer were already established in the market since local peppers were available in Miami many years before.

"We were able to creep back in the market slowly and then we got two main buyers who decided to try St Lucia again and that is really how we started," says SLREP's Marketing Officer, Vincent La Corbiniere.

In a clear demonstration of how the project has taken off, River Doree Holdings' purchases from farmers more than tripled between 2000 and 2002. According to figures made available by SLREP, purchases jumped from 111,771 pounds in 2000 to 347,611 pounds by 2002.

Dasheen too was showing tremendous promise in the United States as a new export crop until a surprise decision by

It has re-energized the Belle Vue I Cooperative in Soufriere. It has some residents of Anse Ger in Mi establish a paper manufacturin business using banana leaves, leaves and old jeans.



FOR EXPORT: *Soren Hofdal (centre) of peppers are prepared for shipment to Miami* farmers scuttled SLREP's efforts. Re shipments were going up to Miami but after price of dasheen here went up, farmers suddenly stopped exporting and shifted attention to local market because there was more money to be made.

According to La Corbiniere, St Lucia by then achieved "the distinction of being the second dasheen producer in the Miami market. Obviously disappointed, he says the experience highlights a critical need for local farmers to diversify.



NEW INDUSTRY: *Rabbit rearing has become more organised thanks to SLREP.*

ON MOVES FORWARD

ment Project (SLREP) makes a Big Impact

receive more education about the requirements for successful exporting.

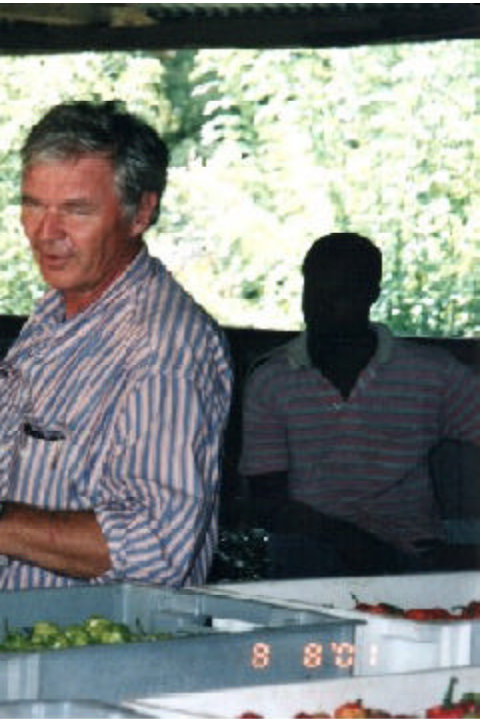
“When the price is high in St Lucia, farmers don’t want to export but when prices are low, they want to export,” observes La Corbiniere. “You cannot develop an export market like that. You have to be consistent.”

Certainly, if there’s one lesson which St Lucia’s four-decades-long involvement in bananas does provide for farmers going into a new cash crops, it’s that exporting offers greater scope for the long-term growth and success of their business than the domestic market.

Cassava Farming

Thanks also to SLREP, which has operated out of an office in La Fargue, Choiseul, a sea moss industry with export potential is taking shape in the east coast village of Praslin. And cassava farming has expanded to such an extent in the Vieux Fort community of Vige-Cacao, that St Lucia has started exporting farine to neighbouring Martinique and soon may be adding St Kitts as a new customer.

For several years now, the Praslin Sea Moss Farmers Association has been



Idings inside his post-harvest facility as

ating, harvesting and processing sea moss assistance from various agencies. However, isn’t until SLREP came on board that the ry made a big leap forward towards putting erations on a true commercial footing.

unding obtained from the Poverty Reduction (PRF), SLREP helped the 25-member iation to open a small processing plant boosted production capacity. Processing ntly takes place three days a week, ling employment for about five persons from mmunity.

St Lucia Distillers Ltd is a major local customer, purchasing some 90 gallons of processed sea moss every week for use in the manufacture of some of its beverage products. Right now, the industry looks poised for a significant export breakthrough in Barbados.

Networking

Negotiations have been taking place with a Barbadian concern which, Demacque says, is interested in buying bottled sea moss in a variety of local fruit flavours – passion fruit, tamarind, cherry, etc.

When SLREP went into Vige-Cacao, cassava production was essentially a crude, backyard business involving a number of families who operated independently of each other.

SLPREP not only brought the 60 producers together by facilitating the establishment of an association, it was also instrumental in setting up a factory with more efficient methods of producing farine. A network of 200 farmers grows cassava for processing into farine by the association.

“The women used to grate the cassava with their hands which exposed them to the possibility of injury,” recalls Demacque, a former Director of Agriculture in the Ministry of Agriculture here. “We introduced them to a simple electric grater which has made the process of manufacture a lot faster and safer.”

The group so far has shipped about six tons of farine to an importer in Martinique. Demand there, however, is seasonal so SLREP is hoping an opportunity will soon open up in St Kitts where there is demand for the product and enquiries have yielded encouraging results.

SLREP has been involved in so many projects, the list is simply too long to mention. It has assisted Choiseul’s craft



Storage facilities built with technical support from SLREP improves irrigation

Over the past six years, the St Lucia Rural Enterprise Development Project (SLREP) has played a key role in advancing this broad national objective. As it winds down operations after reaching the end of its project life earlier this year, SLREP is leaving behind solid evidence that agricultural diversification has indeed made encouraging headway.

producers. It has re-energized the Belle Vue Farmers Cooperative in Soufriere. It has helped some residents of Anse Ger in Micoud to establish a paper manufacturing small business using banana leaves, cassava leaves and old jeans. A buyer in Germany is reportedly interested in obtaining supplies of the craft paper from the group.

These are but a few examples of SLREP’s many projects. However, one which really stands out for its social significance is the development of a rabbit industry which has created a livelihood for several women, mostly heads of households, who otherwise would be unemployed.

“At this point in time, the demand for fresh rabbit meat outstrips the supply,” says

Demacque. “When Soiye Vieux Fort started, the demand was 100 lbs a week, now it has gone to 200 lbs. That is in addition to the supermarkets so our focus now is working with the farmers to help them expand production.”

Approximately 30 farmers, concentrated mainly in Micoud, Vieux Fort and Saltibus, are engaged in rabbit rearing at present.

With SLREP scheduled to officially cease operations next March, it is planning for the future by seeking to ensure that clients continue to receive the necessary institutional support to sustain the growth of their enterprises.

It had planned a consultation with non-governmental organisations on July 28 and has scheduled another for August 11, this time with agencies like the BELFUND that are involved in supporting the development of micro-enterprises.

“What we will say to the agencies on August 11 is ‘this is what we have done, there is potential for it, and how best can our clients continue to receive support and services to help them to develop further’,” says Demacque.

“Many of the issues revolve around marketing and these persons will continue to need services as far as market information,” he adds. “We have really seen through the SLREP experience the extent to which the lack of information can really keep people at bay in terms of the opportunities that exist.” ●



DRYING SEAMOSS: Marketing Officer Vincent La Corbiniere (right) looks on as a representative of the Ministry of Agriculture examines some dried sea moss.

W.T.O: FRIEND OR FOE?

St. Lucian Parliamentarians met for two days (August 04 - 05, 2003) to examine key issues in international trade and review the role of the World Trade Organisation. The following is an excerpt from the address delivered by Prime Minster Dr. Kenny Anthony.

“ It gives me great pleasure to welcome to Saint Lucia, the WTO officials and the other experts who have traveled to our shores to assist us with the conduct of this Parliamentary seminar. We are looking forward most eagerly to share in your knowledge of WTO rules and procedures, as well as to engage you in a debate which should help to bring greater clarity, coherence and consistency to our national positions in the current trade negotiations.

I understand that for some of you this is your first visit to Saint Lucia, so I trust that you will be able to take some time from your busy schedule to travel around our country, to experience its beauty and the hospitality of our people, but also to obtain a better appreciation of the defining characteristics of our particular, small island developing state. Beauty can admit of weaknesses, and in our case, it is our economic fragility and vulnerability.

As has been mentioned already, this National Seminar for Parliamentarians is only the second ever to be convened by the WTO, the first being in Cape Town, South Africa. The acceptance by the WTO of our request for this seminar is no doubt a tribute to the high profile and respect that Saint Lucia has been able to earn for itself within the WTO.

The WTO, perhaps more than any other international organization, has been dominated by power relations among its members. In that organization, it is commercial and economic powers which are the principal determinants of the attention received and the influence which can be exerted.

When a small country like Saint Lucia whose share of the world trade does not even register in the statistics, showing up as 0.00%, and does not even have a resident Embassy in Geneva, the attention and recognition extended to it is almost suspicious.

A VICTIM OF THE MULTI-LATERAL

TRADING SYSTEM

Having welcomed you, I must be frank and tell you, that Saint Lucia does not regard the WTO as a friend. Saint Lucia is a casualty of the multilateral trading system, administered by the WTO. As you might have anticipated, I am referring to the impact of the WTO decisions on the preferential arrangements for the export of our bananas. Unquestionably, the WTO decisions, upholding the challenge to the preferential regime by the United States, have helped to cripple the banana industry in Saint Lucia, and the Windward Islands.

Since those decisions, prices have fallen dramatically, the Windward Islands have lost their market share in the United Kingdom, farmers have abandoned the industry, and new requirements have been imposed for the production and marketing of fruit. Not surprisingly, export plummeted from a high

income of E.C\$188.4 million in 1990 to EC\$ \$110.7 million in 1994 and now to EC\$ 41.16 million in 2001. Likewise, exports fell from 117,564 tons in 1990, to 90,254 tons in 1994 and now 34,044 tons in 2001. Admittedly, production in 2001 was severely affected by a debilitating drought.

I shall not bother to explain the social and emotional consequences that have followed in the wake of the decline of our banana industry. Given our experience, how, then could the WTO be an asset to small states?

As if you have not yet arrived at that conclusion, I merely wish to say that I am far from sanguine about the WTO. Its fundamental principles and accompanying practices rarely impact in a benign manner on small and weak trading nations.

QUALITY OF MEMBERSHIP

The WTO was always meant to be a truly global institution. To enjoy that status however, it is not enough that it opens its doors to membership by all countries. While the numerical size of membership is important, greater importance should be placed on the quality of that membership.

What is essential is the right and the ability of all members to participate meaningfully in an institution whose business is to secure benefits for all, and I would assume that that includes the disadvantaged. The fundamental rights of members cannot be dependent on their size or their political or economic power.

But Honourable members and friends, the WTO is now a permanent feature of the architecture of global regulations, and we have to live with it as part of our daily lives. We are compelled to find the means of securing our interests and this must start with familiarising ourselves with, provisions of the WTO.

A LOSS OF SOVEREIGNTY

Unquestionably, the WTO system of global regulation is proving to be a serious constraint on the scope of national sovereignty over domestic policy. Countries have lost sovereign control over the levels of taxation to be applied to imports, an area long targeted by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Indeed, if some countries have their way, government procurement and competition policy among others would go the same way.

Whilst our maneuverability is being steadily limited domestically, of even greater concern is that the scope for preserving international rules which permit us to obtain benefits essential for our economic growth and development are being regularly challenged and steadily eroded.

The tide is also flowing against non-reciprocal trade preferences. We have for
(cont'd on page 7)



The following is an edited version of opening remarks by Hon. Julian R. Hunte Minister for External Affairs International Trade and Civil Aviation.

“I welcome all of you here this morning to what is, in many ways, an historic event. I welcome in particular, our guests and resource persons from the World Trade Organisation who will be with us over the next two days.

The Ministry of External Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation is pleased to be associated with the World Trade Organisation in hosting this National Workshop for Parliamentarians on the Multilateral Trading System and the Doha Development Agenda.

The significance of this workshop should not escape us coming as it does at a time when we are engaged in preparations for the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference scheduled to be held in Cancun, Mexico, September 10 to 14, 2003.

But the background to this workshop dates from approximately eighteen (18) months ago when Saint Lucia, among other developing countries, was asked to submit its Technical Assistance and Capacity Building needs to the WTO. We were one of the few countries which recognised the necessity to sensitise parliamentarians to the intricacies of the multi-lateral trading system, and of the operations of the WTO in particular.

It is in response to this request that this two-day workshop is being held for parliamentarians in Saint Lucia. It is only the second of these National Workshops to be held by the WTO, the first one having been held in South Africa. It is also my understanding that this National Workshop follows a regional one held last week in Trinidad under the auspices of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, where delegations from member countries took part. At this workshop, however, we will be able to expose not just one or two members of parliament to these trade issues but, indeed, our entire parliament.

To us, such exposure of members of Parliament to the features of the Multi-lateral trading system is extremely important. It was the former Director General of the WTO who wrote the following:

“The WTO is a government to government organisation. We do not tell governments what to do. They tell us. We operate by consensus, thus every member government

has veto power. Our agreements are negotiated by Ambassadors or Ministers who represent their governments and who in turn are responsible for advancing their government agenda. That is why it is important for parliamentarians and legislators to know about the institutions they own and fund. It is important for them to also know that they have access to an invaluable resource at the WTO Secretariat, to help them pass the right rules for their country and their people”.

Mr. Chairman, International Trade negotiations are now at a very critical phase. We are a mere few weeks away from the crucial fifth Ministerial Meeting in Cancún. For small countries like Saint Lucia which do not have representation in Geneva, it is absolutely crucial that we find alternative ways of influencing the process towards taking decisions, which take our circumstances into account.

From past experience we have learnt that it is necessary for us to work extremely hard in order that our voices may be heard in the various fora. It has been an uphill task to get issues related to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) on the agenda.

It appears that although there is recognition of the Special Vulnerabilities of Small Economies by the major trading nations, there remains the reluctance to include a separate category of nations within the WTO. And so we must continue to argue our case and make our voices heard.

We cannot, however, make informed contributions if we do not keep abreast of developments. As Parliamentarians we must be at the centre of the debate. But we cannot achieve all that is needed on our own.

The inclusion of the Private Sector, therefore, as part of our deliberations, signifies the efforts of Government to build national consensus and ensure that the views of all parties are represented.

Against this background, I look forward with great expectation to our deliberations over the next few days, and I am confident in my hopes that in the final analysis we will all find this exercise to have been useful.”

from page 6

WTO Friend or Foe?

decades been able to export to the European Union, the USA and Canada without having to offer reciprocal duty free entry for the exports of those countries. We were fortunate to secure a WTO waiver for those arrangements, but we must wonder how much longer can we rely on such derogation from the rules.

Even outside of those special provisions, the liberalization which got a great boost with the end of the Uruguay Round and the birth of the WTO, has resulted in a steady reduction in tariffs which is likely to accelerate even further with the Doha Development Agenda.

What this means is that the value of our preferences are being continually eroded. If the garments which we sew get into the US market free of duty, the higher the tax which is applied to other similar garments imported into the US market, the greater the competitive advantage of the Saint Lucian garment. But as-across-the-board duties fall, the market becomes more difficult for our producers.

A WORLD WITHOUT TRADE PREFERENCES

We are fighting a losing battle to preserve preferences. Eventually, we will face a world without trading preferences. In theory this means, that we have to become more efficient, by lowering our costs and improving our quality.

These things are essential not only to compete internationally, but also domestically. Increasingly, local production will be obliged to face import competition. We cannot stop it, and we are told that, competition will be beneficial to the development of strong, viable industries, as well as to the consumers.

INFLUENCING RULES

While these are some of the things which we must do in order to survive, the real challenge for us small developing countries and island states is to secure changes to the rules to make them more sensitive to our needs. Hitherto, small countries have not really participated meaningfully in the multilateral trade negotiations, and cannot be perceived as having had any real influence on the outcomes. We must work together to change that.

In this regard, let me make two suggestions:

- 1) As small countries we must define our own goals, based on a clear understanding of what is genuinely in our interests and which will further our development. We must resist attempts to have our goals defined by outside agencies for which our interests can only be secondary or even incidental. While we value the advice and support of the Bretton Woods institutions and friendly governments, donor



Parliamentarians during the session on the WTO rules and issues

organisation and agencies, the definition of our goals and aspirations can only be done by ourselves.

- 2) We must keep the public with us. The domestic economic restructuring and the pursuit of changes to the WTO rules are truly massive tasks which will require the mobilization of our resources. But also, the pubic will need to understand why it is being asked to do things differently and why it is being called upon to make sacrifices.

WORKING AGAINST THE TIDE

Honourable members, we are now at a very difficult and challenging point in our economic history. The tide of liberalization is helping the stronger and more competitive while working against the weaker and less competitive.

The tragedy we face is that despite the most valiant efforts on our part, we seem incapable of successfully fighting the changes or working against the tide. However, there is something which we can do, and that is the lesson which is beginning to take shape for us in the WTO.

Think of a small sailboat making its way against the wind. Logically that should be an impossibility but those of you who know about sailing should understand the principle, and indeed might have mastered the technique of “tacking”. To achieve our goals and to make progress in defiance of the odds, we need clear vision. Temporary tactical lateral movements, even retreats, are sometimes necessary, but we must have a firm grip on the rudder. This is what permits us to move forward without being thrown here and there, or being carried along by the tide. It is not our strength which will get us where we have to, but our vision, unity of purpose, and determined pursuit of our goals.”

OPENING DESBARRAS

(from page 3)

(AFD) as part of a broader programme for upgrading access to tourism areas around the island.

Construction is expected to begin towards the end of the year, Finisterre had announced earlier. The road will enhance access to turtle watching areas in that section of Babonneau.

Finisterre also revealed that Government had identified 30 acres of private land for purchase in order to take the PROUD initiative to other sections of Babonneau.

The Prime Minister was full of praise for Mrs. Didier-Nicholas and the PROUD staff.

“I have much respect for the PROUD staff because it is not easy to regularize squatters,” he remarked.

“You know how it is.... The land isn’t even theirs but the moment they think you want to take it away from them, they want to reach for their cutlass. It’s not easy. It’s rough for the staff of PROUD, but they have made us all feel proud today.”

Several similar ceremonies are planned to take place over the coming months and years, to celebrate the completion of various PROUD projects which are making life better for hundreds of St Lucians around the island.

‘M’ FOR MINIBUSES!



Have you been wondering what’s the reason for the distinctive blue, new ‘M’ number plates which have been appearing on minibuses lately?It’s the start of a process of re-registering all motor vehicles on the island, using a special computer software package acquired by the Ministry of Communications, Works, Public Utilities and Transport.

The process began on July 1 and minibuses are receiving special attention.According to Minister of Communications, Works, Transport and Public Utilities Felix Finisterre, as minibus operators come in to renew their licences for the next two years, they will be issued with the new ‘M’ plate.

The number plate is being issued under the new Road Transport Act which came into effect last October.The new system will help authorities to more easily identify minibuses which are operating without a licence. An amnesty is currently on. Come October, however, authorities plan to start cracking down on defaulters.

MESSAGES, MYSTERIES & MEN

Another View of Carnival 2003



Young stilt walkers formed part of the contingent of revellers from Guadeloupe.



HEALTHY MESSAGE: Ministry of Health band spreads message about healthy lifestyles. Health Minister, Damian Greaves leads.



Carnival is over and the Cultural Development Foundation is already full speed ahead preparing the St. Lucia contingent for CARIFESTA VIII in Suriname under the theme “Many Cultures, the Essence of Togetherness, the Spirit of the Caribbean”. Dates August 24th - 30th 2003.

TWO BLACKS IN WHITE : On the left Director of Information Services, Embert Charles, from the band XS Energy portrayal of “Endangered” On the right - Programme Manager with the Office of Private Sector Relations, Erstein ‘Mallet’ Edwards, from the band Rituals portrayal of “Timbuktu”



FAMILY COURT

(from page 2)

“We deal generally with the negative side of human behaviour but we hope that when they move on to another step of their journey, that those who have come through the doors of the Family Court would have learnt something about themselves and their strengths,” says Mrs. King.

“The first six years have been a journey that is second to none for those of us who are the pioneers of the Family Court,” she adds. “It has been a hard journey but it has been a good journey. I see the Family Court growing, growing in its initiatives, and growing in its service to St Lucia.”

Meanwhile, the Family Court is stepping up its community outreach to increase public awareness of its services. As such, any organisation which is interested in knowing more about what the Family Court does, is invited to contact the office. An officer will be happy to come and give a talk to the organisation.



OPENING DESBARRAS
PROUD DELIVERS
NEW ACCESS ROAD

It was a simple ceremony but it had a lot of meaning for the residents of Desbarras, a tiny agricultural community nestled in the hills of the Quarter of Babonneau. It marked the official opening of a brand new road linking the 28 lots making up the community.

Debarras used to be a chaotic settlement of squatters. But thanks to the six year old Labour Government's landmark Programme for the Regularisation of Unplanned Developments (PROUD), the community has been transformed into a neat network of houses on clearly demarcated lots, complete with modern infrastructure and utilities.

The land on which the residents live was never theirs. But through PROUD, the brainchild of Prime Minister, Hon. Dr. Kenny D. Anthony, they will change their status from squatters to land owners.

PROUD took root as an idea as Dr. Anthony traversed St Lucia's 17 constituencies in 1997 during the campaign for general elections which voted his St Lucia Labour Party (SLP) into government. As he went through the countryside and the urban ghettos, Dr. Anthony was moved by the appalling conditions in which so many people lived. Houses were built virtually upon each other. There were no amenities or public utilities.

It was because hundreds of landless St Lucians had simply conquered land and built the most rudimentary structures with the least comfortable living and sanitary conditions. In most cases, they squatted on Government land but, in many cases, on private land as well.

Dr Anthony thought long and hard about what could be done to improve the quality of life for these marginalized St Lucians. The result was PROUD which was (cont'd on page 3)



DOING THE HONOURS: Parliamentary Representative, Hon. Felix Finisterre, and a resident unveil a sign naming a section of the road.

SIX YEARS OF FAMILY COURT
STRIVING FOR EQUAL JUSTICE FOR ALL



Family Court director, Rumelia Dalphinis-King: "It has been a hard journey ... but a good journey."

Despite its gender-neutral designation, the perception somehow persists among St Lucians that the Family Court is a woman's court.

Perhaps it's because the overwhelming majority of clients happens to be women. Needless to say, men are just as welcome to come with their grievances. They too are always guaranteed a fair and impartial hearing.

Today, men are increasingly using the Family Court's services compared with previous years. However, the unfortunate label which has been around almost from the court's inception back in 1997 is seen as a barrier to more men coming forward.

As the Family Court marked its sixth anniversary last month, it welcomed the opportunity to address the lingering misconception. Equal access, impartiality

and fairness are core principles which always guide the court's operations; a senior official is reminding the public. "Let's take the Domestic Violence Act that comes under the jurisdiction of the Family Court," says Director, Rumelia Dalphinis-King. "Nowhere does it speak about the gender of the applicant. It is gender-neutral..."

Besides domestic violence, the Family Court adjudicates cases specifically related to juveniles and young persons charged with criminal offences, child support by delinquent parents, separation and maintenance, and attachment of earnings.

It does not handle child abuse cases. When they come up, they are always referred to the Department of Human Services. If, however, there is need for care and protection of the abused child, it is dealt with by the Family Court.

(cont'd on page 2)

EDITORIAL

MORE THAN JUST FETE!

For the vast majority of St Lucians, carnival is about having fun. A grand fete! There's absolutely nothing wrong with seeing carnival from this perspective. Given the many stresses of contemporary life, everyone needs an occasional de-stressor. And carnival, Caribbean-style, is surely one of the best de-stressors to be found anywhere in the world.

To limit ourselves to this narrow perspective of carnival, would be to limit our unlimited potential for development as a people with skills and talents to make a unique contribution to the world.

For the Caribbean, carnival represents an excellent platform, in the new economic environment shaped by globalization, for nurturing a new industry with considerable scope for making a significant contribution to future growth and prosperity at the national and regional levels.

We are referring to the development of a cultural industry — an objective of the the Cultural Development Foundation (CDF).

The CDF was set up to take carnival to a new level of organisation and success — most commentators agree this is already happening — and to oversee the general development of St Lucian culture.

To grasp the magnitude of the contribution of culture to economic development, one only has to look at the United States. Did you know that cultural products — music, movies, books, magazines, etc. — are America's second largest export earner after the aerospace industry? Well, it certainly is!

So carnival represents much more than fete. The designs of our band leaders, the compositions of our musicians, and the other creative talents that come to the fore at carnival time all represent a strong foundation for the development of some exciting products for the world.

We can do it! As America's experience shows, we only have to come up with the right marketing.

NTN "Take 2" - A fifteen minute news review of the week. Every Friday at 6.15 p.m. on NTN, Cablevision Channel 2.

Government Notebook A fresh news package daily on all local radio stations

SIX YEARS OF FAMILY COURT

Besides domestic violence, the Family Court adjudicates cases specifically related to juveniles and young persons charged with criminal offences, child support by delinquent parents, separation and maintenance, and attachment of earnings.

(from page 1)
As a support service, the Family Court offers a coaching service in court etiquette and procedure for child abuse victims. It's to help them feel at ease in the rigid court room environment and to be effective in giving evidence when their matters come up before the criminal court.

Confidentiality

Evidence is never discussed at these sessions. Therefore, the Family Court cannot be accused of telling the children what to say during the trial of their abusers.

Mrs. King, a British-trained social worker who has been with the Family Court from its inception, says the experience of the last six years does provide a case for the court's jurisdiction to be extended, beyond the current five subject areas, to other family issues requiring social support.

It's a matter, no doubt, that will be taken up with the relevant authorities.

Basically, anyone with a family-related issue can walk into the Family Court in the old Peter & Company building on Manoel Street and seek assistance. Access is that easy and simple.

The applicant is first seen by a qualified social worker – serving in the role of intake counsellor - and will be advised whether the Family Court can be of assistance or if the matter will have to be referred to another social agency.

“It’s the social support service, run by a team of four in-house social workers, which makes the Family Court truly unique within the local court system.”

Sometimes, the matter goes before the presiding magistrate the same day. This is usually what happens in very serious cases of domestic violence where the applicant's life may be in danger.

“If the client is at high risk, a protection order will be sent into the court and the person's case will be heard almost immediately,” Mrs. King explains.

“Before (the existence of the Family Court), that would not obtain,” she adds. “You would have had to wait for a day in the regular court system and that may have taken some time. If the case is not high risk, that case could be heard within the following week.”

It's the social support service, run by a team of four in-house social workers, which makes the Family Court truly unique within the local court system. Besides screening persons who walk in seeking assistance, Family Court social workers provide counselling in cases where it is ordered for clients.



THE COURTROOM: *The lay-out allows participants to sit on the same level during the hearing of cases.*

They conduct social investigations into cases relating to child custody and maintenance. And they also serve, among other things, as mediators, particularly in cases of visitation or access to parents who are separated from their children.

The Family Court owes its uniqueness to several other reasons. All cases are held in camera, that is, behind closed doors, out of the reach of the general public. And the court room environment is rather informal compared with other courts.

The presiding magistrate does not sit on an elevated podium, as obtains in other courts, but is on the same level as other participants. The prosecutor wears civilian clothes and everyone sits. And the emphasis is more on providing effective solutions to family problems than ordering punishment.

Handling Domestic Violence

Considerable court time is taken up dealing with cases of domestic violence, a serious social problem on the island. Ninety per cent of cases are brought by women, generally against men. But an increasing number of men is now openly admitting to being at the receiving end sometimes.

For example, they are beaten up by women who claim to be acting in self-defence. In other cases, they are beaten up by their women for gambling or drinking out money that was meant for the family.

Domestic violence, however, is not limited to physical beatings. It can be verbal, it

All cases are held in camera, that is, behind closed doors, out of the reach of the general public. And the court room environment is rather informal compared with other courts.

can be psychological, etc. It is not limited to age, race, or class.

Mentioning the case of a woman in her 70s who had remained in an abusive relationship with her partner for 50 years, Mrs King says a lot of elderly persons out there are victims of domestic violence, sometimes at the hands of children.

“These people are silent in their pain,” she says. “They hardly ever come forward and you hardly ever hear about them but it is there.”

The 70 year old woman was an exception. After her half century of suffering and quietly hoping it would end one day that never came, she finally mustered the courage and came to the Family Court for help.

Her case was a success story because she was determined to bring the sorry episode to an end. It was the correct attitude because getting out of an abusive situation ultimately depends on what the victim wants for him or herself, notwithstanding the intervention of the Family Court.

Often, counselling for at least six months is what the Court orders to break the cycle of violence through re-education. Sometimes, counselling can last for up to a year. Generally speaking, an acceptance

of violence as the way to resolve disputes in the family is what feeds the abuse.

In many cases, the behaviour has been passed from generation to generation. Little wonder that some abusers describe their skirmishes with partners as “a little disagreement”. Their thinking does not allow them to see it as a big problem.

“Cases of domestic violence are there because we don't know our inner strengths of control and tolerance and it is because we lack control and tolerance, we lash out,” explains Mrs. King, who previously practised social work in Britain.

“A whole re-education has to occur to break the cycle,” she explains. “I think with our interventions, we have started a ripple in the big sea that is the problem. We hope this ripple will continue and that as awareness increases we will see a steady reduction as time passes.”

Child maintenance is another big issue that comes before the Family Court. Cases are brought mostly by mothers against

delinquent fathers. If, however, for some reason which can be proved in court, a father believes the money he's providing is not benefiting his child, he has a right by law to seek redress.

And some men are beginning to do so. In some cases, they are applying for custody of the children. “Their cases have always been heard,” says Mrs. King. “We have never turned those cases away and say because you are a man, you can't apply for custody of your child.”

Six Years of Success

Some men refuse to pay mothers child maintenance because of doubts that they are the biological father. In such cases, the Family Court offers a solution. Have a DNA test done right here in St Lucia to determine the paternity. Sure proof that the court is in step with the times!

Looking back at the last six years, Mrs King is satisfied the Family Court has made a difference and is full of praise for her staff of 12. She lists the expeditious handling of cases among the successes, taking into account what transpired before.

In fact, the Family Court has been so effective that its workload is ever increasing as more and more St Lucians come in for help.

(cont'd on page 8)

“They conduct social investigations into cases relating to child custody and maintenance. And they also serve, among other things, as mediators, particularly in cases of visitation or access to parents who are separated from their children.”

OPENING DESBARRAS

(from page 1)

launched on April 3, 2000 targeting 11 squatter communities around the island in the first instance.

Desbarras is the first of these 11 communities where work under the initiative has been completed. The project had several components – carrying out of boundary surveys, relocation of residents, and the construction of 1,924 feet of roads and 3,848 feet of drains.

A Milestone

At the late afternoon ceremony on Tuesday, July 29, to mark the official opening of the Desbarras Road, PROUD Coordinator, Mrs. Delia Didier-Nicholas, disclosed it was done “within budget”.

She explained that “the construction and drainage were approved by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) for the total sum of EC\$410,993.56. However, it was constructed at a cost of \$403,130.59.”

Describing the project as “a significant milestone in the social life of St Lucia”, Mrs. Didier-Nicholas told Desbarras residents they now had to take care of their new road, ensure proper garbage collection, plant flowers along the way, “and pay your bills”.

Parliamentary Representative for Babonneau, Hon. Felix Finisterre, told the gathering it was the Prime Minister’s idea “to raise people’s honour and improve their quality of life in every area of St Lucia, so that they could not consider themselves or be considered second class”.

Land at \$1 - \$1.50 per square foot.

He noted that Government was offering Desbarras residents the land on which they live at a price within their reach. “The land that has been made available through the project at a cost of \$1 and \$1.50 per square foot can be worth \$10 per square foot anywhere else,” he pointed out.

Finisterre, who is also the Minister for Communications, Works, Public Utilities and Transport and a former head of the St Lucia Heritage Tourism Project, said Desbarras residents have been able to help themselves through the successful turtle watch programme on nearby Grand Anse beach.

They’ve also benefited from a special CDB-backed programme executed by the National Research and Development Foundation (NRDF), which targeted persons from the area who are involved in the production of handicraft.



IMPROVED ACCESS: The new road for the residents of Desbarras.

Martin Satney, the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Physical Development, Environment and Housing which administers PROUD, said it’s “one of the most important projects undertaken by this Government”.

“Its value,” he pointed out, “is in the fact that it seeks to empower people with access to land and title to that land.”

Desbarras has indeed been transformed; stone and muddy tracks have given way to roads with names like Turtle Drive, Hilltop Road, and Spot Avenue.

Residents no longer have to use two pairs of shoes or walk bare feet to get to the main road. Children now ride bicycles where they previously twisted ankles. Construction of new homes is taking place, and motor vehicle owners are happy.

PROUD touching lives.

But Desbarras isn’t the only part of Babonneau benefiting from PROUD. Similar works are also underway at Pays Perdu, also known as Resina, where a new road is under construction.

PROUD is also touching lives elsewhere on the island. Boundary surveys and other works are in progress at Bexon, from the area south of the Catholic Church extending to include communities such as Sarrot, Labayee, Cendre de Feu, and Ravine Poisson.

In Vieux Fort, work continues in several areas. At Derriere Morne, procurements are in progress for boundary surveys pending CDB approval. At La Tourney, boundary surveys have been completed and residents are being relocated to new lots.

Construction work is also in progress on roads and drains at La Ressource.

In the south as well, boundary surveys are expected to commence in La Croix, Laborie by August 11. At Piaye, boundary surveys are complete and the collection of data will commence during the second week of August in preparation for title deeds.

The ceremony in Desbarras was clearly a moment of nostalgia for Prime Minister Anthony. He recalled when it all started – during his first visit to the area while campaigning for the 1997 election with the then SLP candidate, the late Kenneth John.

He told the residents gathered: “You complained about your conditions – about your houses, about the land, about your roads. I promised to do what I could if I were elected.

“We didn’t get to do it in the first five years and you could have turned your backs. But still you kept your trust and confidence. It is I, therefore, who now must thank you for that trust reposed in my government.”

Still addressing the residents, the Prime Minister sought to put the ceremony in its proper context: “This project has touched and changed your lives”.

“The new life you now have is a lesson that no matter where you are in St Lucia, this Government will help you. No one lives too far to be helped ...,” he remarked.

“We all in St Lucia should have the same honour and dignity of being St Lucian. What’s available in Castries should be available to everyone else, everywhere else.”

Enhancing the value of land

Dr. Anthony urged those who now own or are purchasing lots through PROUD to improve the value of their property. “You must elevate and beautify your community, plant flowers near your house and keep your little community,” he urged.

“If this is done, it will enhance the value of your land and with your title to your land, you will now have the power to do so much more for your future,” he pointed out.

The Prime Minister indicated that funding had already been secured for the much-anticipated road from Garrand to Desbarras, to be constructed with a loan from the French Development Agency

(cont'd on page 7,



ALL EARS: Whatever this Desbarras resident is saying has the full attention of the Prime Minister. Looking on in the background is PROUD Coordinator, Mrs. Delia Didier-Nicholas, and Permanent Secretary Martin Satney.

SLREP was launched in 1997 to assist in providing income-generating alternatives for rural residents, especially those displaced by the decline of bananas.

Whenever the topic of agricultural diversification is discussed, not just here in St Lucia but practically anywhere else in the Caribbean, you often hear a common complaint. There hasn't been sufficient progress!

While that may very well be true, considering the adjustment challenges facing traditional export agriculture as a result of globalization, the tendency to dwell on this particular shortcoming does cloud any simultaneous successes.

Following the virtual decimation of bananas by the onset of trade liberalization in the 1990s, diversification not only of agriculture in St Lucia, but of the economy as a whole, has assumed highest priority as a strategic objective for Government.

It's part of an extensive economic restructuring and repositioning exercise quietly taking place, to help St Lucia cope not only with the challenges of globalization but also to take advantage of new business opportunities which may come along.

Agricultural Diversification

Over the past six years, the St Lucia Rural Enterprise Development Project (SLREP) has played a key role in advancing this broad national objective. As it winds down operations after reaching the end of its project life earlier this year, SLREP is leaving behind solid evidence that agricultural diversification has indeed made encouraging headway.

"We have been able to build the capacity of rural people through our many interventions," says Project Coordinator, David Demacque, summing up the experience of the last six years. "To really maintain and sustain rural people to help

DIVERSIFICATION

St Lucia Rural Enterprise Development Project



SLREP Project Coordinator, David Demacque: *"We have been able to build the capacity of rural people"*

them counter the effects of globalization, you really need to strengthen their capacity."

Jointly funded by the Caribbean Development Bank (CDB), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the Government of St Lucia, SLREP was launched in 1997 as a six-year, EC\$12.7 million project to assist in providing income-generating alternatives for rural residents, especially those displaced by the decline of bananas.

While bananas still dominate the agriculture sector and is expected to remain the island's principal cash crop for some time to come, a few promising alternatives have started to emerge as a



PEOPLE EMPOWERMENT: *Farmers engaged in crops used in agro-processing*

result of SLREP's wide-ranging initiatives. More importantly, they represent either new or potential foreign exchange-earning opportunities for the St. Lucia economy.

Hot peppers are one good example. Currently, about 100 farmers are growing the commodity primarily for export to the United States through River Doree Holdings, a Choiseul-based farm enterprise which has taken a leading role in reviving the cultivation of hot peppers for export. This opportunity arose after SLREP sent a small trade mission to Miami to visit importers and carry out an assessment of the hot pepper market to determine if there were any possibilities for business out of St Lucia.

Reaching New Markets

There was! And what worked in St Lucia's favour was the fact that its credentials as a producer were already established in the market since local peppers were available in Miami many years before.

"We were able to creep back in the market slowly and then we got two main buyers who decided to try St Lucia again and that is really how we started," says SLREP's Marketing Officer, Vincent La Corbiniere.

In a clear demonstration of how the project has taken off, River Doree Holdings' purchases from farmers more than tripled between 2000 and 2002. According to figures made available by SLREP, purchases jumped from 111,771 pounds in 2000 to 347,611 pounds by 2002.

Dasheen too was showing tremendous promise in the United States as a new export crop until a surprise decision by

It has re-energized the Belle Vue I Cooperative in Soufriere. It has some residents of Anse Ger in Mi establish a paper manufacturin business using banana leaves, leaves and old jeans.



FOR EXPORT: *Soren Hofdal (centre) of peppers are prepared for shipment to*

farmers scuttled SLREP's efforts. Re shipments were going up to Miami but after price of dasheen here went up, farmers suddenly stopped exporting and shifted attention to local market because there was more to be made.

According to La Corbiniere, St Lucia by then achieved "the distinction of being the second dasheen producer in the Miami market. Obviously disappointed, he says the experience highlights a critical need for local farmers to diversify.



NEW INDUSTRY: *Rabbit rearing has become more organised thanks to SLREP.*

ON MOVES FORWARD

ment Project (SLREP) makes a Big Impact

receive more education about the requirements for successful exporting.

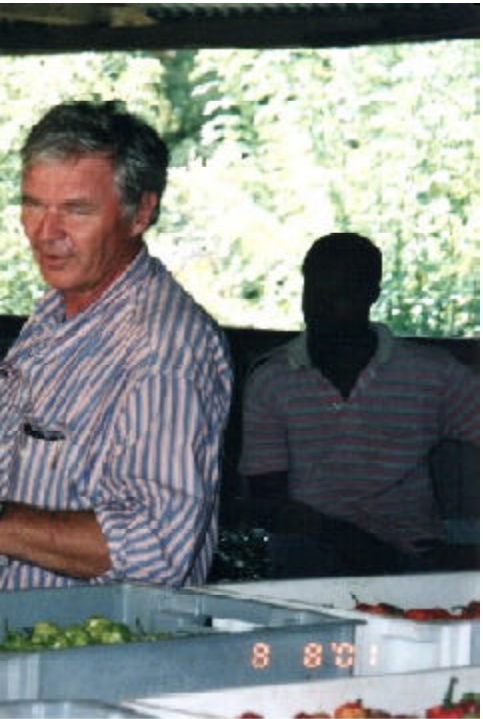
“When the price is high in St Lucia, farmers don’t want to export but when prices are low, they want to export,” observes La Corbiniere. “You cannot develop an export market like that. You have to be consistent.”

Certainly, if there’s one lesson which St Lucia’s four-decades-long involvement in bananas does provide for farmers going into a new cash crops, it’s that exporting offers greater scope for the long-term growth and success of their business than the domestic market.

Cassava Farming

Thanks also to SLREP, which has operated out of an office in La Fargue, Choiseul, a sea moss industry with export potential is taking shape in the east coast village of Praslin. And cassava farming has expanded to such an extent in the Vieux Fort community of Vige-Cacao, that St Lucia has started exporting farine to neighbouring Martinique and soon may be adding St Kitts as a new customer.

For several years now, the Praslin Sea Moss Farmers Association has been



Idings inside his post-harvest facility as

ating, harvesting and processing sea moss assistance from various agencies. However, n’t until SLREP came on board that the ry made a big leap forward towards putting erations on a true commercial footing.

unding obtained from the Poverty Reduction (PRF), SLREP helped the 25-member iation to open a small processing plant boosted production capacity. Processing ntly takes place three days a week, ling employment for about five persons from mmunity.

St Lucia Distillers Ltd is a major local customer, purchasing some 90 gallons of processed sea moss every week for use in the manufacture of some of its beverage products. Right now, the industry looks poised for a significant export breakthrough in Barbados.

Networking

Negotiations have been taking place with a Barbadian concern which, Demacque says, is interested in buying bottled sea moss in a variety of local fruit flavours – passion fruit, tamarind, cherry, etc.

When SLREP went into Vige-Cacao, cassava production was essentially a crude, backyard business involving a number of families who operated independently of each other.

SLPREP not only brought the 60 producers together by facilitating the establishment of an association, it was also instrumental in setting up a factory with more efficient methods of producing farine. A network of 200 farmers grows cassava for processing into farine by the association.

“The women used to grate the cassava with their hands which exposed them to the possibility of injury,” recalls Demacque, a former Director of Agriculture in the Ministry of Agriculture here. “We introduced them to a simple electric grater which has made the process of manufacture a lot faster and safer.”

The group so far has shipped about six tons of farine to an importer in Martinique. Demand there, however, is seasonal so SLREP is hoping an opportunity will soon open up in St Kitts where there is demand for the product and enquiries have yielded encouraging results.

SLREP has been involved in so many projects, the list is simply too long to mention. It has assisted Choiseul’s craft



Storage facilities built with technical support from SLREP improves irrigation

Over the past six years, the St Lucia Rural Enterprise Development Project (SLREP) has played a key role in advancing this broad national objective. As it winds down operations after reaching the end of its project life earlier this year, SLREP is leaving behind solid evidence that agricultural diversification has indeed made encouraging headway.

producers. It has re-energized the Belle Vue Farmers Cooperative in Soufriere. It has helped some residents of Anse Ger in Micoud to establish a paper manufacturing small business using banana leaves, cassava leaves and old jeans. A buyer in Germany is reportedly interested in obtaining supplies of the craft paper from the group.

These are but a few examples of SLREP’s many projects. However, one which really stands out for its social significance is the development of a rabbit industry which has created a livelihood for several women, mostly heads of households, who otherwise would be unemployed.

“At this point in time, the demand for fresh rabbit meat outstrips the supply,” says

Demacque. “When Soiye Vieux Fort started, the demand was 100 lbs a week, now it has gone to 200 lbs. That is in addition to the supermarkets so our focus now is working with the farmers to help them expand production.”

Approximately 30 farmers, concentrated mainly in Micoud, Vieux Fort and Saltibus, are engaged in rabbit rearing at present.

With SLREP scheduled to officially cease operations next March, it is planning for the future by seeking to ensure that clients continue to receive the necessary institutional support to sustain the growth of their enterprises.

It had planned a consultation with non-governmental organisations on July 28 and has scheduled another for August 11, this time with agencies like the BELFUND that are involved in supporting the development of micro-enterprises.

“What we will say to the agencies on August 11 is ‘this is what we have done, there is potential for it, and how best can our clients continue to receive support and services to help them to develop further’,” says Demacque.

“Many of the issues revolve around marketing and these persons will continue to need services as far as market information,” he adds. “We have really seen through the SLREP experience the extent to which the lack of information can really keep people at bay in terms of the opportunities that exist.” ●



DRYING SEAMOSS: Marketing Officer Vincent La Corbiniere (right) looks on as a representative of the Ministry of Agriculture examines some dried sea moss.

W.T.O: FRIEND OR FOE?

St. Lucian Parliamentarians met for two days (August 04 - 05, 2003) to examine key issues in international trade and review the role of the World Trade Organisation. The following is an excerpt from the address delivered by Prime Minster Dr. Kenny Anthony.

“ It gives me great pleasure to welcome to Saint Lucia, the WTO officials and the other experts who have traveled to our shores to assist us with the conduct of this Parliamentary seminar. We are looking forward most eagerly to share in your knowledge of WTO rules and procedures, as well as to engage you in a debate which should help to bring greater clarity, coherence and consistency to our national positions in the current trade negotiations.

I understand that for some of you this is your first visit to Saint Lucia, so I trust that you will be able to take some time from your busy schedule to travel around our country, to experience its beauty and the hospitality of our people, but also to obtain a better appreciation of the defining characteristics of our particular, small island developing state. Beauty can admit of weaknesses, and in our case, it is our economic fragility and vulnerability.

As has been mentioned already, this National Seminar for Parliamentarians is only the second ever to be convened by the WTO, the first being in Cape Town, South Africa. The acceptance by the WTO of our request for this seminar is no doubt a tribute to the high profile and respect that Saint Lucia has been able to earn for itself within the WTO.

The WTO, perhaps more than any other international organization, has been dominated by power relations among its members. In that organization, it is commercial and economic powers which are the principal determinants of the attention received and the influence which can be exerted.

When a small country like Saint Lucia whose share of the world trade does not even register in the statistics, showing up as 0.00%, and does not even have a resident Embassy in Geneva, the attention and recognition extended to it is almost suspicious.

A VICTIM OF THE MULTI-LATERAL

TRADING SYSTEM

Having welcomed you, I must be frank and tell you, that Saint Lucia does not regard the WTO as a friend. Saint Lucia is a casualty of the multilateral trading system, administered by the WTO. As you might have anticipated, I am referring to the impact of the WTO decisions on the preferential arrangements for the export of our bananas. Unquestionably, the WTO decisions, upholding the challenge to the preferential regime by the United States, have helped to cripple the banana industry in Saint Lucia, and the Windward Islands.

Since those decisions, prices have fallen dramatically, the Windward Islands have lost their market share in the United Kingdom, farmers have abandoned the industry, and new requirements have been imposed for the production and marketing of fruit. Not surprisingly, export plummeted from a high

income of E.C\$188.4 million in 1990 to EC\$ \$110.7 million in 1994 and now to EC\$ 41.16 million in 2001. Likewise, exports fell from 117,564 tons in 1990, to 90,254 tons in 1994 and now 34,044 tons in 2001. Admittedly, production in 2001 was severely affected by a debilitating drought.

I shall not bother to explain the social and emotional consequences that have followed in the wake of the decline of our banana industry. Given our experience, how, then could the WTO be an asset to small states?

As if you have not yet arrived at that conclusion, I merely wish to say that I am far from sanguine about the WTO. Its fundamental principles and accompanying practices rarely impact in a benign manner on small and weak trading nations.

QUALITY OF MEMBERSHIP

The WTO was always meant to be a truly global institution. To enjoy that status however, it is not enough that it opens its doors to membership by all countries. While the numerical size of membership is important, greater importance should be placed on the quality of that membership.

What is essential is the right and the ability of all members to participate meaningfully in an institution whose business is to secure benefits for all, and I would assume that that includes the disadvantaged. The fundamental rights of members cannot be dependent on their size or their political or economic power.

But Honourable members and friends, the WTO is now a permanent feature of the architecture of global regulations, and we have to live with it as part of our daily lives. We are compelled to find the means of securing our interests and this must start with familiarising ourselves with, provisions of the WTO.

A LOSS OF SOVEREIGNTY

Unquestionably, the WTO system of global regulation is proving to be a serious constraint on the scope of national sovereignty over domestic policy. Countries have lost sovereign control over the levels of taxation to be applied to imports, an area long targeted by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT). Indeed, if some countries have their way, government procurement and competition policy among others would go the same way.

Whilst our maneuverability is being steadily limited domestically, of even greater concern is that the scope for preserving international rules which permit us to obtain benefits essential for our economic growth and development are being regularly challenged and steadily eroded.

The tide is also flowing against non-reciprocal trade preferences. We have for
(cont'd on page 7)



Prime Minister Kenny Anthony & External Affairs Minister Julian R. Hunte
The following is an edited version of opening remarks by Hon. Julian R. Hunte Minister for External Affairs International Trade and Civil Aviation.

“I welcome all of you here this morning to what is, in many ways, an historic event. I welcome in particular, our guests and resource persons from the World Trade Organisation who will be with us over the next two days.

The Ministry of External Affairs, International Trade and Civil Aviation is pleased to be associated with the World Trade Organisation in hosting this National Workshop for Parliamentarians on the Multilateral Trading System and the Doha Development Agenda.

The significance of this workshop should not escape us coming as it does at a time when we are engaged in preparations for the Fifth WTO Ministerial Conference scheduled to be held in Cancun, Mexico, September 10 to 14, 2003.

But the background to this workshop dates from approximately eighteen (18) months ago when Saint Lucia, among other developing countries, was asked to submit its Technical Assistance and Capacity Building needs to the WTO. We were one of the few countries which recognised the necessity to sensitise parliamentarians to the intricacies of the multi-lateral trading system, and of the operations of the WTO in particular.

It is in response to this request that this two-day workshop is being held for parliamentarians in Saint Lucia. It is only the second of these National Workshops to be held by the WTO, the first one having been held in South Africa. It is also my understanding that this National Workshop follows a regional one held last week in Trinidad under the auspices of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, where delegations from member countries took part. At this workshop, however, we will be able to expose not just one or two members of parliament to these trade issues but, indeed, our entire parliament.

To us, such exposure of members of Parliament to the features of the Multi-lateral trading system is extremely important. It was the former Director General of the WTO who wrote the following:

“The WTO is a government to government organisation. We do not tell governments what to do. They tell us. We operate by consensus, thus every member government

has veto power. Our agreements are negotiated by Ambassadors or Ministers who represent their governments and who in turn are responsible for advancing their government agenda. That is why it is important for parliamentarians and legislators to know about the institutions they own and fund. It is important for them to also know that they have access to an invaluable resource at the WTO Secretariat, to help them pass the right rules for their country and their people”.

Mr. Chairman, International Trade negotiations are now at a very critical phase. We are a mere few weeks away from the crucial fifth Ministerial Meeting in Cancún. For small countries like Saint Lucia which do not have representation in Geneva, it is absolutely crucial that we find alternative ways of influencing the process towards taking decisions, which take our circumstances into account.

From past experience we have learnt that it is necessary for us to work extremely hard in order that our voices may be heard in the various fora. It has been an uphill task to get issues related to Small Island Developing States (SIDS) on the agenda.

It appears that although there is recognition of the Special Vulnerabilities of Small Economies by the major trading nations, there remains the reluctance to include a separate category of nations within the WTO. And so we must continue to argue our case and make our voices heard.

We cannot, however, make informed contributions if we do not keep abreast of developments. As Parliamentarians we must be at the centre of the debate. But we cannot achieve all that is needed on our own.

The inclusion of the Private Sector, therefore, as part of our deliberations, signifies the efforts of Government to build national consensus and ensure that the views of all parties are represented.

Against this background, I look forward with great expectation to our deliberations over the next few days, and I am confident in my hopes that in the final analysis we will all find this exercise to have been useful.”

from page 6

WTO Friend or Foe?

decades been able to export to the European Union, the USA and Canada without having to offer reciprocal duty free entry for the exports of those countries. We were fortunate to secure a WTO waiver for those arrangements, but we must wonder how much longer can we rely on such derogation from the rules.

Even outside of those special provisions, the liberalization which got a great boost with the end of the Uruguay Round and the birth of the WTO, has resulted in a steady reduction in tariffs which is likely to accelerate even further with the Doha Development Agenda.

What this means is that the value of our preferences are being continually eroded. If the garments which we sew get into the US market free of duty, the higher the tax which is applied to other similar garments imported into the US market, the greater the competitive advantage of the Saint Lucian garment. But as-across-the-board duties fall, the market becomes more difficult for our producers.

A WORLD WITHOUT TRADE PREFERENCES

We are fighting a losing battle to preserve preferences. Eventually, we will face a world without trading preferences. In theory this means, that we have to become more efficient, by lowering our costs and improving our quality.

These things are essential not only to compete internationally, but also domestically. Increasingly, local production will be obliged to face import competition. We cannot stop it, and we are told that, competition will be beneficial to the development of strong, viable industries, as well as to the consumers.

INFLUENCING RULES

While these are some of the things which we must do in order to survive, the real challenge for us small developing countries and island states is to secure changes to the rules to make them more sensitive to our needs. Hitherto, small countries have not really participated meaningfully in the multilateral trade negotiations, and cannot be perceived as having had any real influence on the outcomes. We must work together to change that.

In this regard, let me make two suggestions:

- 1) As small countries we must define our own goals, based on a clear understanding of what is genuinely in our interests and which will further our development. We must resist attempts to have our goals defined by outside agencies for which our interests can only be secondary or even incidental. While we value the advice and support of the Bretton Woods institutions and friendly governments, donor



Parliamentarians during the session on the WTO rules and issues

organisation and agencies, the definition of our goals and aspirations can only be done by ourselves.

- 2) We must keep the public with us. The domestic economic restructuring and the pursuit of changes to the WTO rules are truly massive tasks which will require the mobilization of our resources. But also, the pubic will need to understand why it is being asked to do things differently and why it is being called upon to make sacrifices.

WORKING AGAINST THE TIDE

Honourable members, we are now at a very difficult and challenging point in our economic history. The tide of liberalization is helping the stronger and more competitive while working against the weaker and less competitive.

The tragedy we face is that despite the most valiant efforts on our part, we seem incapable of successfully fighting the changes or working against the tide. However, there is something which we can do, and that is the lesson which is beginning to take shape for us in the WTO.

Think of a small sailboat making its way against the wind. Logically that should be an impossibility but those of you who know about sailing should understand the principle, and indeed might have mastered the technique of “tacking”. To achieve our goals and to make progress in defiance of the odds, we need clear vision. Temporary tactical lateral movements, even retreats, are sometimes necessary, but we must have a firm grip on the rudder. This is what permits us to move forward without being thrown here and there, or being carried along by the tide. It is not our strength which will get us where we have to, but our vision, unity of purpose, and determined pursuit of our goals.”

OPENING DESBARRAS

(from page 3)

(AFD) as part of a broader programme for upgrading access to tourism areas around the island.

Construction is expected to begin towards the end of the year, Finisterre had announced earlier. The road will enhance access to turtle watching areas in that section of Babonneau.

Finisterre also revealed that Government had identified 30 acres of private land for purchase in order to take the PROUD initiative to other sections of Babonneau.

The Prime Minister was full of praise for Mrs. Didier-Nicholas and the PROUD staff.

“I have much respect for the PROUD staff because it is not easy to regularize squatters,” he remarked.

“You know how it is.... The land isn’t even theirs but the moment they think you want to take it away from them, they want to reach for their cutlass. It’s not easy. It’s rough for the staff of PROUD, but they have made us all feel proud today.”

Several similar ceremonies are planned to take place over the coming months and years, to celebrate the completion of various PROUD projects which are making life better for hundreds of St Lucians around the island.

‘M’ FOR MINIBUSES!



Have you been wondering what’s the reason for the distinctive blue, new ‘M’ number plates which have been appearing on minibuses lately?It’s the start of a process of re-registering all motor vehicles on the island, using a special computer software package acquired by the Ministry of Communications, Works, Public Utilities and Transport.

The process began on July 1 and minibuses are receiving special attention.According to Minister of Communications, Works, Transport and Public Utilities Felix Finisterre, as minibus operators come in to renew their licences for the next two years, they will be issued with the new ‘M’ plate.

The number plate is being issued under the new Road Transport Act which came into effect last October.The new system will help authorities to more easily identify minibuses which are operating without a licence. An amnesty is currently on. Come October, however, authorities plan to start cracking down on defaulters.

MESSAGES, MYSTERIES & MEN

Another View of Carnival 2003



Young stilt walkers formed part of the contingent of revellers from Guadeloupe.



HEALTHY MESSAGE: Ministry of Health band spreads message about healthy lifestyles. Health Minister, Damian Greaves leads.



Carnival is over and the Cultural Development Foundation is already full speed ahead preparing the St. Lucia contingent for CARIFESTA VIII in Suriname under the theme “Many Cultures, the Essence of Togetherness, the Spirit of the Caribbean”. Dates August 24th - 30th 2003.

TWO BLACKS IN WHITE : On the left Director of Information Services, Embert Charles, from the band XS Energy portrayal of “Endangered” On the right - Programme Manager with the Office of Private Sector Relations, Erstein ‘Mallet’ Edwards, from the band Rituals portrayal of “Timbuktu”



FAMILY COURT

(from page 2)
“We deal generally with the negative side of human behaviour but we hope that when they move on to another step of their journey, that those who have come through the doors of the Family Court would have learnt something about themselves and their strengths,” says Mrs. King.

“The first six years have been a journey that is second to none for those of us who are the pioneers of the Family Court,” she adds. “It has been a hard journey but it has been a good journey. I see the Family Court growing, growing in its initiatives, and growing in its service to St Lucia.”

Meanwhile, the Family Court is stepping up its community outreach to increase public awareness of its services. As such, any organisation which is interested in knowing more about what the Family Court does, is invited to contact the office. An officer will be happy to come and give a talk to the organisation.