



PM silenced critics on Debt
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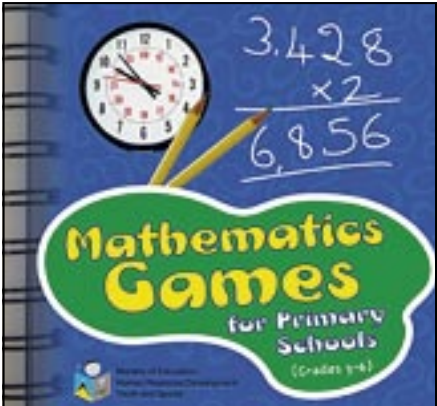
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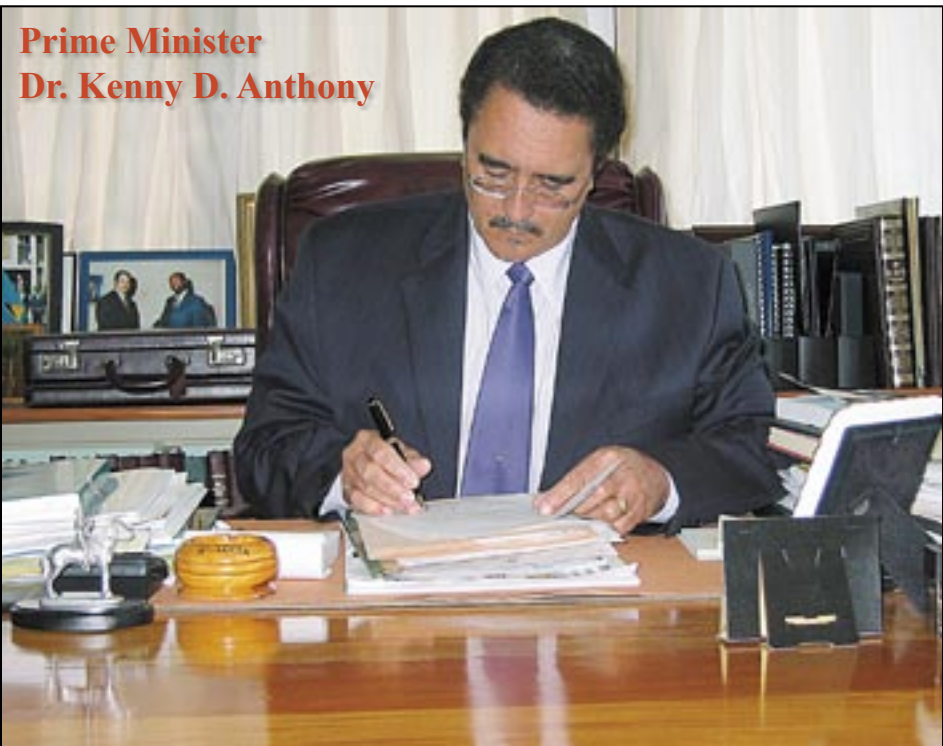
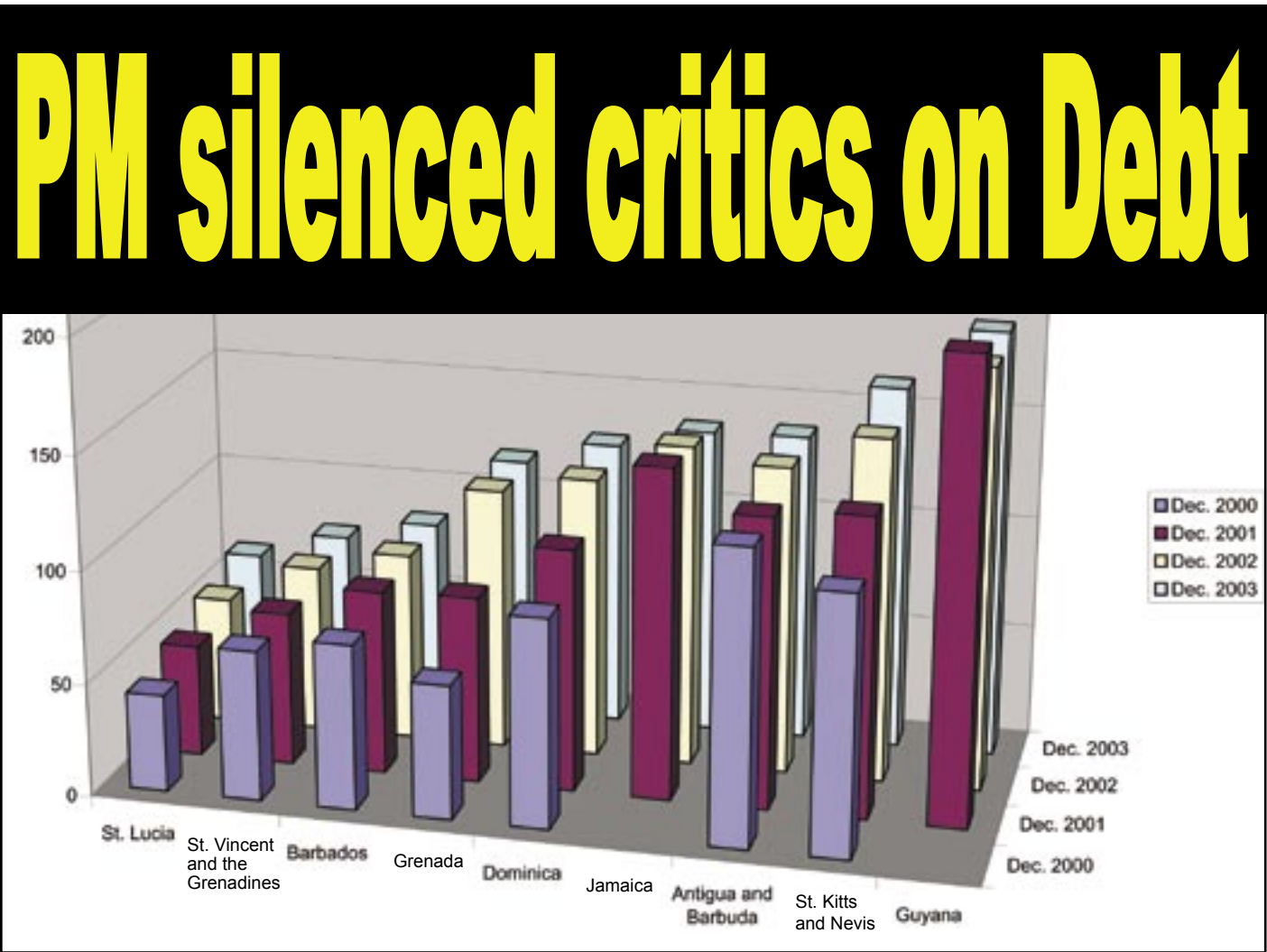
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Prime Minister
Dr. Kenny D. Anthony

P rime Minister Hon. Dr. Kenny Anthony has dismissed claims that his Government is plunging the country deeper and deeper into debt. Dr. Anthony sought to clarify this misconception on Monday, in his weekly radio address to the Nation.

In response to claims that other Caribbean neighbours were laughing at the island on the issue of its current debt, Dr. Anthony used available statistics to show that Saint Lucia in-fact has the best Debt to GDP ratio among the Independent States of the Caribbean, except Trinidad and Tobago, whose economy is driven by its abundant natural resource, oil.

Debt is expressed as a ratio of a country's Gross Domestic Product, which is

the total value of goods produced and services provided in a country in any one year. Presently, the Gross Domestic Product of Saint Lucia is EC\$2.07 billion.

Using statistics Dr. Anthony said, "In the case of Saint Lucia, the Debt to GDP ratio at December 31, 2003 stood at 62.8%. Surprised? If you are, then that is what happens when you accept, without questioning, the pronouncements of individuals with no known interest in the truth. If this Government has handled the debt portfolio so recklessly, why then, does St. Lucia enjoy the lowest Debt to GDP Ratio among CARICOM States, save, as I stated earlier, with the exception of Trinidad and Tobago?"

The Prime Minister said St. Lucia had to increase its borrowing, since the amount of aid and grants received in the past to finance development, had over the years declined. He said the island had to contend with budget deficits and had not generated surpluses in sufficient amounts for re-investment in subsequent years. But despite this, he said the economy in 2003 grew by 3.0%, in 2004 by 3.5% and in the last quarter by 5.4%.

Pointing to why the country needs to borrow Dr. Anthony said, "The stark fact is that if this Government had not borrowed, there would be no Beausejour Cricket Stadium, no new west coast highway, no Poverty Reduction Fund, no loans to students pursuing higher education, no payment of the huge debt of the SL-BGA, no new building for the Ministry of Communications and Works, no new roads for the Tourism Sector, no BERU to provide support to banana farmers, no new secondary schools, no new primary schools, no resolution of drainage problems in Castries and Anse La Raye, no Borelairs Correctional Facility to end the security problems we inherited."

Dr. Anthony said in preparation to meet the island's debt commitments, his government had established what is described as Sinking Funds, which basically are accounts in which the Government deposits specified funds to meet debt payments in the future. As of now, he said, the country had seven Sinking Funds with some \$104 million dollars to meet debt payments.

Caribbean leaders ready to implement CCJ, CSME



Prime Minister
Dr. Kenny D. Anthony

Prim Minister, Hon. Dr. Kenny D. Anthony has outlined the readiness of the region's political directorate to forge ahead with the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ) and the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME). The Prime Minister said Caribbean leaders were very much concerned that the process was being met with extensive apprehension, fear and resistance on the part of the citizenry.

Dr. Anthony, who addressed the issue at the CLICO Group of Companies Annual Awards on Saturday, March 12th, called on the citizens of Caricom

member states to firmly support current moves toward integration.

"There must be the empowerment of people in order to enable them to contribute creatively. The task before us is clear; we have to increase the momentum of the regional integration process. We have to take difficult decisions which may not appear too attractive to our individual small economies, but which are all too necessary for our collective survivals", Dr. Anthony said.

Dr. Anthony's appeal came as CLICO Group of Companies publicly declared the over - 68 year old institution ready to welcome the concept of one

economic space. President of the CLICO Group of Companies Mr. Leroy Parris said CLICO viewed the CSME as a positive and vitally important aspect of the new regional order.

"The free movement of goods, services, people and capital", he said, "unleashes tremendous opportunities for over six million Caricom Nationals, who will be in a position to maximize

their talents leading to stimulation of our economies, greater efficiencies, higher standards and increased profits."

The company's board of directors expressed confidence and satisfaction with Saint Lucia's economic performance and viability. Mr. Parris said the favourable statistics, along with CLICO's significant investments on the island helped make Saint Lucia the logical choice, when CLICO contemplated moving the Awards to the Eastern Caribbean for the first time. Approximately 150 awards were presented to both local and visiting staff and agents at the gala affair.

PM called for justice system to regain people's trust

Prim Minister, Hon. Dr. Kenny D. Anthony has challenged the local justice system to work towards regaining the trust of the citizenry, particularly in light of the imminent establishment of the Caribbean Court of Justice (CCJ).

While raising several strong arguments pointing to why the Caricom Community should relinquish ties with the British Privy Council, Dr. Anthony also noted that the local justice system could do much to rebuild and repair public confidence in the process.

"Where for example, some citizens have come to distrust local justice, we must seek ways to improve their circumstances by improving access to adequate representation, by improving accountability and transparency in the justice system. We must seek to demystify the systems of justice administration so that citizens feel empowered and not disenfranchised," The Prime Minister said.

Dr. Anthony, who was at the time addressing the recently-held Annual Awards Ceremony of the CLICO Group of Companies, said the Privy Council had remained distant and inaccessible to the vast majority of ordinary citizens of the region, and that the Council also bore both a philosophical and contextual disconnect with the region.

Says he: "It is therefore time to establish a more popular, more accessible and relevant process. In this context we may as well contemplate the consequences of failure of PJ Patterson, when he posited that the next generations will never forgive us. They will look at a united Europe, a cooperative Europe, a Latin America attempting to set up free trade areas and begin to wonder what went wrong in the Caribbean."

The C.C.J is to be the final Court of Appeal and the highest body of arbitration on trade matters for the Caribbean Community.

Local businesses urged to prepare for CSME



Dr. James
Fletcher

Dr. Cletus
Bertin

Titus Preville

nar for local businesses on Monday, March 14, 2005 at the Cara Suites Hotel. The initiative, spearheaded by the office of the Prime Minister is one in a series of activities organized for the business community under the theme 'Protect and Position Your Business for CSME'.

Addressing the participants, Mr. Preville said businesses within the services sector had been able to organize themselves under the newly formed National Coalition of Services Industries, and advised others within the private sector to follow suit.

"It is only when you have yourselves form into some sought of association that you can begin to define some of the issues that face you. You can begin to define some of the rules and regulations that ought to govern business in that particular sector. The thing with competition is that, there is nothing wrong with competition but all competition must be regulated with certain rule and guidelines that govern competition. Without those guidelines then anything goes and that is a recipe for chaos", Mr. Preville said.

While the CSME will provides op-

portunities for the expansion of markets, especially in the services sector, the Commerce Director warned that there were still common weaknesses that might compromise the island's ability to take advantage of these opportunities.

Cabinet Secretary, Dr. James Fletcher,

agement then we will not be able to play in the arena. It is that simple. This initial seminar focuses on the implementation of two specific ISO standards – the ISO 9001 series and ISO 15489, and addresses the various processes needed to consistently and systematically deliver high quality products and



Seminar participants

er, who also addressed the participants, said government under the CSME would no longer be able to provide protection from market forces and competition. He urged the local private sector persons to make full use of the opportunities being made available that would help strengthen their competitive edge.

"If we do not know the rule of the game and understand the modes of en-

service to customers, and consequently, improve competitiveness at both the micro-economic and macro-economic levels", Dr. Fletcher said.

ISO is a series of international standards developed by quality experts from around the world for use by companies that either want to implement their own in-house quality systems or to ensure that suppliers have appropriate quality systems in place.

Director of Commerce, Titus Preville has urged local businesses to align themselves with the various local organizations or bodies established to provide the necessary support in preparation for the establishment of the Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME).

Mr. Preville made the call at the opening of an International Organization for Standardization (ISO) semi-



Mrs. Fortuna Belrose, Operations Manager, CWC St. Lucia Inc.

Cricket World Cup St. Lucia begins outreach programme

The Management of Cricket World Cup St. Lucia Inc. has commenced an extensive research and data processing exercise to access critical information required to begin community mobilization and promotional campaigns, for St. Lucia's hosting of Cricket World Cup 2007.

As part of the process, the team intends to conduct a series of focus groups

meetings with Community Development Officers, Town and Village Council representatives to discuss community resources and needs.

The first such activity is scheduled for the Anse-La-Raye and Canaries Communities on Thursday, March 17, 2005. The team will be meeting with community Representatives Island wide, in the weeks to come.

For more information, visit: <http://www.gfi.com>

CWC 2007: 51 days, 100,000 visitors, US\$500 million • Opportunities abound

As Cricket World Cup St. Lucia takes to the road with a community outreach programme, to tell people what is expected of them and how they can benefit from the 2007 Cricket World Cup competition, President of the West Indies Cricket Board, Teddy Griffith is suggesting that with the competition only two years away, "the region is generally on target with the preparation, but there is the need to sensitise the people of the Caribbean as to what is expected of them in the months ahead and during the event".

He revealed that the Cricket World Cup in the West Indies is expected to last 51 days, attract 100,000 visitors and generate in excess of US\$500 million in overall economic activity, pointing out that his board would work towards sensitising the people of the Caribbean of the potential benefits and opportunities arising out of the stellar event in which they can share.

"I cannot stress this point enough for it is on that basis that the relationship between the tournament and the West Indian public must be forged," commented Mr Griffith recently, at the opening of the Nevis Sports Museum and the induction of Elquemedo Willett, the first Leeward Islands cricketer to play for the West Indies, into the Hall of Fame.



Mr Griffith addressing a gathering in Charlestown Nevis that included the Deputy Governor General for Nevis, His Honour Mr Eustace John, and the Honourable Premier, Mr Vance Amory, during the opening of the Nevis Sports Museum.

The President also observed that the time had come for the WICB to increase the pace of their activity both in the area of the development of the physical plant and infrastructure to host the event.

"The staging of the Cricket World Cup in the West Indies in 2007 does, however, present the governments and the people of the Caribbean with an

opportunity to showcase our islands to almost half of the world's population and to offer more than an anticipated 100,000 visitors a taste of West Indian hospitality at its best," noted Mr Griffith.

He pointed out that the large influx of visitors combined with the movement of local fans during the fifty-one day period of the event would tax the

region's accommodation facilities to the fullest saying, "it is in this area that we foresee the opportunity for substantial benefit to and participation by small, micro and individual businesses in the economic activity of the World Cup."

He told Nevisians that even though their island would not be hosting any matches, they should not look at it as an impediment to their being involved in the event or benefiting from it, as Australia, the defending champions from the 2003 Cricket World Cup in South Africa, would be based in St. Kitts for their preliminary matches.

"I have no doubt that with this island (Nevis) a short hop away, by air or sea, from St. Kitts, opportunities will abound for Nevisians willing to open their homes for bed and breakfasts or simply as lodging for the visitors who will follow the team," advised the President. "Our statistics indicate that the average international visitor spends up to US\$200 per day when one takes into account accommodation, meals and drinks, travel, entertainment and other items."

The Government of St. Lucia has already played its part by providing an array of incentives for the construction of hotels, large and small in preparation for the 2007 cricket tournament.

Region forges consensus on corporate governance

The Eastern Caribbean Central Bank (ECCB) and the Eastern Caribbean Securities Exchange Ltd (ECSE) hosted the second meeting of the Caribbean Corporate Governance Forum (CCGF) at the ECCB Headquarters over the period 8 to 9 March 2005, under the theme "Principles of Good Governance: Forging a Caribbean Consensus on Corporate Governance".

The Prime Minister of St. Kitts-Nevis, Dr. the Honourable Denzil L. Douglas, delivered the welcome address to the, approximately, 170 participants from 20 countries who were in attendance. Also addressing the Forum was the Minister of Commerce, Tourism, Investment and Consumer Affairs of St. Lucia, the Honourable Philip J. Pierre who represented the Prime Minister of St. Lucia, Dr. the Honourable Kenny Anthony, who has responsibility for this subject area.

The Forum focused on corporate

governance reform and reviewed the proposed Caribbean Corporate Governance Principles formulated by the Caribbean Technical Working Group on Corporate Governance (CTWG), for region-wide adoption. The CTWG was created out of the first Corporate Governance Forum held in St. Kitts in September 2003.

The Forum agreed to the following Statements of Principles:

Principle I — The corporate governance framework within the Caribbean should encourage the development of transparent and efficient markets, have its basis in the rule of law and ethical standards to foster the division of responsibilities among supervisory, regulatory, and enforcement bodies.

Principle II — The Corporate Governance framework should protect and facilitate the exercise of shareholders rights.

Principle III — The corporate governance framework should ensure the equitable treatment of all shareholders, including minority and foreign shareholders. All shareholders should have the opportunity to obtain effective redress for violation of their rights.

Principle IV — The corporate governance framework should recognize the rights of stakeholders established by law or through mutual agreements and encourage active co-operation between entities, including family owned businesses and state-owned/controlled enterprises, and stakeholders in creating wealth, jobs, and the sustainability of financially sound enterprises.

Principle V — The corporate governance framework should ensure that timely and accurate disclosure is made on all material matters relating to the entity, including its financial situation, performance, ownership, and governance.

Principle VI — The corporate governance framework should ensure the strategic guidance of the entity, the effective monitoring of management by the Board, and the Board's accountability to the entity and to stakeholders.

These statements will be further developed by the Working Group into a full set of Principles for adoption by the entire region, and as a guide for the formulation of individual country, sector and industry codes. The Forum agreed that the full set of Principles would be completed and disseminated to all stakeholders within the region over the next 3 months. Wide consultations will be held with all stakeholders in each country on the Principles, after which they will be forwarded to the CARICOM Head of Government with lead responsibility for Justice and Governance, the Honourable Dr. Kenny Anthony, who has been a very strong supporter of the process. The matter will then be placed before the CARICOM Heads of Government for final endorsement.

This business of

PM in conversation



Prime Minister Dr. Kenny D. Anthony

An issue that you hear a lot about these days is debt, or if you wish to be more technical, “public debt”. The Government, it is said, is plunging the country deeper and deeper into debt. “This is a reckless Government”, is the frequent shout from some quarters.

There are bizarre twists to the alarm bells. An opposition supporter was heard to say “They should re-elect Kenny Anthony so he can pay back the money he borrowed”.

When citizens badly need a service or amenity, they throw caution to the wind and you hear the advice: If the Government doesn’t have the money, why can’t it borrow the money to do it?

In a sense, much of the talk about “debt” reflects the growing sophistication of the public.

It is true that in the past there were shouts that “Government was borrowing too much”, but these were mere shouts without serious debate. Now, we are on the borders of serious debate. Of course, such debates thrive only in a society where the Government encourages tolerance and free expression.

Some of the anxiety about debt also has to do with personal experiences. Some individuals have had difficult experiences with managing their liabilities, so naturally, they extend these experiences to the public domain.

How is public debt measured?

To properly evaluate our situation, it is useful to understand how public debt is measured. Currently, two systems of measurement are used. The International Monetary Fund, popularly known as the IMF, presents data on the total debt of a country, that is to say Central Government Debt, as well as

other Public Sector Debt such as debt incurred by statutory agencies. On the other hand, the Eastern Caribbean Central Bank prefers to measure only Central Government Debt. In effect, debt figures published by the Central Bank tend to be lower than that of the IMF. Debt figures include both guarantees or contingent liabilities as well as actual borrowed money.

The next point to note is that debt is expressed as a ratio of a country’s Gross Domestic Product. In other words, a comparison would be made between total debt against the Gross Domestic Product. Simply put, the Gross Domestic Product means the total value of goods produced and services provided in a country in any one year. Presently, the Gross Domestic Product of Saint Lucia is EC\$2.07 billion or EC\$2,070 million. This is essentially the value of goods and services produced within St. Lucia between January and December 2004.

Nothing to hide

From time to time, journalists ask about the debt figures. But few bother to research the figures. Some actually believe that the Government - I guess, any Government - hides the debt figures, because it fears embarrassment. Nothing is further from the truth, not in Saint Lucia!

There are two authoritative sources where the debt figures can be easily obtained. Debt figures are always reproduced in the Annual Estimates of Expenditure. A second source is the Economic and Social Review, presented by the Minister of Finance on the occasion of the Annual Budget Statement, which is freely available on the GIS Website at www.stlucia.gov.lc.

Where does st. Lucia stand?

Quite recently, an aspiring politi-

Debt GDP ratios of Comm

Country	Dec. 2000	
St. Lucia	43.2	
St. Vincent and the Grenadines	66.7	
Barbados	73.3	
Grenada	59.5	
Dominica	92.5	
Jamaica		
Antigua and Barbuda	129.9	
St.Kitts and Nevis	114.3	
Guyana		

The Grow

Unquestionably, there has been a steady growth in the economy over the past fourteen years.

DEBT TO GDP RATIO	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
	28.4	32.7	35.6	40.8	43.5	42.7	46.0

of Public Debt

on with the Nation

onwealth Caribbean States

Dec.2001	Dec.2002	Dec.2003
49.6	56.2	62.8
68.2	74.4	74.9
81.6	83.8	84.1
82.6	116.4	116.7
107.5	124.6	127.3
146.4	142.6	136.4
128.6	136.6	137.4
132.4	152.4	162.0
203.1	185.9	189.5

th of Debt

wth in Saint Lucia’s debt portfolio over the
Here are the figures:

1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003
6.8	40.0	41.8	41.4	46.0	49.6	56.2	62.8

cian suggested that our neighbours are laughing at us because we are going deeper and deeper into debt. Where does St. Lucia stand in the context of its regional neighbours?

The fact is, up to December 2004, Saint Lucia had the best Debt to GDP ratio among the Independent States of the Caribbean, except Trinidad and Tobago, whose economy is driven by its energy sector - and its abundant natural resource; oil. Let us look at the figures.

Up to December 2003, St. Vincent and the Grenadines had a Debt to GDP ratio of 74.9%, Barbados 84.1%, Grenada 116.7%, Dominica 127.3%, Jamaica 136.4%, Antigua and Barbuda 137.4%, St. Kitts and Nevis 162% and Guyana 189.5%. In the case of Saint Lucia, the Debt to GDP ratio, at December 31, 2003 stood at 62.8%. Surprised? If you are, then that is what happens when you accept, without questioning, the pronouncements of individuals with no known interest in the truth. If this Government has handled the debt portfolio so recklessly, why then, does St. Lucia enjoy the lowest Debt to GDP Ratio among Caricom States, save, as I stated earlier, with the exception of Trinidad and Tobago?

In 1990 the Debt to GDP Ratio was 28.4%, in 1991 32.7%, in 1992 35.6%, in 1993 40.8%, in 1994 43.5%, in 1995 42.7%, in 1996 46.8%, in 1997 40.0%, in 1998 41.8%, in 1999 41.4%, in 2000 46.0%, in 2001 49.6%, in 2002 56.2% and in 2003 62.8%.

From these figures you will note that between 1990 and 1996 debt increased by 18.4 percentage points, and from 1996 to 2003 debt increased by 16.0 percentage points. In other words, debt rose slightly more sharply between 1990 and 1996/97 when the Opposition was in office, compared to the period that this administration has been in office. Indeed, in 1996/97, for example, the U.W.P. Government borrowed approximately EC\$196.9 million dollars to finance its budget. Surprised again? After all, you have been told that this is a reckless Government. Watch it, you will be told next that these figures are wrong.

Why the increase in debt?

Why, then, has the public debt grown over the years. There are several reasons. Here are some:

Firstly, the amount of aid and grants, which St. Lucia receives have steadily declined over the years. St. Lucia has had to replace the loss by borrowing to finance its development.

Secondly, we are simply not generating surpluses in sufficient amounts for re-investment in subsequent years. Relatively speaking, our surpluses are very low.

Thirdly, for years we have had to contend with budget deficits. Budget deficits refer to the amounts by which actual expenses exceed planned expenses. In effect, we actually spend

more than we earn.

Fourthly, in some years, budget deficits can be larger than others. This may be due to excessive expenditure or a severe reduction in revenue from taxes. This occurred in 2002 and 2003 following the events of September 11, 2001 and the recession in the World economy.

This Government, as indeed most Caribbean Governments, had to borrow more heavily than usual, to maintain economic activity. Now, we are reaping the benefits of these measures. In 2003 the economy grew by 3.0%, in 2004 by 3.5% and in the last quarter by 5.4%.

Are we in danger of defaulting

The question is frequently asked whether we are in danger of defaulting on our debts. In preparation to meet our debt commitments as and when they become due, we have established what is described as “Sinking Funds”. Basically, these are accounts in which the Government deposits specified funds to meet debt payments in the future. As of now, for example, we have seven Sinking Funds, and to date, some \$104 million dollars is available, to meet our payments.

Of course, an economy can be wiped out as happened in Grenada with Hurricane Ivan. In that event, problems can be encountered in meeting debt obligations, as indeed as happened in Grenada.

Hot and cold

It is understandable that Opposition Parties should feel that an incumbent Government is vulnerable on debt. But this is a subject laced with hypocrisy. The same politicians who shout that Government is not doing “x or y”, shout again when Government borrows to do the “x and y” they complain about. Have you noticed that politicians who complain most bitterly about debt say nothing condemnatory, absolutely nothing, when debt is incurred to finance projects in their constituencies? They suddenly become mute and supportive. The truth is, they can’t have their cake and eat it.

The stark fact is that if this Government had not borrowed there would be no Beausajour Cricket Stadium, no new west coast highway, no Poverty Reduction Fund, no loans to students pursuing higher education, no payment of the huge debt of the SLBGA, no new building for the Ministry of Communications and Works, no new roads for the Tourism Sector, no BERU to provide support to Banana Farmers, no new secondary schools, no new primary schools, no resolution of drainage problems in Castries and Anse La Raye, no Bordelais Correctional Facility to end the security problems we inherited. The list can go on but I will rest awhile.

Are any of these expenditures wasteful and extravagant? You judge.

Do have a great day. God Bless, until next week.

St. Lucia observed World Consumer Rights Day

Saint Lucia joined the rest of the world in observance of World Consumer Rights Day on Tuesday, March 15, 2005.

World Consumer Rights Day, which was first observed in 1983 by Consumers International coincided with the same date when former United States President John F Kennedy introduced the first four Consumer Rights Bill to the US Congress.

Every year since 1983, Consumer Organizations worldwide have used the occasion to raise public awareness

on a number of critical issues confronting the consumer movement.

This year, the event is being observed under the theme: Consumers Say No to GMOs to highlight the concerns and issues surrounding Genetically Modified Organisms, and Genetically Engineered Foods. For its part, the Consumer Affairs Department in Saint Lucia hosted a workshop at the Bay Gardens Inn to sensitize the public on GMO's.

Facilitators at this workshop were drawn from public and private sector

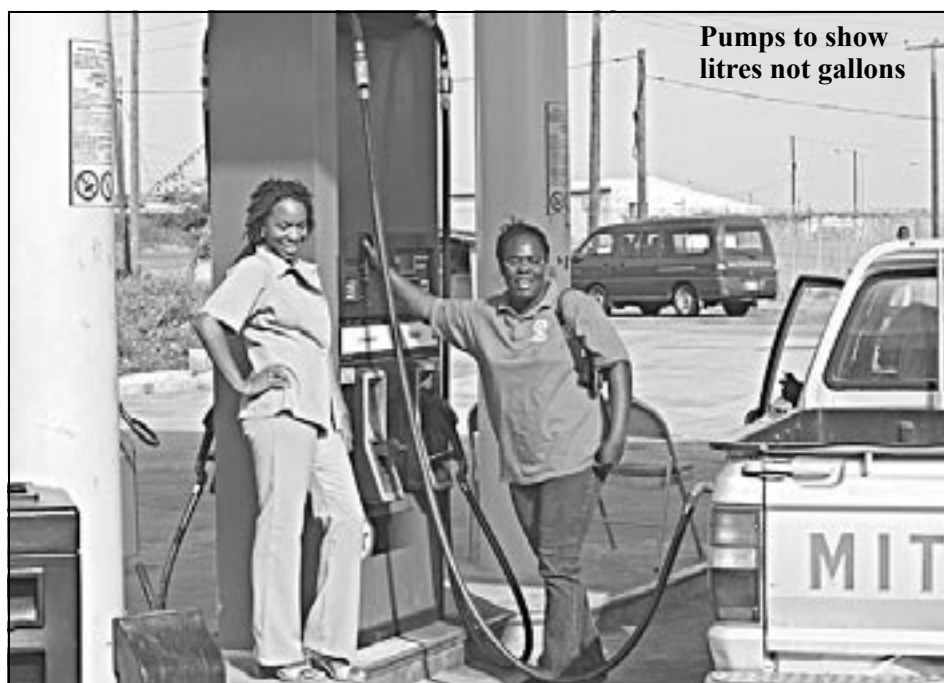


agencies, who articulated different perspectives on the topic, while participants were drawn from the distributive trades

sector and other concern groups.

For more information, visit: <http://www.gfi.com>

St. Lucia moving from old Imperial to Metric System



The Saint Lucia Bureau of Standard (SLBS) will spearhead the island's conversion from the old Imperial System to the Metric System. Following Cabinet Conclusion No.171 of 2005, Director of SLBS, Dr. Allison Plummer, said her organisation, along with the Metrification Board would immediately bring to full completion, a process which began in 2005, when the Metrology Act was passed.

Explaining the rationale behind the conversion, Dr. Plummer said, "It is a critical part of enabling the Caribbean Single Market and Economy, so that we all use the same units to trade. We all speak the same language to trade".

The conversion to a metric system, such as gallons to litres, pounds to ki-

lograms, and feet to metres will align St. Lucia with the rest of Caricom and the developed world. This process, according to Dr. Plummer, has received the support of the business sector, and a massive public education campaign will be undertaken to sensitize the general public.

"One of the sectors that is very enthusiastic for the change over is the petroleum sector. So that we are hoping to first start off with changing the sale of petroleum to the metric system", said Dr. Plummer, informing that within the Public Sector, several departments are already operating in the metric system, including the Land Registry and the Customs Department.

Dr. Plummer said imported goods and devices will also be monitored to ensure that they read in metric terms.

Dominica campaigns for CSME

A public awareness campaign on the significance of the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) will take place in Dominica from March 15-17, 2005.

A number of activities will take place next week to sensitize the general public on the importance of the CSME to the economic viability and sustainability of the Region.

The Campaign is being organized jointly by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Marketing and the CSME Unit.

Visits to Secondary Schools, appearances on various radio talk-shows, television appearances, sessions with the Private and public sector unions, discussions with senior public sector officials and dialogue with NGOs and youth representatives are some of the activities that will form part of the public awareness campaign.

In his opening remarks at the Sixteenth Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community held in Suriname last month, CARICOM's Secretary General, Dr. Edwin Carrington un-

derscored the importance of the CSME to the Region as a "mechanism to propel the Region towards overcoming its many social and economic challenges even as the Community forges alliances

with other nations and regions".

The march of globalization and the harmful effects of trade liberalization on small economies in the Caribbean Region have given this drive to create a single economic space within CARICOM renewed impetus. The expansion of the European Union to 25 in 2004 and the consolidation of other trading blocs has forced the people of the Re-

gion to seek to deepen the integration process to meet the challenges of the modern age.

The dream to create a single economic space within the Caribbean Region was born in Grenada with the signing of the Grand Anse Declaration in 1989.

The CSME is due to come into effect by the end of this year.

Ambassador Hunte to lead United Nations Mission to Bermuda



Ambassador Julian Hunte

St. Lucia Ambassador to the United Nations The Honourable Dr. Julian R. Hunte is scheduled to lead a special mission to Bermuda at the end of March to participate in that overseas territory's public consultation process on political and constitutional advancement, it was announced today.

Ambassador Hunte, who was elected to chair the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization last month, has arranged the U.N. mission at the request of the Bermuda Independence Commission (BIC), a government-appointed body which is responsible for conducting the political education programme in the territory. The mission will include several

members of the Special Committee, UN Secretariat staff members, as well as representatives of U.N. agencies and a senior expert.

Ambassador Hunte explained that the invitation to visit Bermuda emerged from informal discussions with a delegation from the BIC which had travelled to U.N. Headquarters in February to meet with member States of the Special Committee on Decolonization and Small Island Developing States of the Caribbean and Pacific regions. Those meetings concentrated on the role of the United Nations and the international community at large in fostering democratic governance through the decolonization process.

Continued on page 7

BERU urges greater local use of Bananas

The Banana Emergency Recovery Unit (BERU) will be amplifying its activities to encourage greater local interest in the fruit. Program Manager, Hilary Laforce said besides BERU's mandate to improve efficiency and productivity of banana farms, the unit was also concerned about the marketing of St. Lucia's bananas.

He said St. Lucia needed to find alternatives in the event it was unable to competitively market its bananas to the traditional markets, when the new regime comes into effect in 2006: "We are saying locally, we need to get our people to eat more bananas, and that

can redound to the benefit of the farmers, who can then produce not only for the regional and overseas markets, but for the local market. And what a better way to start but by having school children begin to use the fruit as a fresh fruit, as well as in the preparation of various dishes".

Mr. Laforce said BERU's sponsorship of the Home Economics secondary school food finals, which was held on the Derek Walcott Square on Wednesday, was another means of getting school children to acquire the taste of bananas as a healthy food. During the food competition bananas was used as the main ingredient.

Meanwhile, BERU is planning to host the island's first Banana Festival slated for 2006. The festival is seen as another channel to share information on the versatility of bananas.

"Experiments have been carried out with the use of bananas through the stem to produce paper as well as rope. So there is some effort and some work being done in that regard. We intend to continue to basically promote the use of the fruit and the whole plant for the processing of various products. In the future, we would want to work with the manufacturing people in that regard", Mr. Laforce said.



Banana farmer

Mr. Laforce said in producing for the local market, banana farmers needed to maintain the same keenness for quality as they do for overseas markets.

CDF pushing the Arts



The Cultural Development Foundation (CDF) is continuing its thrust to generate public appreciation for the Arts, by using the National Arts Festival as a major vehicle to expose the pub-

lic to a range of art forms. This time around, the CDF is spotlighting theatre and poetry productions, having already staged the Visual Arts Exhibition and several other productions, including dance and the Junior Steel Pan Competition, which was held recently.

Communications Officer of the Cultural Development Foundation, Danae Augier said local actors and directors have been busy preparing to stage more home grown performances. Last night, Thursday 17th, saw two plays being performed at the Cultural Centre, as well as a "Spoken Word" presentation by poets from the Writers Forum. One play was presented by the production company "Insight". The play called "Just in case" was written and directed by Gandolph St.Clair.

The play merges a traditional theme with serious modern day issues, such as the impact of globalisation on people's lives. Another play, "Famn Pa Fanmi Nonm" written and directed by Travis Weeks, of the Kweyol Theatre Workshop, tells a story of two young lovers dealing with feels of insecurity and mistrust.

The CDF has also planned a special night for families: "On Sunday, March 20th beginning at 6:00 p.m., we're going to be featuring the traditional groups on the island and that as well, is part of the national arts festival. We'll be featuring groups such as Dezagweab, and Island Creole Dancers", said Miss. Augier.

The St. Lucia Arts festival was launched in February, and is scheduled to culminate this month.

St. Lucians urged to celebrate Commonwealth Day

The Chairman of The Council of Commonwealth Societies wrote to Prime Minister, Dr. Kenny D Anthony, urging him to encourage young St. Lucians to celebrate Commonwealth Day on Monday, March 14, 2005, under the theme 'Education – creating opportunity, realising potential.'

Calling for the Ministry of Education and the media to play their part in the celebrations, the Chairman hoped that the activities related to the theme would be maintained and developed throughout the year, pointing out that Education was a major priority for the Commonwealth, in which some 75 million children lacked access to basic schooling.

Attaching a Message from Her Majesty The Queen, Head of the Commonwealth, it was requested that it be given as wide a distribution and as much publicity as possible.

In the message, Her Majesty acknowledged the strong foundation on which the future of the Commonwealth rests, given that more than half its two billion citizens are under the age of twenty-five. Equally however, she acknowledged the challenges arising out of living conditions and natural disasters, citing last September's hurricanes in the Caribbean and the devastating earthquake and tsunami in the Indian Ocean.

On the Commonwealth Day theme, Her Majesty said that Education was

the key to unlocking human potential and creating opportunity. She wrote: "Education is sometimes described as the golden thread that binds the Commonwealth. Our shared use of a common, world language – English – has underpinned a long and rich tradition of educational co-operation. With our shared practices and similar systems, an extensive network of scholarships, and many examples of excellence, much has been achieved".

As the Commonwealth continues to respond to today's challenges, Her Majesty said, one clear objective is the UN Millennium Development Goal of achieving universal primary education by 2015. She also cited other objectives, such as mitigating the effects of



Queen Elizabeth II

HIV and AIDS, and expanding distance education.

Commonwealth Day falls on the second Monday in March each year, and the date is chosen to correspond with a school-day in nearly all Commonwealth countries around the world. Each year the theme is chosen to encourage people in the 53 countries of the Commonwealth to concentrate on an aspect of common interest on Commonwealth Day.

Ambassador Hunte to lead United Nations Mission to Bermuda

Continued from page 6

"I stressed to my colleagues on the special Committee that it would be important to respond quickly and favourably to the request of the people of Bermuda in order to engage them at this critical time when they are reviewing their political options for the future," Ambassador Hunte said.

Accordingly, the United Nations

team would conduct a series of discussions with the full Bermuda Independence Commission, and would participate in a number of public meetings in different areas of the territory. The team is also scheduled to meet with the Premier of Bermuda and his Cabinet, along with representatives of the opposition.

"We look forward to a fruitful discussion with the people of Bermuda as

they proceed towards the attainment of a full measure of self-government," Ambassador Hunte said, and the Special Committee is fully prepared to provide effective guidance as the process unfolds.

A non self-governing territory administered by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Bermuda is located in the western part of the Atlantic Ocean, about 917

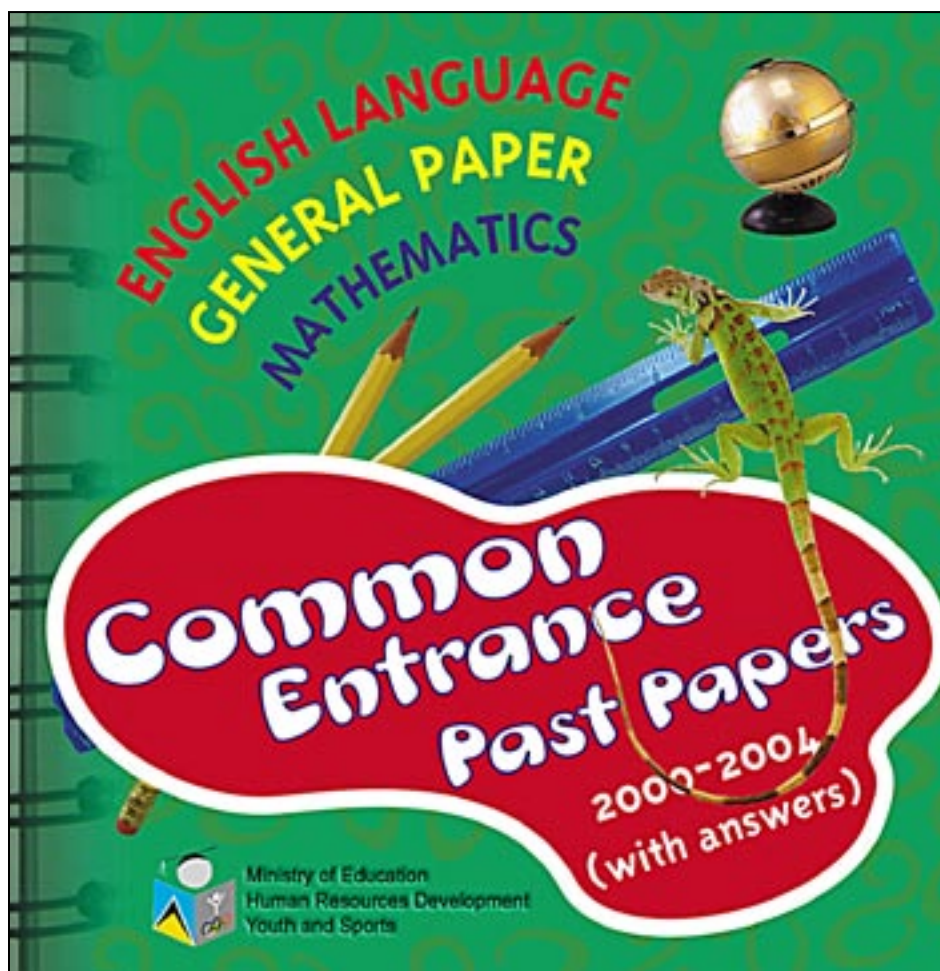
kilometres east of the North Carolina coast of the United States of America with a population of some 63,000 inhabitants. The Territory is very densely populated, with 1,180 inhabitants per square kilometer), and is on the list of countries with the highest urban population, as 100 per cent of its population lives in urban areas.

Interactive CDs for Common Entrance and Primary School Mathematics

The Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports has developed interactive CDs for use by students in Primary and Secondary schools. These are: Common Entrance Examinations (Past Questions and Answers), Mathematics Games for Primary Schools, and Learning Geometry for Secondary Schools

The CDs were developed as part of a collaborative project between the Information Technology Unit (ITU) and the Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteers (JOCV), aimed at promoting software development within the school system. This initiative involved teachers and students from a number of Secondary Schools on the island. Participants were trained in the use of Macromedia Flash, and were then able to assist in the overall production of the materials.

The main aim of the software is to provide students with an opportunity to get extra practice at home using a medium which they enjoy – the computer. Some of the features include: Timing on questions, Scoring of answers, Immediate feedback, and Easy navigation.



The Common Entrance CD contains past questions and answers from 2000 to 2004. These include Mathematics problems, English Language Comprehension and Composition, and two multiple choice papers. The Mathematics CD contains a variety of Math games suitable for primary school Grades 3 – 6.

The CDs are currently on sale to members of the public from the Information Technology Unit, Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sports on the Castries Waterfront. The Common Entrance CD is being sold at a cost of \$40 while the Mathematics Games cost \$30 each.

Proceeds of the sale will go towards the long-term development of software for schools. Persons are asked to **REFRAIN FROM MAKING ILLEGAL COPIES OF THE SOFTWARE, AS THIS VIOLATES COPYRIGHT LAWS CURRENTLY BEING ENFORCED IN ST. LUCIA.** In addition, persons purchasing the CDs will automatically qualify to win prizes such as a digital camera or printer.

The IT Unit would like to thank the various persons who contributed to the overall success of the project. Persons may contact the Unit at 468-5248 for further details.

HE Mr. Abdou Diouf, Secretary-General, International Organisation of the Francophonie visits St. Lucia



HE Diouf meets Governor-General, Dame Pearllette Louisy



HE Diouf meets Prime Minister, Dr. Kenny D. Anthony



Governor-General, Dame Pearllette Louisy hosts HE Diouf, with Prime Minister, French Ambassador, Minister for Education, among top officials in attendance



Pioneering French Teacher, Mrs. Cordilia Fevrier received the Chevalier des Palmes Académiques Award to commemorate the visit of HE Diouf to St. Lucia

Cuthbert Elisee Frank LELARGE Cordilia Fevrier Hon. Mario Michel



THIS WEEK ON NTN

Sat. Mar. 19th - Fri. Mar. 25th, 2005

The GIS reveals the high level of financial and technical assistance given to St. Lucia by the Commonwealth- Saturday 19th March, 6:30 p.m.

· Special interview with dame Sessenne Descartes - Sat. Mar. 19th, 8:00 p.m.

· The GIS highlights Government's Projects to lessen the impact of natural disasters - Sun. Mar. 20th, 6:30 p.m.

· The GIS speaks with community development officers about community development projects - Mon. Mar. 21st, 8:00 p.m.

· Under One Umbrella: The Commonwealth - Tues. Mar. 22nd, 7:30 p.m.

· The way Forward in Agriculture - Wed. Mar. 23rd, 8:00 p.m.

· The GIS discusses issues pertaining to Genetically Modified Organisms - Thurs. March 24th, 8:00 p.m.

· Sports in Action: The GIS puts the spotlight on the upcoming Seniors' Games scheduled for March 28th 2005 - Fri. Mar. 25th, 6:30 p.m.

Remember to tune in for:

· GIS News Breaks and Kweyol News daily from 6:30 p.m.

· Issues & Answers/Mondays at 8:00pm:

· Interview/Tuesdays at 6:15pm :

· Konsit Kweyol/Tuesdays at 8:00pm (Kweyol Discussion):

· Your Right to Know/Thursdays at 6:15 p.m. (Min. of Ed. Prog).

Take 2/Fridays at 6:15pm (Week in Review)

· Weflechi/Fridays at 6:40pm - (Week in Review—Kweyol)

For the complete programme guide, log on to our website at www.stlucia.gov.lc and then click on the NTN icon.

www.stlucia.gov.lc

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