

Speeches

February 9th 2001

Committee Welcomes New Members

The National Committee on External Trade Negotiations, established to advise Government on the negotiating strategies it should adopt in international fora, welcomed five new members this week. The new members are Mr. Allan Field, Chairman of the Private Sector Agency; Dr. Marion Williams, Governor of the Central Bank, attorneys-at-law Senator Dale Marshall and Mr. Kerrie Symmonds and Professor Andrew Downes of the University of the West Indies. At its first meeting for the year, the Committee was addressed by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Miss Billie Miller and Committee Chairman Sir Harold St. John. Miss Miller told them that their mandate to examine the global economic picture on an ongoing basis and advise Government on the best approaches to interfacing with the international community was a very important one.

She said that issues which were of particular concern were the establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), the relationship with Europe under the Cotonou Agreement, the relationship with the world Trade Organisation (WTO) and the CARICOM Single Market and Economy. She described the establishment of the Single Market and Economy as critical, noting that the Caribbean's survival in this hemisphere and beyond will very much depend on how swiftly and how efficiently it could be put in place. Miss Miller urged the Committee members to keep abreast of the

issues and to advise on what was realistically attainable for Barbados as it interfaced with the global community. Sir Harold in his remarks noted that the committee had done a considerable amount of work, clearly identifying the issues and the negotiating positions. He said that the committee must always be cognisant of the need for CARICOM to have a harmonised position on a range of issues.

He also said that the Committee recognised the importance of having a close working relationship with Government Ministries as well as the labour movement and the private sector. The Committee also agreed on a work programme that would provide the basis for the discharge of its mandate during 2001. **(BGIS)**