

STATEMENT ON THE SUGAR INDUSTRY
BY THE
LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION
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The sugar farmers of Barbados have been made victims of the clear battle between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Ministry of Finance. They have not received the money which is owed to them, nor do they even know how much they will be paid for the crop in this year 2015. This has led to continuing acres, indeed thousands of acres, being taken out of production.

Against this background the country must now demand an urgent justification from this Government for investing \$500 million in a sugar factory for a sugar industry that is 15,000 tons and declining.

Why is the Prime Minister now fast tracking this project all of a sudden when two months ago the Prime Minister indicated that it could not be an immediate priority for his government? Is this not more to do with the Prime Minister's survival?

At a time when the Government is unable to meet the legitimate demands of the QEH, the thousands of students at UWI and the well-being of so many sectors, the scale of this project cannot be propelled on a political basis.

Where is the Cost Benefit Analysis for the factory? Where is the Environmental Impact Assessment? Is this the best way to execute the project or should the private sector and farmers be encouraged to invest themselves, in a smaller factory that is more suited to the current scale of the industry?

The Government's behaviour has led to a further erosion of confidence in an industry that we must not allow to die, but equally must not be used as a political panacea for Government's political problems. It is urgent that the farmers receive what is owed to them, as so many Barbadians ought to receive what is owed to them, but in so doing to ensure that we do not literally bring the end to an industry that has been around this country for centuries.

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