

THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

SECOND SESSION OF 1971 - 76

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 15th April, 1975.

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 12.03 p.m. o'clock.

PRESENT

Hon. C. E. TALMA, C.B.E., (Deputy Prime Minister and Leader of the House); Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW, B.Sc., (Econ.), LL.D., (Prime Minister); Mr. R. St.C. WEEKES, J.P.; Mr. W. R. LOWE, J.P., (Chairman of Committees); Mr. W. C. B. HINDS; His Honour C. A. E. HOPPIN, (Deputy Speaker); Mr. L. S. CRAIG; Mr. J. B. SPRINGER; Mr. E. D. MOTTLEY; Mr. C. L. BOLDEN, LL.B.; Mr. F. L. WALCOTT, O.B.E.; Hon. F. G. SMITH, Q.C., S.C., B.A., (Minister of Communications and Works); Hon. P. G. MORGAN, C.B.E., (Minister of Tourism, Information and Public Relations); Mrs. G. L. EASTMOND; Hon. P. M. GREAVES, B.A., (Minister of Housing, Lands, Labour and National Insurance); Hon. A. MORRISON, (Minister of Agriculture, Science and Technology); Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD, B.A., M.A., (Econ.), (Minister of Education, Youth Affairs, Community Development and Sport) and Mr. E. E. GREAVES, B.A., Ed.M.

Prayers were read.

MINUTES

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Minutes for Tuesday, 11th March, 1975, as well as the Minutes of Tuesday 17th March, 1975, are before you for confirmation. *(Pause.)* There being no alterations, I declare that these Minutes are duly confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY MR. DEPUTY SPEAKER

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am in receipt of a letter dated 10th March, 1975, which was handed to me by the Clerk of Parliament this morning, and

it is my duty to inform hon. Members of its contents. The letter reads:

"Dear Mr. Clerk,

I herewith request that you transmit this letter to the House of Assembly for the grant to me of leave of absence from duties in that Honourable Chamber.

I am humbly requesting that the House of Assembly grant to me leave of absence for 6 months.

Yours faithfully,
N. G. A. Maxwell."

Mr. MOTTLEY: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I do not think this is the proper time for that letter to be read. I notice that the Clerk called "Documents to be laid", and that letter cannot be taken as a Notice of the Day. We will either follow these Rules or scrap them.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: As Deputy Speaker, I do not intend to break the Rules, or to allow anyone to break them. The Clerk went ahead before I read the letter, and I felt that a letter of this importance should be made known to hon. Members.

Hon. C. E. TALMA: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Leave of absence can be applied for in two ways: Either by way of an application to the Speaker or Deputy Speaker, or on the Floor of the Assembly by an honourable Member himself, or any honourable Member asking for leave on his behalf.

Mr. MOTTLEY: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. That is the very point I was making. The Leader of the House gets up and terms this letter as an application for leave of absence. If you will look at Standing Order No. 10 Order of Business, you will observe that this letter

cannot be dealt with at this stage. Are you going to make a mockery of the Rules of this House to suit certain individuals? This is a letter addressed to you, and you should read it under Announcements.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is exactly what I was doing.

Hon. C. E. TALMA: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I say this is correspondence to the Speaker or Deputy Speaker, but the gist of it is an application for leave.

Mr. BOLDEN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, what worries me terribly — provided that my ears are hearing correctly — is that you stated that this letter was dated 10th March, 1975, and was handed to you this morning. If this letter was dated 10th March, 1975, and has only just been handed to you on the 15th April, 1975, then there is something seriously wrong. Did the Clerk of Parliament have this letter from the 10th March? If so, why is it that it has not been handed to you before? This is a very sinister method which affects not only an application for leave, but it is the sort of action that can be taken with any other document in this House. A document is dated a particular date, and a month and six days later, it is then put into operation. Suppose the gentleman had died? Suppose something had happened to him during the interim? Where has this letter been all along?

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I can say that the original copy has been stamped. "Received by the Clerk of Parliament on the 15th April, 1975." That is, it was received by the Clerk of Parliament today.

Mr. BOLDEN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, is it that the letter is dated 10th March, 1975, and the Clerk's date receipt stamp is the 15th April, 1975?

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is what I have said. I will give the information again. The letter is dated 10th March, 1975. It reads:

"Dear Mr. Clerk,

I herewith request that you transmit this letter to the House of Assembly for the grant to me of leave of absence from duties in that Honourable Chamber.

I am humbly requesting that the House of Assembly grant to me leave of absence for 6 months.

Yours faithfully,
N. G. A. Maxwell"

The letter was handed to me today, and it is stamped as having been received on the 15th April, 1975. In fact it was received by the Clerk of Parliament about half an hour ago.

Mr. CRAIG: Mr. Deputy Speaker, under Standing Order No. 10 Order of Business, you will find "Motions for leave of Absence." What has happened is that Mr. Speaker sent a letter to Mr. Clerk to transmit to you, and you are making an announcement that Mr. Speaker is going on leave. I would have thought that you would have followed the method set out in Standing Order No. 10.
12.15 p.m.

I expected it would have been the duty of the Leader of the House to get up and move that Mr. Speaker be granted leave of absence, but if you read something from the Chair, it would appear as if it is a personal letter directed to you which you are now seeking to bring before the House. If you follow the Standing Orders carefully, you will see that there must be motions for leave of absence; so there must be a motion before the House asking for leave of absence for the Speaker of the House. I hope, Sir, that we can get on with the business of the House, and at the appropriate time let the Leader of the House move a motion for leave of absence for the Speaker. You just cannot under "Order of Business" read out a letter, because although it may have been dated 10th March, it was not handed in to the Clerk until today about half an hour ago. I am not interested in that, but the Leader of the House should get up and make a motion to the effect that the Speaker requests leave of absence. I think that is the correct thing to do.

Hon. C. E. TALMA: Mr. Deputy Speaker, as I already intimated I will again make it clear that there are two ways of applying for leave. One is by writing a letter as in this case, or failing that, for a motion to be made on the floor of the House, as is the usual practice, when it comes to the Order of Business. If the hon. Member wants it done both ways, I can do it both ways, and in this case I will do it both ways. I will make a motion at the appropriate time for six months' leave.

Mr. BOLDEN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Leader of the House is incorrect because if one looks at Standing Order No. 10 and then at Standing Order Number 72, there has got to be some motion because Standing Order Number 72(2) says:

"If, without leave of the House, any Member shall be absent from sittings of the House continuously for not less than three calendar

months, the seat of that Member shall be declared vacant."

This means that there must be some motion before the House in order that the House may grant that leave and comply with Standing Order Number 72. It cannot be an announcement as such. The House has to grant leave; so the Leader of the House will have at some stage in the proceedings to move a motion for the appropriate leave to be granted by the House.

PAPERS PRESENTED

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am commanded to present the following Papers:

- (1) The Customs Duties (Amendment) Order 1975.
- (2) The Customs Duties (Bottles for use in Rum Industry) Order 1974.
- (3) The Financial (Amendment) Rules 1975.
- (4) The Report of the Standing Insurance Committee and Statement of Accounts of the General Insurance Fund for the year 1973-74.

Hon. C. E. TALMA: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am commanded to present the following:

The Representation of the People (Expenses) (Amendment) Regulations 1975.

Hon. A. MORRISON: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am commanded to present the following:

The Financial Statement of the Barbados General Agricultural Society for the year ended 31st March 1974.

Hon. F. G. SMITH: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am commanded to present the following:

The Annual Report and Statement of Accounts of the Natural Gas Corporation for the period 1/4/73 - 31/3/74.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Hon. C. E. TALMA: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to give notice of a Bill to amend the Registration Office Act, 1961.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to give notice of a Bill to amend the Central Bank of Barbados Act, 1972.

Hon. C. E. TALMA: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to give notice of a Bill to amend the Law Revision Act, 1967.

Also, I beg to give notice of a Bill to make certain miscellaneous amendments to the Acts in force in Barbados on 31st December, 1971, for the purposes of and in connection with the incorporation of those Acts into the revised Edition of the Laws of Barbados.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' NOTICES

Mr. GREAVES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to give notice of the following Resolutions:—

(1) RESOLUTION RE SEVERANCE PAYMENT LEGISLATION

Whereas under the present Severance Payment Legislation in Barbados a worker is eligible for Severance Pay up to the age of 65 years;

And Whereas a number of employers are dismissing workers who attain the age of 65 years without compensating them;

Be It Resolved That an amendment be made to the existing legislation to prevent employers from taking an unfair advantage of a loop-hole in law and thereby depriving workers of their due.

(2) RESOLUTION RE PROGRAMME OF SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE RURAL COMMUNITIES

Whereas the social, cultural and economic life in rural areas is of paramount importance to the development of any nation;

And Whereas all available evidence suggests that the above is not a priority in Government planning;

Be It Resolved that this House views with deep concern the lack of rural planning and development in Barbados and calls on the Government to give urgent consideration to a meaningful programme of social, economic and cultural development in the rural communities.

NOTICES OF QUESTIONS

Mr. CRAIG: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to give notice of the following Question:—

QUESTION RE OVERSEA VISITS BY GOVERNMENT MINISTERS

To enquire of the Appropriate Minister:

1. How many overseas visits were made by each Minister of Government for the period of the First Session of 1971-76.
2. What was the cost of the visits made by each Minister to the Barbados Government?
3. What are the daily allowances paid by the Barbados Government to each Minister when on a visit overseas?
4. How many wives or relatives of Ministers accompanied their husbands at the expense of the Barbados Government, and what were the names of the Ministers so accompanied by their wives?

Mr. GREAVES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, to enquire of the Minister of Education, Youth Affairs, Community Development and Sport:

QUESTION RE SCHOOL MEALS CENTRE AT ST. CLEMENT'S, ST. LUCY

Is the Minister aware that the School Meals Centre at St. Clements, St. Lucy is extremely hot and uncomfortable for the workers, particularly when meals are being prepared?

Will the Minister take the necessary steps to have this inconvenience removed?

To enquire of the Minister of Education, Youth Affairs, Community Development and Sport:

QUESTION RE ASSEMBLY HALL FOR ST. LUCY'S SECONDARY SCHOOL, ST. LUCY

1. Is the Minister aware that there is no Assembly Hall at the St. Lucy's Secondary School and consequently assembly is held in the open air?
2. Is the Minister aware that this situation affects the smooth functioning of the school?
3. Can the Minister state whether or not the Assembly Hall will be provided before the end of the current financial year?

To enquire of the Minister of Education, Youth Affairs, Community Development and Sport:

QUESTION RE THE PROVISION OF A PLAYING FIELD AT ST. LUCY'S SECONDARY SCHOOL ST. LUCY

Is the Minister aware that there is no playing field at the St. Lucy's Secondary School?

And is the Minister aware of the problems which the absence of this facility imposes on the pupils and teachers of the school?

Can the Minister state what are the problems being encountered in getting the playing field at the school established?

Mr. LOWE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on behalf of the hon. Member for St. George North, I beg to give notice of the following Question:—

QUESTION RE UNUSED SCHOOL TOILET AT ST. JUDE'S VILLAGE, ST. GEORGE

"To enquire of the Appropriate Minister:

Is the Government aware that there is an old unused school toilet in St. Judes Village, St. George below the old Girls' School which is rat-infested and used as a dump, which poses a health hazard to the residents of the area?

If the answer to the above is in the affirmative, will some urgent action be taken to relieve this dangerous situation?

12.25 p.m.

FIRST READINGS OF BILLS

Hon. C. E. TALMA: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that a Bill to amend the Registration Office Act, 1961 be now read a first time.

Hon. A. MORRISON: I beg to second that.

The Question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that a Bill to amend the Central Bank of Barbados Act, 1972 be now read a first time.

Hon. A. MORRISON: I beg to second that.

The Question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Hon. C. E. TALMA: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that a Bill to amend the Law Revision Act, 1967 be now read a first time.

Hon. A. MORRISON: I beg to second that.

The Question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Hon. C. E. TALMA: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that a Bill to make certain miscellaneous amendments to the Acts in force in Barbados on 31st December, 1971 for the purposes of and in connection with the incorporation of those Acts into the Revised Edition of the Laws of Barbados be now read a first time.

Hon. A. MORRISON: I beg to second that.

The Question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Mr. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that a Bill to amend the Married Women's Separation and Maintenance Act, be now read a first time.

Mr. C. L. BOLDEN: I beg to second that.

The Question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

SIX MONTHS' LEAVE OF ABSENCE
GRANTED TO HIS HONOUR
N. G. A. MAXWELL

Hon. C. E. TALMA: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that the hon. Member for St. Philip North be granted six months' leave of absence from his duties in this Chamber with effect from today's date, the 15th day of April, 1975.

Hon. A. MORRISON: I beg to second that.

Mr. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that it is customary — I have never during the five or six years I have been in here, heard an application for leave of absence for such a long time — to expect that out of courtesy to this Chamber, if any Member is going to leave the Chamber for such a long time, that the reasons should be given. Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is more so where the person is the Speaker of this Honourable Assembly. It is not every day that one hears a motion being made for leave of absence for six months, and I feel that Members of this House are entitled to know and to have some reason set out in the application to the motion, as to why the Speaker would like six months' leave of absence.

It has always been traditional, I believe, in the House of Commons that you state the reason

why for example, if the person is ill or if it is urgent business, or something like this. We find that from time to time some Ministers will make application for leave of absence from the House on grounds that they are going overseas on Government Business; other Members have made application on the ground that they are going overseas on vacation. But here we find that there is just this application on behalf of the Speaker and a letter, which you read earlier, Sir, dated 10th March, 1975 and which is stamped as having been received by the Clerk today, 15th April, 1975 and he is making application for six months' leave of absence.

Sir, one cannot help but feeling uneasy when one hears in this Chamber the Speaker himself exhorting Members to maintain the dignity of this Chamber. One cannot but remember the Speaker taking Members to task for behaviour in this Chamber; one cannot but remember hearing the Speaker — I would hate to use the word "lambast", but — taking the Members to task for their conduct, at a time when this surprised most Members because Members took the view that the attitude or statement by the Speaker was not in keeping with his position and he had no power to verbally assault the Members of this Chamber.

We find today that the Speaker, is himself now failing to uphold the dignity of this House by treating this House with scant respect and sending in an application today which I dare say is back-dated for over a month. As one hon. Member has said, what has happened? Why is it that the application is dated the 10th March and the Clerk of Parliament did not receive it before today's date.

We have been through a whole Sitting of the Estimates, and it was the Member for St. Michael South Central who drew it to the attention of the House that the Speaker was absent and not one single word was heard as to the reason why the Speaker was absent. Now we find that there are many things in the atmosphere and we hear the Speaker wants a grant of six months' leave of absence.

This is creating a precedent, Sir; no Member has asked for this length of time, as far as I know unless he has stated that he is going overseas because he is ill and he has to have an operation, or there some sickness, or something like that.....

Hon. C. E. TALMA: If the hon. Member would give way.....

Mr. MOTTLEY: On what grounds?

Hon. C. E. TALMA: On a point of order. The hon. Member is alleging that no Member has ever had six months' leave of absence. I do not know if the hon. Member is aware that I had six months' leave — more than six months' leave. For that matter you are entitled to as long as one year's leave. According to Standing Order 72(3) you do not have to state any reasons nor do you have to get any permission. You just write in or get someone to make a motion on the floor that you would like to have this amount of leave, and it is automatic. Of course, nobody can prevent the hon. Member from speaking, as long as he is in order.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Point made.

Mr. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, just let me correct the hon. Member on two points.
12.35 p.m.

Firstly, since I was here from 1969 no Member has had six months' leave. Secondly, I am quite sure that when the hon. Member applied for six months' leave, he applied for six months study leave. He did not treat the House in this scant manner with which we now find the present Speaker treating the House.

I do not think it is right for us to sit down in here and just because somebody comes and says I want six months' leave that it should go like that. It is not six days. It is six months. He is drawing the taxpayers' money. He will be drawing his salary for doing nothing. This is irresponsibility to the taxpayers of this country. We are going to give him six months' leave for doing what? I dare say that it will be overseas because as far as I understand the Standing Orders, Sir, the Member applying for leave or the person applying for leave on behalf of the Member, as a matter of courtesy to the House should state the reason why he is applying for leave.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have read Standing Order 72 more than once. Nowhere does it state that you have to say why you want six months' leave. I am just correcting the hon. Member. The Speaker, the hon. Member for St. Philip North, in his letter has requested six months' leave, and nowhere does the Rule state that you should specify the reason for having the leave. We are guided by the Standing Orders of this House. The letter complies with Standing Order 72.

Mr. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I never said that the motion was out of order. I

have never said that the Standing Order requires a Member to state the reasons why he is going overseas. I have said that I have heard Ministers who applied for leave, and Members both on this side and on that side who applied for leave, and they have stated the reason why. I have never said that the Rules require you to do so. I am saying that it is a matter of courtesy. I do not think that I should sit here and grant a Member six months' leave unless I know the reason why he is applying for the leave.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: When we revise the Standing Orders the hon. Member can have that part put in. As it stands now, the letter is in order.

Mr. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, one only has to look at the practice in England and Wales where it states that it was considered necessary in the past for Members to apply to the House for leave of absence for which sufficient reason had to be given such as urgent business, ill health, illness in your family, domestic afflictions and matters of that nature.

I am not saying that the Rules require you to state the reason. I am saying that as a matter of courtesy to this House it would have been right to state in his letter why he wants six months' leave. Why should we sit down in here and give a Member six months' leave — not even a backbencher, but the Speaker, and he will be drawing the salary of Speaker all this time and has no responsibilities to the people of this country? I am going to vote against the motion for the reason I have stated. It is not that I am against any Member getting leave, but I feel that the Member should treat this House with more courtesy by stating the reason why he is asking for leave.

Mr. CRAIG: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is not the type of debate that I would like to get into. I do not feel that it is the type of debate that any of us in here would like to get in; but I have to support my colleague on the ground that the Speaker is not just an ordinary hon. Member of Parliament. It is he who claimed the ancient rights, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is he to whom we look forward for guidance and the Speaker protects the Opposition against the might of the Government.

I think it was a very salient point when the hon. Member for St. Michael South Central, the Minister of Communications and Works, highlighted Mr. Speaker's absence. I am a Barbadian and I like to face up to realities. I do not like kicking a dog when it is down. This is common knowledge around Bridgetown, around the whole of Barbados. I have had friends from

St. Vincent who were at the LIAT talks and they were asking, where is your Speaker? I told them, "you are making a joke of a man for whom all of us in Parliament must have the highest respect."

No one is denying the Speaker the right to be on leave; but it is the way it is done, the "hoity toity" attitude, leaving here during the Estimates. No one saw him. You, Mr. Deputy Speaker, did not know if Mr. Speaker was coming or not. You are a man, I understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who has to do your work at the Cotton Factory, but you had to be here because no one knew what was the position with Mr. Speaker. If you asked the Clerk where the Speaker is and you want to ask the Speaker something of importance pertaining to Parliament, the Clerk of Parliament cannot tell you where the Speaker is.

It is nothing I believe that any of us would like to think about. There are all of these fancy rumours going around Bridgetown. I am sympathetic towards the hon. gentleman and I believe that the Prime Minister of this country could save his party and the people of Barbados at this stage. He could save us a little bit of embarrassment if he would act in the right manner. Call Mr. Speaker to board, have a talk with him and decide exactly what is going to happen. You cannot deny the fact that you have heard all these strange rumours whether they are true or false. You hear that the Chinese Ambassador is involved with Mr. Speaker. You hear that the staff of Parliament is involved with Mr. Speaker. I do not like it. If it is true, I am sympathetic towards the hon. gentleman because this is a strange life that we have to live in.

I heard the Prime Minister say that the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh. He told the Speaker that. I do not like that attitude. I do not like, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that you are forced into the position that you are forced into, reading a letter that leave should be given and we do not know what we are doing.

I feel very sad about the whole affair because this is a man who holds a high office in this country and it is a reflection on the black man again. That is the first thing you will hear. When the white man was in power in this country, you never used to hear this. I regret the whole incident. If it is true that the Speaker finds himself in an awkward position I sympathise with the hon. gentleman. I would implore everybody, even my colleagues, on this side, if they can assist him, to assist him. I have always heard about the old party circle and I

have heard Members of my party circle say that the Government had five Members over here who would cut our throats. This may be true, but I still do not share that view. I do not like to see advantage taken of people. I do not like to kick a dog when he is down, because the dog cannot defend itself.

I am very sympathetic towards the whole affair, and I believe that many of my colleagues and members on the Government side and members of the staff of Parliament share my sentiments. I regret that I have to vote against it for the same reason that my colleague said that he has to vote against it.

The Question that the hon. Member for St. Philip North be granted six months' leave of absence from attendance at the Honourable the House of Assembly, was put and resolved in the affirmative, the House dividing as follows:-

Ayes: Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW, Hon. C. E. TALMA, Hon. A. MORRISON, Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD, Hon. F. G. SMITH, Hon. P. G. MORGAN, Mr. W. R. LOWE, Mr. F. L. WALCOTT, Mr. E. E. GREAVES, Mr. J. B. SPRINGER, Mrs. G. L. EASTMOND and Mr. R. St.C. WEEKES — 12.

Noes: Mr. L. S. CRAIG, Mr. E. D. MOTTLEY, Mr. W. C. B. HINDS and Mr. C. L. BOLDEN — 4.
12.45 p.m.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leave is therefore granted to the hon. Member for St. Philip North for the period of six months with effect from the 15th April, 1975.

Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I expect to be out of the country during the period April 16th to 20th, and 21st to 23rd in the first instance. I am visiting the Republic of Venezuela at the invitation of that Government to discuss matters of mutual interest between our two Governments in the spheres of education and culture. In the second instance I will be visiting the State of Antigua to attend a meeting of the Ministers of Education of the CARICOM region.

In addition to that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I expect to be out of the country during the period 30th April to 1st June at the invitation of the United States Government on a U.S. foreign visitor's grant and I am asking that I be granted leave of absence from any Sittings of this Hon. Chamber which may take place during those periods of my absence.

Mr. MOTTLEY: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will rise to second that motion because I believe that is the way these things should be done. It shows that the Member for St. Michael South treats the House with more respect than the Speaker.

The Question that the hon. Member for St. Michael South be granted leave of absence from attendance at the Honourable the House of Assembly during those periods was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. C. E. TALMA: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that Standing Orders 6, 16, 18, 20, 42, 43 and 44 be suspended for the remainder of today's Sitting.

Hon. A. MORRISON: I beg to second that.

The Question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. C. E. TALMA: I beg to move that Government Business be now taken.

Hon. A. MORRISON: I beg to second that.

The Question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Hon. C. E. TALMA: The first Order stands in the name of the Prime Minister and it is to move the passing of a Resolution to approve the Leave Passages (Amendment) Order 1975. The Prime Minister will deal with that, Sir.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE LEAVE PASSAGES (AMENDMENT) ORDER, 1975

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: This Order, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was made on the 11th March, 1975 and is subject to affirmative Resolution. The main purpose of the Order is to increase the level of the minimum salary at which persons will be entitled to Leave Passages as a result of the salaries revision of 1973. Then in the definition of a child, the age will be reduced to 18 years in accordance with other legislation enacted by this House and the amendments to the Constitution. Then in paragraph 5 of the principal Order the words "Governor-General" have been removed as designating the competent authority, and this is

now vested in the Chief Establishments Officer. Then the principal Order is amended by revoking paragraphs 12, 13 and 15 and renumbering the other paragraphs accordingly.

The Order comes into operation on 1st April, 1975 which is the beginning of the financial year. I beg to move that this Order be now approved.

Hon. C. E. TALMA: I beg to second that.

The Question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: The next Order is a Resolution to guarantee a loan not exceeding \$2.5 million to the National Housing Corporation by the Barbados Development Bank, relating to Public Officers Housing Loans.

RESOLUTION TO GUARANTEE A LOAN OF \$2.5 MILLION FOR THE NATIONAL HOUSING CORPORATION

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: Mr. Deputy Speaker, up to today's date the Public Officers Housing Loan Fund has been financed from the following sources: In 1955 there was a Government grant of \$500,000, in 1969 there was a loan guaranteed by the Government of \$1.8 million, in 1970 the Barbados Development Bank advanced \$3 million for the fund, borrowing from the National Insurance Board, and in 1973 again there was a further charge of \$2 million through the same source, that is through the Barbados Development Bank.

In 1969 when the Barclays Bank loan of \$1.8 million was due to mature the Government agreed that the Housing Authority, which is now the National Housing Corporation, should negotiate with Barclays Bank to amortise the loan over a period of eight years, and as a result the Housing Authority was requested, and agreed to amortise the loan at a monthly repayment schedule of \$25,000 on principal and interest, and as at the end of January 1975 the amount outstanding was \$848,924 because the National Housing Corporation was supposed, and I believe they did make payments on principal and interest in the amount of \$25,000 per month.

12.55 p.m.

The administrative expenses of the Public Officers Housing Loan Fund in the division of the National Housing Corporation amount to about \$4,500 a month. In addition to the

\$25,000 loan from Barclays Bank, there is another \$24,792 monthly repayment to the Barbados Development Bank so that the total is roughly \$54,000 monthly outgoings from the section, or division, of the National Housing Corporation. That is the division dealing with the Public Officers Housing, and we know that there is a great demand and a waiting list.

The income, on the other hand, is approximately \$76,000 per month by way of repayments of which \$34,000 is in the way of interest and \$4,200 in the way of principal. My reason for mentioning those figures is to demonstrate that the amount of money being generated by that division of the National Housing Corporation is less than \$24,000 per month, and this amount is insufficient to meet the demands for new loans which are accumulating at a reasonably rapid rate.

Let me give you some idea of the position of things. Now, 217 applications totalling \$1.9 million have been approved, and in addition to that there are 1,250 applications demanding, or requesting, loans up to \$6 million which have not been processed. You have a potential of \$8 million required by the Public Officer sector alone in the National Housing Corporation. Nearly \$2 million has been approved for 217 applications and there are 1,250 other applications which, to put it bluntly, it will be a waste of time processing them until shortly before money is available. If you are going to satisfy the applicants in the Public Officers sector alone, you will need something like \$8 million. This is the main reason why we are now requesting a further \$2½ million to guarantee this loan for the Public Officers Housing under the division of the National Housing Corporation.

Just very briefly, there is some other information which Members of the House might wish to have. The rate of interest is 7½%, and this is only possible because we are borrowing National Insurance Funds. The rate of interest in the mortgage market is varying between 9½% and 14% for housing. What we propose to do is to make these advances to the Public Officers whose loans have been approved and then proceed to process other loans as quickly as possible. The rate of interest that Public Officers Housing and Loan Fund is paying to the bank is 7½%. The rate of interest that Public Officers pay now is 8% and that leaves a margin of ½% for administration and so on. I propose to increase the interest rate to Public Officers to 8½%, which is still a highly subsidised rate, from 8% to 8½%. The maximum loan given to a Public Officer,

because of the rise in the cost of materials, will be increased from \$27,000 to \$32,000 on first mortgages and there is still a limit of \$10,000 on second mortgages. Of course, they have to come after the first mortgages have been satisfied.

Many Public Officers have found themselves in a position where they have a first mortgage and they cannot finish the house, and we have allowed them to apply — I can only say allow them to apply, but not to grant them necessarily until the funds are there — for second mortgages up to a limit of \$10,000. This is not all of the information that I have on Public Officers Housing, but I think it is all that is necessary for Members to appreciate the reason for this Resolution.

I beg to move that this Resolution to guarantee a loan not exceeding \$2.5 million to the National Housing Corporation by the Barbados Development Bank, relating to Public Officers' Housing Loans do now pass.

Hon. C. E. TALMA: I beg to second that.

Mr. CRAIG: Mr. Deputy Speaker, in financial matters of this nature, I do not profess to have any great knowledge. I am not a financier, but when it comes to the Housing Authority, one has to examine the Housing Authority and its operations as well as the way it functions. The National Housing Corporation has, for a number of years, been the subject of public scrutiny. In 1969 this Party came in here and drew to the attention of the Government by way of a Resolution the behaviour of the then Housing Authority. In the Resolution the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance was invited to have a public inquiry into the actual operation of the Housing Authority. Today we are being asked by the Government to support a loan from the Barbados Development Bank to the tune of \$2.5 million.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, no one would deny that any Government should provide for its people proper housing, proper clothing, and proper food. These are three basic things that people need.

1.05 p.m.

When one examines the Sixteenth Annual Report of the Housing Authority for the period 1st April, 1971, to 31st March, 1972, one will see that it says in paragraph 2 of the Auditors' Report that:

"It is the practice of the Authority to accrue rent and interest as income even where collectibility of these amounts is extremely doubtful. Consequently, we have been unable to satisfy ourselves as to the fairness of the presentation in the balance sheet."

This is enough to make the eye-brows of the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance raise again because it is the auditors who say that they cannot satisfy themselves, and it would not be fair for them to give this their blessing in the absence of its presentation in the balance sheet, because obviously there might be a number of discrepancies. Now we have called on them over and over in the interest of the people of the country to have an enquiry, since the Opposition is recognised as the watch-dog of Government expenditure, and it is our bounden duty to draw to the attention of Government where we observe things are going wrong at a financial level. When we came in here in 1969-70 we asked to have an enquiry and told you not to appoint anybody from the Opposition but to choose the people you wanted, and you would see a number of things which would come out which would cause concern to you as Minister of Finance and to the taxpayers of this country. We were given the boot and told that the wrong people, the lepers, that is, of the society, had brought the wrong Resolution asking the right people to look into something. That is all it boiled down to. The wrong Resolution was brought in by the wrong people at the wrong time. We realised it was the wrong time for the Government but the right time for the Opposition, because it was near the elections, and it involved a Minister to the tune of \$1.5 million. Now we are hearing the small man being accused; but I say, free the small man and hang the Minister. Do not hang the small man all the time. You should examine the Ministers who since they were in Government were able to buy three or four plantations between 1969 and 1974. That is what the Prime Minister must look at if he is prepared to get the respect of the public all the time.

We are not imposing on him by asking him about the Resolution for \$2.5 million. We are aware that we have to provide things of this nature, and if he has to get the money, he must get it; but what we are calling for again is a public enquiry into the Housing Corporation. A number of these Government Statutory Boards needs examining carefully. This is the danger of party politics, because you have a person who helps you in an

election. I do not believe in that; I believe in the best man for the job, no matter who you are, so long as you have your country's welfare at heart. We have to support this Resolution, but we are going to be borrowing money all the time to put into a place where however you turn at every street corner you can hear something about the Housing Corporation, and every politician in this country has lost respect because of the behaviour of some of the Government members. You now hear that all are the same, but it is not fair. No matter what anybody tells me, this type of politics only came into Barbados between 1961 and today. When the Minister of Finance, the Member for St. Michael West and the Leader of the House were Members of the Opposition Party, they knew that the Government never condoned behaviour of that nature, and that is why it was felt that the then Premier was not a good administrator but a constitutional thinker.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we now have a different style of politics in this country and the young people have no respect for their elders, politicians are disrespected, you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are just another person knocking around in here, the Gallery behaves badly all because of the behaviour of the politicians themselves. It may be too late and the Prime Minister may say it is the wrong person seeking the wrong request, but in the interest of all concerned I am calling again for an enquiry into the Housing Corporation and other Statutory Boards. Do not hang the little man continually; it is not the little man alone, it is the big fellow at the top having his fun and encouraging the little man to have his fun also. Free the small man at the Housing Corporation and examine the former Minister of Housing and the present Minister too. Give the small man a chance and spank the big fellow.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have to support this Resolution in the interest of the nation and its housing needs, but I am warning the Government that there is too much corruption in these Statutory Boards. I believe the Prime Minister must hear things the same way that we hear them; he must have people with their ears to the ground and they must be able to tell him what is going on; so he must be able to gauge the strength of the Opposition, and the mood of the public because he is an experienced person now. I hear people talking about an election, but what Prime Minister is going to call an election? Can he risk it now when things are as bad as they are? He is too

smart a politician to risk that. The Minister of Finance is a shrewd person and an able man. There are some people who say they do not drink rum and yet they are always drunk, because you are saying you are the most honest person in the world. I am trying to give the hon. Member his due and I am saying that as a Minister of Finance, he must have his ears to the ground, and from the report of the Housing Corporation, even the auditors are not satisfied with the behaviour of the Housing Corporation, and therefore I say it is regrettable that I have to support this Resolution, but I must see the country's need first.

Mr. GREAVES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on this Resolution, there are a number of points I would like to make. I would just like to indicate that I am not at all against the public officers getting loans for housing purposes. As a matter of fact, the picture as has been painted by the Right Hon. Prime Minister in the presentation of the Resolution would indicate to all hon. Members the need that exists in this particular area, and to deal with 270 applications and still have a backlog in one section of over 1,200 is a clear indication that enough is not being done in the area of housing. As you are aware, this is only one section of the operations of the National Housing Corporation. I believe that if one had an opportunity to look at the figures of the total operations of the National Housing Corporation, one would see the picture in its totality and indeed would realise how bad the situation is, and I would hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the Right Hon. Prime Minister would really take a serious look at the National Housing Corporation from the point of view of having a review of the housing programme and the policies which are being pursued by that Corporation.

There are literally thousands of people all over the country who have made application to the National Housing Corporation for loans three, four or five years ago and cannot at this stage even get an indication as to whether or not they will get the loan. I know of instances, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where people have put up the frame for houses expecting to get a loan from the National Housing Corporation and have not been able to get it, and as a result the frames have rotted and they have lost what money they invested on the frame on the understanding that they would have been getting some kind of loan from the Housing Corporation. I think it is a real case that we are sitting down here

today as it were merely scratching the surface of a problem which is of a very serious and national importance, a problem which concerns the people throughout the length and breadth of this country, and I am suggesting that a very serious look be taken at this matter, because 1.15 p.m.

what we have to bear in mind is that if we get a housing programme going, the kind of housing programme which might not necessarily satisfy the needs of everybody but at least would go a far way in answering and in meeting some of the tremendous problems which exist in housing at present, this would also create opportunities for people to be employed in a number of areas and it would assist also in relieving the unemployment situation which exists in this country.

I would therefore hope, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Government would take a very serious look at this particular matter from the point of view of the operations of the National Housing Corporation, relate it to the needs which obviously are in the knowledge of the National Housing Corporation from the point of view of the number of applications which have been made to the corporation, and indeed, from the fact that there are a number of other people, I know, who really need to get loans but realize the fact that it really does not make any sense to make an application for the simple reason that you are told when you make an application that there is no money available, so that you get frustration at this level; and I would hope that a very serious look be taken at this and that some concrete and positive action be taken to relieve this very serious and pressing situation.

Mr. WALCOTT: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to share the views that the hon. Member for St. Lucy has stated on this question of housing. Housing is very vital to Barbados and I do not view it from a personal view like the hon. Member for St. James, because I find that sometimes the hon. Member pleads ignorance when he is dealing with the Prime Minister and when the Prime Minister is here, and when the Prime Minister is not here, he makes these very vapid remarks.

Well, I do not have any confidence in a man who is not going to say what he wants to say when a man is facing him but will say it when the man's back is turned. So I will dismiss what he was saying.

The other point is this. It is going to be very serious for a deputy leader of an Opposition who is going to plead ignorance about financial matters; if he is going to plead ignorance about financial matters, what is going to be his position in here? Financial matters are very vital to a country, especially to a country like ours.

We cannot debate matters, when we reach this stage that we can only debate matters if we are speaking in a personal manner and calling somebody else corrupt. Too many people believe it is a favourite pastime for one to say that the other fellow is a corrupt fellow, and all that you need to say is that "A" is corrupt, but I am pure and just.

Now I feel that with regard to the National Housing Corporation the Prime Minister should examine this Ministry. The reason why I say so is because this Ministry as a Ministry in totality has come under too many problems, and problems from the point of view where officers working in this organization have been accused of too many misdemeanours. The Labour Department some time ago under this Ministry, — something went wrong and people were before a court or nearly before a court for money — was involved with people who were given provident fund money; now you hear about money in relation to housing, and also you hear about money relating to Parks and Beaches.

You have to examine the structure within a Ministry where things are falling down around an area like this, and see what is happening. Is the load too much? Why I say this is because there is no point giving departments large sums of money to administer and they do not have the proper personnel and the machinery for dealing with it; because one of the problems that I find here is, we have some people in the community who, whether they work in the Government or they work in private enterprise, the first thing that they look for when they get a job, is sometimes to see how they can beat the system, and how they can get some money out, and how they can forge a cheque, and how they can get somebody's name signed, and the best way they can get some money out of people. This has become now a pastime for some people; and if you have some of these silly public servants or these silly administrators whose job is to sit down and all they want is a big chair to sit on, a lot of carpet around them and a lot of things around them, and they are

not wondering what is happening around them, well then people will carry away the money, because those in authority do not know what they are doing; and with housing in particular, I think the Prime Minister has to bear in mind that Barbados has special problems in housing.

From what he has said, I see there is need for housing; a very vast amount, not only for public officers, but nationally. Something in the vicinity of \$25 million to \$30 million; and I think we have got to bring to our minds that this is going to be a major priority because it is going to set many people at work and it is going to be one of our number one priorities and we would have to think of our priority in our own social and economic context and deal with it first; and I see this as one of the areas to which attention should be paid.

The Prime Minister said that the increase is going to be a subsidy. This is an area — where I feel that money is too dear in Barbados, and money is needed for social development. You cannot develop housing on expensive money if it is going to reach out and reach down to a large section of people, and therefore an 8% interest loan is still a high loan for housing, and we have to try and get as much money as we can for housing. I am submitting that if we can go on to housing, we will put more people in work. I do not subscribe to what the hon. Member for St. James has said, because if the Opposition has anything against the Minister or against any Member, he can bring a Resolution in, have a debate on what he wants. The machinery is there. There is no point, each time that there is a debate on some public policy, that the only thing you can do is to single out a person for some personal attack or some personal abuse.

Now I consider that housing is above personal abuse. Housing is too vital to this community and I am of the opinion that the National Housing Corporation is incapable — I am not dealing now with any person carrying away money, but the National Housing Corporation is incapable with the personnel at their disposal, of dealing with this massive programme that we have. The dispersal of personnel all over the country, all over Bridgetown, is not the best way to streamline this. You require better coordination, you require excellent officers with the kind of qualifications and the kind of dedication for

this kind of service, because this is not a service that requires the mentality that as they hear you talking about \$25 million, somebody's Adams' apple and palate begin to run up and down like a clock pendulum and they want to see out of this how much of this they can get scraped off, coming their way.

1.25 p.m.

We want excellent administrators, and I feel that the Government is losing too much of its money and time – and not only the Government, but the private sector too. If you have half cent administrators you are bound to lose more than you are spending. You cannot spend \$1 million and have 50 cent administrators. I feel that the time has come when you must spend money on good quality administrators who will be able to take care of a massive programme like this.

I feel that Housing is such a programme and I would like to see the Government when it is financing these institutions to make arrangements along the lines that I have suggested.

The Government now has an excellent opportunity as a result of the higher price that is coming from sugar. Some of this money can lead to a new dimension in our thinking along these lines. I do not subscribe to the view that as soon as you get something, the first thing you must do, is to dissipate it. I said so ten years ago and I can remember how much of the ministerial seat talk we had at the time. I am not afraid, and I will never take fright because I am above this narrow ministerial seat attitude. I am not afraid of ministerial seats or political positions. I am above those persons who think in these narrow terms; and all of those who think in these terms have to eat out of my hands.

It is a matter of ideas. Ideas run the world, not foolishness. An idea must be good and sound. I said so ten years ago. You do not take all the money you gain and divert it into one channel. I am not saying that the Government should spend all the money on Housing, or on Education or on water. I am not one of those fools who believe that because water is essential you should spend all your money on water and none on food. You can divide the money and distribute it equitably in a way that will give the greatest satisfaction to the greatest number of people.

I feel that if a massive programme of housing was embarked on, it would set this country alive in a manner that would do a lot to stop the nonsense and distortions that you get today, and silence once and for all some of the clowns that still seem to be penetrating this society.

Mr. BOLDEN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, looking at the report of the National Housing Corporation, one sees.....

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Will the hon. Member confine his speech to what is before us which is a Resolution relating to Public Officers Housing Loans?

Mr. BOLDEN: I am confining myself to that.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: If the hon. member starts by talking about the report, that is not before the House.

Mr. BOLDEN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, do not let anyone put you wrong. I am dealing with the National Housing Corporation and no one can tell you that I cannot start with the Report. I am going to start with that, and if you rule me wrong I will sit down. I am going to start with that because it deals with the very point that I am going to speak about. If you want to hear it in broad language there is thieving up there. That is why my colleague asked for a public inquiry into the National Housing Corporation. I am going to start with this for that reason. Do not let anyone tell you that I cannot start with this. I am not one of the backbenchers over there, who do not know what they are doing.

The Report says: "It is the practice of the Authority to accrue rent and interest income even where collectibility of these amounts is extremely doubtful. Consequently, we have been unable to satisfy ourselves as to the fairness of the presentation in the Balance Sheet of:

Loans

Rents and other receivables

and in the Income and Expenditure Statement of:—

Rents and
Interest.

"In addition, we believe that an amount of not less than \$5,500,000 should be provided for doubtful receivables."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, quite recently the National Housing Corporation has gone about suing people for rents due, capital and interest repayments. These cases have come before the several High Courts in this island and the people have been saying that they have paid their money. They have produced receipts, and in many cases they have said that when they paid the money, the Accounting Officer told them that the books are not here; leave the money and we will send the receipts to you through the post. Many of them have produced receipts, and

the receipts are nowhere entered in the Corporation's books.

That is why I said that the Auditor's Report is very vital. The Prime Minister is asking people of this country to guarantee a further loan of \$2.5 million to the National Housing Corporation. What I can say is that we are not against providing houses for public officers or anybody else in this country. What we are saying is, as the hon. Member for St. Michael North Central has said, is that you cannot keep on putting money into an organisation of this sort, if there is no proper method of accounting by the officers or by anybody handling this type of money.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order. The point of order is a very simple and elementary one. The Resolution which we have before us is for the guaranteeing of this loan of \$2.5 million to a specific division of the National Housing Corporation. I just want to say parenthetically that in the first place both interest and principal on the Public Officers Housing Loans are deducted at source. Receivables in the other sectors which they claimed are a disclosure of defalcations in the Auditors' Report deal with rents which it is doubtful that the people will pay. In other words, arrears of rents are considerable because of inability to pay or preference for consumer products like television sets rather than pay the Government's rents or matters of that kind.

Now when the Auditor says that we should not put in sums which you do not think you can collect it merely means that you are inviting the National Housing Corporation to write off a considerable amount of bad debts which are presumably uncollectable; but we do not like to write off sums of money like that, unless we have established that they are incapable of being collected.

On a point of order, Sir, the hon. Member should stick to the guarantee because there is no possibility in the Public Officers Housing Loans for this money not be collected and paid back to the Barbados Development Bank because it is collected at source.

1.35 p.m.

Mr. BOLDEN: I beg to differ from the Hon. Minister of Finance, because if the Hon. Minister would look at many of the Government's accounts, he will see that even for the Christmas loans there are large sums outstanding, because when an officer moves from one point to the next there are no deductions made.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: On a point of correction, Sir, that is not so. The only loans we have come to the House year after year for, were for these advances and the amount outstanding does not arise this year because we did not lend any money last year. The total amount outstanding was less than \$3,000 because some casual workers had left the Island or had not worked for some time.

Mr. BOLDEN: I beg to differ again. There are several outstanding sums which were not deductible because Civil Servants move from one department to the next. The Prime Minister must look at his accounts. I am saying that the public of Barbados generally will have to guarantee the \$2.5 million. It is going to pass through the National Housing Corporation, come what may, irrespective of what the Prime Minister says, and it is time that this body be investigated, because you just cannot keep pouring money into an organisation like this. The Prime Minister must understand that there are too many scandals about this department, to come to Parliament and ask that this be passed. We agree that we must provide housing for the people, but at the same time the National Housing Corporation must be an efficient body, above the sort of scandals which we are hearing about, year after year in that department.

Mr. HINDS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I too must join with those other hon. Members who are calling once again for a public inquiry into the operations of the National Housing Corporation. As to this loan of \$2.5 million which we are now being asked to guarantee for public officers' housing loans, I think that the Minister of Finance — and strangely enough the Minister of Housing has found it convenient to be absent from his seat while this Resolution is being discussed.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: On a point of order, I do not think the hon. Member should be allowed to say that somebody has found it convenient to be absent, because the Resolution was introduced by me, the Minister of Finance, and I am capable of answering all the questions, and I will come in and go out of this Chamber at my own will and discretion and no Member is entitled to accuse another Member of finding it convenient to be absent as if he has something to hide. That is highly improper and reprehensible conduct.

Mr. HINDS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, what the Prime Minister has just said in reference to me is improper, and I would urge upon you to ask him to withdraw it.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Item No. 2 under discussion is in the name of the Prime Minister and I do not deem it fit that the hon. Member for St. Peter should say that the Minister of Housing found it convenient not to be present.

Mr. HINDS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will blindfold myself and say that he found it convenient to be present.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: You may continue your speech, but the hon. Member is not present and he has not made himself absent because of this.

Mr. HINDS: Neither you nor I know, but he is not here.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let me hear your speech on this Resolution.

Mr. HINDS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Prime Minister has accused me of highly improper and reprehensible conduct and I will ask him to withdraw it.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I do not deem that that is so.

Mr. HINDS: Has he not accused me, Sir?

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I heard the remark but I am ruling that you should continue on this.

Mr. HINDS: I cannot continue if you are going to allow the Prime Minister to do this, I will tell him what I know about him.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let us have some order.

Mr. HINDS: I am calling on you, Sir, to call on the Prime Minister to withdraw his remarks about my highly improper and reprehensible conduct. Could it be right?

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Will the hon. Member please take his seat? I will ask the Hon. Prime Minister to withdraw the words "highly improper and reprehensible conduct".

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: I said it is reprehensible for him to accuse the Minister of finding it convenient to be absent, I did not accuse him of being reprehensible.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Clerk has advised me.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: Can I see the Clerk's authority, Sir? When I rose I asked you to

ask the hon. Member to withdraw the statement that the Minister found it convenient to be absent. If he withdraws that, I will have no hesitation in withdrawing my remarks.

Mr. CRAIG: Mr. Deputy Speaker, you have called on the Prime Minister to withdraw a statement. It is as simple as that, all the Prime Minister has to do is to abide by your ruling.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Please take your seat.

Mr. CRAIG: Both of us must sit.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am requesting the hon. Member for St. James to take his seat.

Mr. CRAIG: The Prime Minister must sit, too.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Will the hon. Member for St. James please leave this House immediately for the remainder of the Day's Sitting?

Mr. CRAIG: You called on both of us to sit, but I must sit and the Prime Minister must stand.

The hon. Member for St. James left the Chamber.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I am asking the Hon. Prime Minister to withdraw the words "highly improper and reprehensible conduct".

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: Yes, Sir. I said that the statement was reprehensible and I will withdraw it, if you request me to withdraw it. I withdraw it.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Will the hon. Member for St. Peter withdraw the remark that the Minister found it convenient to be absent?

Mr. HINDS: I withdraw it without objection, I will withdraw it a thousand times.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Will you please proceed?

Mr. HINDS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is strange, if I had any intentions of discussing, let us say, Sir, that aspect of National Housing like the contract for the trowel plastic finish of the National Insurance building, if I had any intention of going into any detail on the matter, this Hon. House would learn that the contract has been given to the brother-in-law of the Minister who is not now in his seat.

1.45 p.m.

We are not now going into that. We are dealing with Public Officers Housing Loans. One of the reasons why the scheme has not succeeded up to the present is that there are a number of Public Officers who have had loans in the past, but they received those loans under certain conditions. In other words, they were granted loans when they agreed to purchase certain properties. These properties, Mr. Deputy Speaker, invariably were properties belonging to people who had found it very difficult to dispose of them on the public market so to speak. You will find that there are some Public Officers who received loans under those conditions and they defy any Accounting Officer to make deductions from their salaries with respect to repaying those loans. They got the property because they wanted somewhere to house their families, but quite a number of them have been very dissatisfied with the conditions under which they took the loan.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not support the Government in increasing the interest rate by half of one per cent to Public Officers at this time. I fully realise that money is dearer today than it was ten, fifteen or twenty years ago, but when I look to see that there are so many Public Officers who are just working for enough to pay house rent, water rates, and telephone bills sometimes, I feel that if we were to increase the rate of interest on Housing Loans we would be depriving their families of certain basic necessities. When we take all of these things into consideration, I feel that it would be an added burden to ask Public Officers to pay increased interest rates on loans for housing.

Apart from the figures the Minister of Finance has given us with respect to the number of applications on file and so on, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I feel that the list of applications should be scrutinised most carefully at this particular time. The length of time that some of these applications have been on the file should not be the sole consideration for approval. Some of these Public Officers, who have made applications years ago, have already sought other avenues for securing loans. They have acquired properties, but their applications are still on the file. Some of these Public Officers have acquired one property, and others have acquired more than two despite the fact that their applications are still pending approval.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are several reasons why some Public Officers find it necessary to make applications for loans. Undoubtedly, many of them have the gravest needs for somewhere to house their families and

themselves. The housing situation in Barbados is very terrible, and we cannot get away from the fact that since there is no rent control, or rent restriction, some of the landlords are charging whatever price suits them and some of these Officers become victims of those people and they have to be contented with paying the rent or leaving the premises. Moving from one house to another is not always an easy task, and it is not always easy to find a second or third house to rent. All of these things have to be taken into consideration.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I want to say that there are many Public Officers who have had loans in the past and who will get loans in future. You will find that they will have to bear a lot of operating costs which they will hardly ever be able to explain and these matters have to be looked into. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you will find that the Public Officer is more than eager to get the loan. He wants to stop paying rent. In other words, he wants to know that instead of paying \$150 a month rent, he is paying \$200 a month towards his own home, which he will own in the long run. What we are chary about is that there are people who know how eager Public Officers must be and about their economic plight, and they are taking advantage of the situation and cashing in because of the unfortunate position in which these Public Officers find themselves.

You will understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this long period of waiting has aggravated the position and has created a greater burden on some of these Public Officers who need houses. It is known that some officers have made applications about eight years ago and others have made their applications one year ago, but when the applications are being processed it is hoped that consideration will be given to those officers in dire need of housing for their families and themselves and it will not merely be a question of whose application appeared on the file first. The officers should be made to have some confidence in the Scheme.

With regard to the question of repayment, this in itself calls for a considerable area of investigation and re-examination, if we are to be satisfied that Public Officers will benefit from these guaranteed loans to the extent that the Government would wish them to benefit. There is no point in guaranteeing these loans merely to find that the plight of these people remains the same as it was two or three years ago. To my mind, the people who are administering this Scheme should have a greater sense of responsibility to the taxpayers, because we know

what has been our experience in the past in respect to these Public Officers Loan Schemes.
1.55 p.m.

Mr. ADAMS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to be very short on this. I fear I may also have to advert to the absence of the Minister of Housing in the House because Standing Order No. 72 does say that any Member who is unable to attend the House should acquaint the House at the earliest opportunity of his inability so to do, and I have not so heard of the Minister acquainting the House. I just mentioned this, but the debate is going on and the Minister is not here. I am sorry he is not here for this reason: Some years ago the Auditor General's Report stated at a time when I believe monies had recently been released for Public Officers' loans that a number of these loans had been made without authority, the only authority had been, I think I quote the language correctly, by a person describing himself as the Minister of Housing.

Now no explanation has been forthcoming as to how Government money was paid out against the law to these public officers. I believe the same report also commented that one of the Public Officers who received one of these unauthorised loans was a person who was doing substantial business with the Housing Authority, business that had been revealed, by a question asked in this House, to be worth over \$1 million, and this is a person who received a Public Officers' Housing loan of a few thousand dollars to repair a house I believe at St. Simon's in St. Andrew. All these are abuses that have been drawn to the attention of the Housing Authority that have not been corrected.

I heard the Prime Minister say that it is automatic that a deduction must be made, while the same report said that one Public Officer refused to allow a deduction to be made and it was stated in the House some years ago that the responsible officer threatened to kill, or some expression like that, if any deduction was made from his money to repay the loan. So nobody should come in here and just say it is automatic and it always happens that the loans are repaid. We know there are bad debts, and while I do not in any way want to detract from the constructive speech made by the hon. Member for St. Peter, it is the first part of his speech I think we should look at before we really approach the overall question of Public Officers' Housing Loans. Let us hear from the Minister whether he is satisfied that the abuses of the past no longer exist, whether he can give us the assurance that the law is being carried out, and all the officers are paying back their loans and that the machinery as

it is now operating follows them from Ministry to Ministry to make sure that a revolving fund such as this is truly revolving and is not sinking into the pockets of wicked and corrupt persons, persons who make threats and persons who try to use their influence in order to put money into their pockets.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is what we should have the Minister here present to tell us something about. The Minister made certain denials on the last occasion that the Auditor General's Report was discussed in here. Those denials have, with all the diffidence at my command — I do not want to say anything offensive — I think have proved unjustified. All of the allegations with which I am familiar in the Auditor General's Report that were raised in here have since been proved to be true either in the course of Parliamentary Questions or in the course of debate on the Estimates, and this is why I say it is very unfortunate that the Minister is not present to deal with some of these matters.

I do not mind how much the Prime Minister says he can answer every question in the Ministry of Housing. I would not like to think that the Prime Minister has known everything that goes on in the Ministry of Housing over the last, let us say, six years. I would not like to think that the Prime Minister is totally familiar with everything that happened there in 1968, 1969 and 1970 and that he can answer questions about all these matters in the Ministry of Housing. I think better of the Prime Minister than that and I am surprised that he wants to spread his blanket over such scandals as were revealed in this regard as in others by Auditor General's Report that have been laid on the Table of the House both in the last part, I believe, and in this.

The Question that the Resolution do not pass was put, and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Hon. C. E. TALMA: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this concludes Government Business for today's Sitting. Provided that there is a matter of urgency with which the Opposition may wish to deal, we would be willing to remain in here, in accordance with the assurances which are usually given.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. ADAMS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that Private Members' Business be now taken.

Mr. BOLDEN: I beg to second that.

The Question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

Mr. ADAMS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that Order No. 1 be the first Order under Private Members' Business. The Resolution of the hon. Member for St. Lucy has primacy. If he wants it adjourned, perhaps he can indicate.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. C. E. TALMA: If the hon. Member would give way. I beg to move that this Sitting be now suspended for one hour, that is until 3 o'clock.

Hon. A. MORRISON: I beg to second that.

The Question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division. Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.
2.04 p.m.

On Resumption:

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: There is no quorum.....

Mr. WEEKES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is no quorum present, I am asking that the bell be rung.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let the bell be rung.

The bell was rung for two minutes at the direction of Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: There being less than nine members present, this Sitting now stands adjourned until Tuesday, the 22nd April, 1975 at 12 noon.

The Sitting was accordingly adjourned until Tuesday, the 22nd April, 1975, at 12.00 o'clock Noon.
3.05 p.m.