
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1981 – 86

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, 9th November, 1982.

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 12.15 p.m. o'clock.

PRESENT

His Honour W. C. B. Hinds, J.P., (Speaker)
Hon. L. S. Craig, (Leader of the House)
Hon. L. B. Brathwaite
J. G. Odle, B.Sc.
Hon. V. L. Johnson, M.A.
Hon. DeL. O. Bradshaw
L. L. Sisnett
Hon. Dr. R. L. Cheltenham, M.A., M.Sc. (Econ.)
P. M. Greaves
R. E. Brathwaite
Hon. Dr. D. G. Blackman
A. Truss

Prayers were read by Archdeacon F. A. Cayless.

Mr. L. A. WEEKES entered the Chamber and took his seat.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of the Meeting of Tuesday, November 2, 1982.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: I beg to move, Mr. Speaker, that the Minutes for November 2 be now taken as read.

Mr. SPEAKER: If there are no observations by hon. Members, let those Minutes stand confirmed.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW entered the Chamber and took his seat.

PAPERS

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay:—

The Memorandum of Understanding between the Governments of Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, the Commonwealth of Dominica, St. Lucia, and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, relating to Security and military co-operation.

Messrs. B. M. TAITT, L. E. SANDIFORD and Dr. R. C. HAYNES entered the Chamber and took their seats.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay, on behalf of the Minister of Finance and Planning:

The Statement of Account of the Transactions in Rum in the Several Districts of the Island for the months January – March, April – June and July – September, 1982.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice of the following:—

A Resolution to approve the compulsory acquisition of land at Black Rock, St. Michael for the purpose of road improvement.

A Resolution to approve the compulsory acquisition of land at the Belle, St. Michael for the provision of a play ground for the Belmont Primary School.

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN entered the Chamber and took his seat.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Mr. SPEAKER: Government Business is the instant Order of the day.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege to draw to Your Honour's attention and to the attention of this august House, the caption in the *Nation* newspaper of Thursday, November 4, 1982, on page 4; "No public commotion".

I would not bore the House with the entire editorial and therefore I propose to only make reference to the two last paragraphs:

"We think that the point which Mr. Craig should really have taken note of was the one in reference to the frustration experienced by the Opposition in dealing with the people's business, No Confidence Motions and Resolutions critical of Government, Sir.

"After all, Mr. Craig is Minister of Parliamentary Affairs. He should therefore recognise the complaints of the Opposition and address himself to it. Perhaps it is his reluctance in this area that is at the very root of the Opposition's protests."

Well, Sir, I believe if we looked at Hansard, between the session of 1966 and 1971, a present sitting Member of this Assembly, the Deputy Prime Minister, once said that the unions of actors and lawyers are no doubt the strongest unions in the world, because they looked after each other. I would add to that, the union of the RAF boys, the ex-RAF boys, is equally as strong. The union of the ex-RAF boys is equally as strong.

Mr. Speaker, there is no way Sir, that I as Leader of Government Business have attempted to frustrate the Opposition. As Leader of Government Business, Sir, and Minister of Parliamentary Affairs, I am in no position to determine what is to come on the Order Paper, Sir, by way of Private Members' Business such as Resolutions or Questions. There are submitted to the Clerk, as I understand it, and on to you for vetting.
12.25 p.m.

You, Mr. Speaker, as the sole custodian, the high priest of Parliament, in your exalted position determines whether that Resolution is in order or out of order, or if a question is in order or out of order. I may add, Sir, just for the education of some of the members of the Press, that only you, and you alone, have that entire right. It is therefore ridiculous and misleading, and I will go as far as to say that the editorial is vicious in accusing me of frustrating the members of the Opposition.

I stand boldly today and say that never, I believe, since I have been in Parliament, has there ever been a better working relation between members on that side and on this side.

I want to laud the Deputy Leader of the Opposition for the way that he and I have tried to conduct our business on both sides so that Parliament would be a happy place for both sides for the cut and thrust of debate. It has always been a give and take, and I hope he rises in his place and support at least that one statement.

It is unfortunate that the relationship between the Leader of the Opposition and I has not been quite as happy, but he is not as often in his place, and therefore I do not see as much of him when I have to discuss a matter relating to the business of both sides, and therefore I cannot accuse him of not having a good relationship either.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael West, when he is acting Leader of the Opposition, a good relationship exists with him; and the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central, even when he takes his injections to be a talking machine, he can call me behind your Chair, Sir, and make suggestions to me or do so in the dining hall, and we both, at times, come up with a reasonable conclusion.

Now this vicious editorial is accusing me of frustrating the work of the Opposition, when there is the best working relationship.

I recall, Mr. Speaker, when you, too, were on that side of the House in the days when they used to call us "the gang of six." That is how they used to refer to us. We found it difficult to have questions answered, we found it difficult to have Resolutions debated, and I will tell you why it was so difficult.

We had only six, and the Speaker would always come back after lunch for Private Members' Business and take his place in the Chair, and the willy old fox of public life, the grand old man of politics, Sir Edwy Talma, was then Leader of the House. So with six from the Opposition, the Speaker making seven and then the Leader of the House, Sir Edwy Talma would make eight — and there would be no quorum, so Private Members' Business went through the door.

For almost two years that went on. That is what is called frustrating the Opposition, but we lived with it, because we knew it was only a matter of time.

Now that I have been appointed Leader of the House, only a vicious mind, a wicked, depraved mind

could have written an article such as that to accuse me of trying to frustrate the work of the Opposition, when members on that side should have the courage and guts to get up this morning and state categorically that the relationship between that side and this side, with me as Leader of the House, has always been an amicable and cordial one.

There was a time when the Opposition never ever came into the dining hall to eat; they never came to prayers. They stayed outside in the lobby, they would not eat in the dining hall with us and they never took prayers with us.

But now, Mr. Speaker, it is a different atmosphere that prevails. I believe that that atmosphere is because there is a fresh thinking. I have constant contact with the Deputy Leader of the Opposition, and I believe that if I had to be working with the Leader of the Opposition, especially when he is in a friendly mood, it would be a good relationship too.

I have a picture that I shall always cherish, of the two of us walking side by side, hand in hand, going to the Upper Chamber, because there was a time when he said that he would rather be on an aeroplane going to South Africa and sit down with Verwoerd than to sit down beside any member of the Opposition, and I had him made up in the picture. That is going to be among my memoirs.

There was a time when he used to have me afraid. There was a time in 1966-71.....as a matter of fact, early in the Session 1966, when the now Leader of the Opposition came up that side to enter the Chamber - I was a young parliamentarian - when I saw him coming in, I used to get up and bow to Sir Theodore Branker, the then Speaker, and absent myself from the Chamber, so afraid was I of the Leader of the Opposition. But I knew it was only a matter of time before I gained my confidence and put him to walk side by side with me in the Upper Chamber. That demonstrates only the atmosphere that prevails in here now.

Mr. Speaker, I have with me the Order Papers of the House for the first session, 1976-81, which was from Wednesday, October 6, 1976 to Tuesday, October 18, 1977. For that period, before the House was prorogued, the Opposition at that time had asked 44 questions in two years, and of the 44 questions in those two years, approximately 30 of them were answered. Then the House was prorogued. The second session started on November 3, 1977, and ended December 19, 1978, and during that time they had asked 15 questions. That totalled 59 questions for four years. They also had two items of Private Members' Business.

During our session, 1971-76, we asked 442 questions. I have not got in my possession right now, but I hope to get it later in the course of the day, how many unanswered questions there were on the Order Paper. Mr. Speaker, of the 442 questions, I believe that you asked 200 yourself. That was frustrating at the time. 12.35 p.m.

Today, in 18 months, up to today, Sir, in these two sessions, you have 19 questions asked. Of these 19 questions which have been asked, one was given on October 12, one on October 26, another on October 26 and another on October 26. Three by the Leader of the Opposition and three by the Member for St. Michael West. Nineteen questions from June until now.

We have answered the questions as swiftly as we could, we have given the Opposition all the opportunities to debate whatever they want to debate. We have come in here, Sir, and, though they can form a quorum, sometimes when some of their members are absent and they cannot form a quorum, we come in here and sit down and form a quorum and have the cut and thrust of debate on Resolutions that are critical of the Government - and we defend the Government's stand, Sir.

Now, the *Nation* accuses me of frustrating the work of the Opposition about motions of No Confidence. There was a motion of No Confidence in here, brought by the Member for St. Michael South Central, over which Mr. Ezra Alleyne, then a member of Parliament presided, Sir, and I joined, Mr. Speaker, in pointing out your weaknesses and your strength. That is what we did.

That is when the Member for St. Michael South Central was going to bring down the whole of Bridgetown because he refused to accept Your Honour's ruling. There were countless meetings in the country, and then a motion of No Confidence came in.

We sat down in here and debated it, and I recall, Sir, pointing out your weaknesses and your strengths as Speaker, and what a difficult job it is for you.

Now, Sir, this is how I can frustrate the Opposition if I wanted to. All I have to do, Mr. Speaker, is simply move that Standing Orders be suspended, the particular Standing Orders dealing with Private Members' Business.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minister only has fifteen minutes.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: O.K., Sir. Fifteen more?

Mr. SPEAKER: You will come to the end of your..

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Oh yes, Sir, I am just making the final point, Sir.

The final point, Sir, is that I could frustrate the Opposition by suspending the Standing Orders relating to Private Members' Business. But I do not do that. I give them the opportunity...

Mr. SPEAKER: Fifteen minutes is fifteen minutes.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: And, Sir, this paper — thank you, Sir — could write such a vicious editorial.

I beg to move, Mr. Speaker — you have a copy now — that this matter be referred to the Committee of Privileges, Sir, because I take strong objection to the content of the editorial, Sir.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: I beg to second that.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have listened to the Hon. Minister, and I have heard his complaints respecting the *Nation* newspaper and, particularly, the editorial captioned, "No Public Commotion".

My attention has been particularly drawn to the last two paragraphs thereof. In the light of what has been said by the Hon. Minister, and on the face of it, I am satisfied that a *prima facie* case has been made, and I feel it is my duty to refer the matter to the Committee of privileges.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Sir, I think that, before I rose on a point of privilege, you had called Government Business, and, therefore, Government Business is the instant Order of the Day.

Mr. SPEAKER: Government Business is the instant Order of the Day.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Order No. 1, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order No. 1.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Sorry. I must apologise, Sir, Order No. 2. I must apologise. I may probably see in tomorrow's "Nation" that I ended up shaky. Order No. 2, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minister is seeking the leave of the House to withdraw Order No. 1 and substitute therefor Order No. 2.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: I also draw to Your Honour's attention Sir, that Order No. 2 should have been in the name of the Minister of Labour and Social Security, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: Let us address our minds to one Order.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: You are withdrawing Order No. 1.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Hon. Minister is seeking the leave of the House to withdraw Order No. 1 and substitute therefor Order No. 2.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, the Leader of the House, the Acting Prime Minister, is seeking to withdraw Order No. 1 and substitute Order No. 2. May I proceed, Sir?

Mr. SPEAKER: The Leader of the House rose and called Order No. 1. The Clerk was instructed to call Order No. 1. In the meantime, the Leader of the House took a decision to call Order No. 2 in preference to Order No. 1.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: I understand.....

Mr. SPEAKER: In such a case, all the Leader of the House wants to do is to postpone the calling of Order No. 1 and give Order No. 2 immediately in place of Order No. 1, which he had previously called.

Mr. SANDIFORD: Yes. But, Mr. Speaker, it raises a problem because we on this side are asking for a postponement of Order No. 2 on the grounds that it is a very thick Bill which we have only had for a few days, it is a very important Bill, and we are asking that that matter be postponed until another sitting of the House.

So if this is merely substituting 2 for 1, we would expect that demonstration of the understanding and agreement of both sides of the House that there should be an understanding on this one and that it be postponed until a later sitting.

12.45 p.m.

Mr. SPEAKER: It just does not go that way. If the Hon. Member for St. Michael South wants to eat his cake and have it too, it should probably have to be put to the vote. Is it the wish of the House that the Hon. Leader of the House postpones Order No. 1 and takes Order No. 2 in place of Order No. 1?

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: Mr. Speaker, I am just seeking some guidance. I would like Your Honour to rule as to whether the motion to postpone Order No. 1 should not be a separate motion that Order No. 2 be the instant Order of the Day.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Sir, I am taking the cue from Your Honour. Should I move that Order No. 1 be postponed, or be withdrawn, for today? I want you to put it to me the way it should be. I moved that Order No. 1 be the instant Order of the Day in error. Now I am going to move that Order No. 2 be the instant Order of the Day. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, I take my directions from you.

I beg to move that Order No. 1 be postponed for further consideration.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: I beg to second that.

Mr. SPEAKER: This is the time of Government's Business and there is no need for a motion to decide on the order of Government's Business. What is necessary,

what I find to be absolutely necessary at this point in time, is that the Leader of the House should explain to this Honourable House what he proposes doing in respect of Order No. 2. This would settle the matter at once.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Sir, that is what I intended to do, but I was just waiting to find out if Order No.2 was accepted by the House in the correct procedure.

I propose to do Order No. 2 today, Sir, and I can assure Members on the other side, I give them the assurance, as I gave to the Member for St. Michael North when he spoke to me earlier this morning, that I am going to start the Factories Bill. The Minister is going to start the Bill on the Second Reading, and then I am going to have it postponed for further consideration, giving the gentlemen on the other side of the House and Members on the back bench, and maybe some of my colleagues, the opportunity to study the Bill even much closer.

I am quite sure that when the Minister of Labour in his presentation makes certain points, it will even give you the opportunity to be even more equipped to come back to discuss the matter, and this is what I propose to do. This is the good working relationship which we have again exhibited today. I have met your request because that was my thought also.

Sir, Order No. 2 is the instant Order of the day.

THE FACTORIES ACT, 1982

Order No.2 was called — To move the Second Reading of a Bill to revise and consolidate the law relating to factories and the safety, health and welfare of persons employed therein.

Hon. V. L. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, the Factories Bill, under which the country has been operating for the last twenty-odd years, has been the Bill of 1956, which in our opinion, has not kept pace with the gradual industrialisation process that has occurred in Barbados.

I believe, Sir, that we all recognise that the concept of industrial safety has become a very sophisticated and elaborate discipline in itself, because it comprehends not only the safety in respect of the physical injuries that are obvious to the human eye, and which are normally, in the course of things, identifiable as injuries, but it comprehends the more sinister and invidious kinds of ailments that spring up from the more sophisticated, or so we think, technologies that have come to the forefront in the last couple of years.

We in Barbados have to pass through the same process of industrialisation as more developed countries have had to pass. The history and experiences of those countries are there for us to see, and to read, and to be informed by them.

We recognise that the person, the human life, is a precious and a valuable resource, and it is the duty of the

Government, at any particular point in time, to manifest the kind of awareness or responsibilities which fall to it in so far as the protection of human life and limb is concerned, and I am speaking particularly of the working environment.

One of the unfortunate facts of industrialisation is that those persons primarily responsible for the operation of factories, or plants of work, from time to time are likely, being human, to use methods and techniques that are calculated to bring them the highest return in terms of their investment, and are not always likely to bring to bear the humane considerations that would inform their behaviour in respect of the environment which they are to provide for people to work in.

12.55 p.m.

The result of that, Sir, has been that countless lives have been lost, and others significantly impaired, by the fact that sometimes we are not nearly as sensitive as we need to be with respect to those persons who work in our manufacturing processes.

We have to bear in mind, Sir, that the North American experience and the European experience has been a long experience. Some people describe it as an exploitative process in which some of these unscrupulous manufacturers have paid scant regard to the welfare and well being of these workers, and others say that it has only been a slow emergence of technological innovations that has, in some respects, been responsible for the injuries that persons have suffered.

We now come to accept, Sir, that, in the North American and European context, and even further afield, arising out of the concerns that the International Labour Organisation and other bodies responsible for human works and human work environments have assumed, that now people are paying keener attention to what ought to be the atmosphere in which people ought to work, the conditions under which those of us who subscribe to the ILO conventions ought to upgrade. Because of this new concern, we are in a position to recognise a general escalation of the effort to improve the workplace.

Here in Barbados, Sir, we are quick to recognise that our own industrialisation process, our own experience in this area has been rather limited, and as a consequence we are sometimes farther behind than we ought really to be; and the fact that we are operating under a 1956 Bill would indicate that we have not really been paying as keen attention as we needed to have paid to the working environment in which our people find themselves having to operate.

The only time since 1956, apart from this one, to upgrade the factories legislation occurred in 1972 when a committee of 11 persons was put together for the purpose of making recommendations with respect to factories legislation. That committee reported, but it has taken this long for some of the recommendations made by that committee to come into fruition.

The Barbados Labour Party Government, Sir, in coming to power, recognised that something needed to be done as a matter of urgency, and so we have taken the initiative to introduce a modernised and modern version of the Factories Bill, taking into consideration a further concept of the definition of "factory" and going deeper into the concept of safety than was originally envisaged in the Bill.

This Bill, Sir, came before Parliament in the last session, but died in the Other Place; and it is now our intention to bring it back before the House with a view to having it debated here and being brought into law, hopefully, before the end of this year.

Sir, I would like to remark, before I proceed further, on the role that workers organisations have played from time to time with respect to joining our awareness to the need to improving the atmosphere in which people work.

Sometimes we come down pretty hard on the unions because of what we regard, in some circumstances, as the insensitivity to the plight of their workers — they only seem to be concerned with additional wages — but I would like to say that the Barbados Workers' Union has made very substantial contributions towards the present state of this Bill. And perhaps one of the finer contributions made by the honourable Member for St. Lucy, when he was then the honourable Member for St. Lucy, and I am referring to the union representative who is no longer in this place, was made when he spoke on this Bill when it was first introduced sometime during the course of last year.

The union made some recommendations, and when I came to the Ministry of Labour, I reviewed the Factories Bill that was before the House last session, and I took the opportunity to review some of the recommendations that were made, and that is part of the reasons why the Bill has been so long in coming back to this place. We made some further amendments to the Bill because we recognised that some of the contributions that were made by the Barbados Workers' Union, in particular, were worthy of inclusion.

We can recognise, Sir, that the process of keeping pace with a growing process of industrial sophistication is not easy. It is a difficult job, because sometimes when we are making provisions for change, what we describe in the field of sociology as "cultural lag" happens to us, because by the time we have paid regard to a particular enactment, something else has superseded that enactment. This is part of the problem, which I think will continue to bother us from time to time, if we are not bringing the kind of vigilance to legislating for the change that we need to bring.

As one example, Sir, in going through the 1972 recommendations, I noted that it was said that we need not concern ourselves unduly with certain kinds of industrial concerns, because in 1972, and as far as the Committee could have seen at that point in time, there was no need for that kind of concern. But clearly now in 1982, ten years after, the need which was not regarded as a need then has come to be a need now, and so we have to be constantly looking to make sure that we are keeping pace with this kind of, what we might describe as "escalation" in so far as the concept of industrial safety and health is concerned.

1.05 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, there are certain occupations that, by their very definition, carry a very high degree of risk, and there is not a great deal that one can do to eliminate the risk altogether. The best we can do is to alleviate some of those risks by making certain that all of the reasonable precautionary measures that can be brought to bear are brought to bear.

For centuries now, Sir, miners have been dying from black lung in those areas where black lung is a problem and where mining of coal is an industrial activity, and there is not a great deal that operators of those mines can do to make the process of mining completely safe. We recognise that, as long as one works in that activity, there will be the incidence of black lung, and perhaps the incidence will be higher than would make any of us or any of the persons responsible comfortable.

In the same way, here in Barbados I believe there are certain minds of occupations which, by their very definition, are dangerous. But what has been a source of concern to me, Sir, is that some of those things that have been regarded as dangerous are accepted as dangerous period, and nothing has been done of any great consequence to address the need for alleviating the problems associated with that particular kind of activity. What we see from time to time, in some occupations, is that a class of accident continues to happen with alarming regularity — and no one seems to be particularly concerned in addressing his mind to the problems of providing some kind of solution to that particular kind of problem.

One of the recommendations for change, one of the major amendments to this particular Bill, has been in the area of the re-definition of what a factory is. The original concept, as it was introduced to the House last year, had a factory defined in fairly broad terms, but it excluded one of the large areas of operation in our country, the area of sugar cane harvesting, which has become an increasingly industrialised process.

The incidence of the manual cutting of sugar cane is still reasonably high, but we have seen a large proliferation of industrial harvesting equipment, loading equipment, tractor operations etc. Machinery is replacing man

with a great deal of alacrity, and we were concerned that every single year, for as long as I can remember, people have been dying almost indiscriminately in the process of handling and using this equipment.

When I was in Canada last year, I visited the library of the Ministry of Labour to look at the recommendations on industrial safety, and I was surprised to discover that tractor accidents account for the highest kind of industrial deaths in the Province of Ontario.

While we in Barbados do not have the kind of scale that operates in Ontario, obviously when two or three die every year in the process of operating tractors, in a small community like ours, and with a harvesting period that lasts only three months, or four months at the most, it averages out at about a death a month in terms of the length of time that the crop operates. We find that that is an unacceptable risk for the persons who are called to use this equipment perhaps to take.

I would like to say, Sir, that part of the reasons why we need to look very carefully and critically at this area is because the technology has changed, but the mentality of the operators and the managers responsible for these concerns has changed not at all.

I find that there is a level of callousness that operates in these areas, where people who operate factories, who operate plantations, seem to regard this kind of injuries as just another hazard in the course of duty; and the grief that is usually attendant upon this kind of accidents does not become the concern of the operators of these enterprises, and, therefore, the grief belongs entirely and exclusively to the family of those unfortunate people.

This Bill would make provision for penalties to be dealt out to persons who continue to pay scant regard to industrial safety in respect of plantation operations to which I have just referred.

Mr. Speaker, during the coming week, we will be designating that week as Occupational Safety Week. The reason why we are taking this action is to draw public awareness to the need for a higher level of consciousness with respect to the concept of industrial safety.

We in Barbados, as I indicated earlier, have not yet come to recognise the role of industrial safety, and, indeed, some of us, workers as well as managers, exhibit and manifest a certain level of indifference — indeed, sometimes, impatience — whenever we make attempts to draw people's consciousness to a higher level than it is currently operating at. But Sir, we have to educate the public of Barbados, and "by the public," I mean not only the workers, but I mean the workers as well.

When you walk around this island and examine the work places, the level of disregard for public safety — and when I say public safety I am referring specifically to safety of the workers in the working environment — is appalling, and the wonder is, Sir, that more people do not become permanently maimed or that we do not have a higher incidence of death in the work place.

In the last week or so, all of Barbados was shocked by the fact that a young welder could have met his death in circumstances in which, in my view, he needed not to have died at all, because if the normal preliminary precautions had been taken, I mean very elementary and basic precautions, I am satisfied that that man would not have met his death in those circumstances. It was precisely because of the disregard for what already exists in the 1956 Act that that young man met his injury and death.

I had occasion to visit a young lady in the General Hospital some time ago when it was brought to my attention that a factory in Barbados, which had figured fairly conspicuously in maiming at least three people, was again figuring in the maiming of yet another person — and that was a shocking tragedy.

When you go into a hospital ward and look at an 18 year old girl, with all her life still in front of her, to see her without fingers caused by a mal-functioning piece of equipment, then you begin to understand the kind of trauma that those of us who are responsible for industrial safety pass through when these kind of things happen.

1.15 p.m.

That again, Sir, is a case in which I feel that basic precautionary measures, if taken, could have prevented that particular accident.

Last year, I believe it was at another industrial concern, a young man operating a blow torch in cutting open a drum, had performed that particular operation only a few seconds before successfully. When he attempted to perform a similar operation only minutes later, he was blown to bits because of a failure on somebody's part to ensure that the operation he was about to carry out was safe in every particular.

There are regulations which now exist which would provide for safety in all of the circumstances which I have outlined, but the new Bill will more generally and more specifically pay attention to these kinds of incidents, and there will be penalties attached not only to those owners of the factory who are responsible for the general safety of workers, but there will be penalties attached to workers, themselves, who fail to pay attention to the safety procedures that ought to be operating in the particular environment.

I visited one of the industrial concerns at the Harbour Industrial complex sometime ago, and I watch a young man, who was in the process of manufacturing pots from aluminium, operating the lathe without wearing any safety equipment at all. He did not wear goggles, he did not wear a face mask — nothing in terms of protective gear which would have protected him from all of the millions of flying bits of metal that spin off in the process of operating that lathe.

Now, Sir, I would regard that as a concern, and this present Bill is so constructed that it will be the responsibility of the employer, in the first instance, to ensure that all safety operations are being effected; and the fact that the employee fails to wear the safety gear or to carry out the safety operations does not in any way relieve the employer's responsibility of making sure that all persons in his employ conform with the standards of safety which have been put into operation.

When we look, Sir, at the process of industrial development in Barbados I think it is quite obvious to us that we have been moving quite rapidly, and the rapidity with which we have been moving in itself sometimes makes it difficult for us to take fully into consideration all of the factors with respect to safety that we need to pay attention to.

The industrial concerns which come to this island frequently come out of the North American experience, and are, in many cases, only marginal operations that come here particularly to enjoy the tax free incentives that are provided in our industrial legislation.

Many entrepreneurs take the opportunity of liquidation to buy outmoded and condemned equipment, bring it to Barbados, install it as a new factory operation and set Barbadians to work in it. What we have not been paying enough attention to, Sir, is the fact that the equipment that finds its way to Barbados is frequently finding its way to Barbados because it is condemned in North America as unsafe for North Americans to operate.

But, because of our relative poverty and deprivation, we snatch at every opportunity, and we invite people here who, in many instances, have no business here, because they bring the wrong kinds of industrial attitudes to bear on our society. They are frequently persons who will pay no regard to human life and they believe that all they have to do is to find a sufficiently naive country in which they can set about the process of exploiting unsuspecting and unaware persons.

I was in New York City some time ago and I attended an industrial show at the New York Colosseum, and I was shocked to discover that certain brands of soap which had been condemned in North America

as unfit for the North Americans to use was being shipped to Barbados.

I was not then a Minister of Government, nor, indeed, was I even yet in politics.

The soap in question was Dial soap. At the time when it contained hexachlorophane and when hexachlorophene had become a problem in North America, suspect of causing cancer or causing some kind of injury to the children upon whom it was used in the operating theatres, it was withdrawn from the market. The hexachlorophane ingredient was taken out, and what used to be called physohex was subsequently modified, in terms of its formulation, and called physoderm — minus hexachlorophane.

But the dial soap used to contain hexachlorophane. It was condemned in North America and some sharp operators went down there and bought it to bring it to Barbados.

Now, Sir, I know that, wherever opportunities exist, there are going to be people who will be there to exploit those opportunities, and we ought not to be so naive to expect that our own sense of values, our own sense of humanity, our own sense and depth and concern for human life and human well-being is going to characterise the behaviour of persons from elsewhere. All sorts of motives attach themselves to the business of earning money and all sorts of operators are in the marketplace to earn money and, whenever the opportunity arises, they will exploit it to our own detriment.

So, we have to be eternally vigilant to make sure that in the process of our own development, we do not allow ourselves to be exploited by persons who have no concept or concern about our own safety. Safety, Sir, must become the abiding concern of the Government whichever Government it is. And, the Barbados Labour Party, Sir, has demonstrated in the 1956 Bill and in the 1981 Bill that industrial safety is one of its concerns. 1.25 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I mentioned that there are classes of injury to which we pay careful attention. For example, when people die a violent death, because of the explosion of an oil tanker which a young man is welding, that shocks our sensibilities. When a young man is opening up a 50 gallon drum that turns out to have contained some toxic substance and he is blown asunder, that shocks our sensibilities. But there are certain other invidious kinds of occupational hazards that exist in the work place to which we have to pay careful and critical attention.

The question of noise pollution has been a concern.....

(Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: We are getting some now).

Hon. V. L. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, I would beg you to protect me from the Hon. Member for St. Michael South.

The question of noise pollution is a question which we have to address our minds to, because, frequently, we watch operations in, which people are employed in that generate noise levels that are higher than are acceptable for human health, and, in almost every case, we notice that the persons who are in the middle of these operations are not protected from those noise levels.

The Bill will seek to bring under its concern and its attention matters relating to excessive noises which can be injurious not only to the hearing of the individual, but which can impinge adversely upon his nervous system, etc. These are things which have been in operation in our society for a long time, and which we in Barbados, because of the level of industrialisation we have reached, must start paying attention to.

If you were to go to sugar factories, as only one example, Sir, you will discover that, in hardly any case at all, will you find anybody in that operation wearing any kind of protective hearing equipment.

Recently, we had a case in the Labour Department where a worker complained that he was suffering all kinds of emotional distress as a consequence of some sort of generator at one of the factories in Barbados, and he complained repeatedly to the factory manager that that piece of equipment was causing him untold injury, but he was not able to persuade the factory manager to make any attempt to alleviate the suffering that he was passing through.

He reported the matter to the Labour Department and one of our factory inspectors went to the scene to satisfy himself, and, I believe, the then Chief Labour Officer himself made an inspection of the facility to discover that the noise was indeed excessive, and corrective action was taken to bring back a level of sane noise to that particular operation.

If you were to examine the various manufacturing processes, you will discover that there are other hazards to which we need as a Government and as a legislative body, to pay critical attention to.

A few weeks ago, I was speaking to a gentleman right in the precincts of this Hon. House, and he told me that his daughter, a young woman, had died, he was satisfied, as a consequence of injury suffered at one of the factories in the Grazettes Industrial Estate. I do not know the objective parameters of that particular charge — I know this was a father speaking, and he felt

strongly that his daughter would be alive had anybody made any attempt to make her work environment safe.

I have since launched a discrete enquiry to see whether or not there might be any hazard in the concern to which he referred, but he was referring to the situation in which she was working in a factory in which toxic chemicals figured prominently and in which dust particles of a toxic nature float around in the atmosphere all the time. The result was a long history of lung and stomach problems, to which, according to his information, the girl eventually succumbed. These are areas to which we would have to start paying close attention.

We know, Sir, in Barbados we are not accustomed, we have not grown up with processes which can cause this kind of slow injury, or, even if we have grown up with these processes, we have not been mindful of them, because they did not kill immediately or they did not maim immediately. But I know there are many men in Barbados who are deaf as a consequence of working in environments in which noise levels were exceedingly high. I know there are people who have had lung injury from working in environments in which dust pollution was a factor.

What we are aware of is that, in many cases, no real attempt was made to recognise and deal with the fact that this was an injury with which we needed to be concerned. The more dramatic kinds of injury are those that catch our attention all the time, but this "slow death technique" is something which I feel we now must start to pay attention to and with which we must now begin to deal.

We are beginning to manufacture bleach and other toxic substances, paints and lead-based materials. The history of paint manufacture is a history of industrial death. It is a slow burn, because if you were to examine the early records of paint manufacture anywhere in the world, particularly lead-based paints, you will discover that there is a long legacy of permanent injury done to persons who work in those operations and who constantly come into contact with these lead based materials.

The injury to the red blood corpuscles is something that cannot be reversed, and we in Barbados, since we have now reached the level of sophistication in which we are engaging in the manufacture of these kinds of substances, must likewise insist that the proper work environment is in place so that the injury to persons who work in these areas is minimised.

I, for example, have watched people, who are involved in painting, use these inflammable, plastic based, chemical substances, like lacquering materials — they are very toxic indeed — and I have myself wondered how it is possible for a man to work in that environment for

a whole hour, let alone a whole day, without suffering the consequences that I am sure must follow from that kind of industrial activity.

There is a gentleman, whom I know well, who is a nervous wreck — he shakes constantly like a leaf driven by the wind. When I sought to enquire as to why he was so nervous, he told me that the diagnosis of his physician was that, by virtue of his profession as a painter, he had suffered irreparable liver damage, and as a consequence would have his life severely shortened. He can no longer function as a painter, Sir, and I do not think, frankly, Sir, that he can function as anything else, based upon his condition.

1.35 p.m.

Again, Sir, I do not know all the objective measures of these cases I have cited to you, but these are cases which have come to my attention, and if the first evidence that is presented to me is taken at face value, then I say that we have a problem in Barbados that needs to be addressed; and the purpose of this whole Bill to pay heed to the elaborate warning signals that are being evidenced all around us.

I would not be one, Sir, to wait until the events of damage are manifest to take precautionary measures, but the Bill has sought, as nearly as possible, to anticipate those kinds of situations that will develop, and the kinds of activities in which we will be involved in Barbados down the road, so that we would be able to make provisions in the Bill similar to these and, by the process of elimination, we will be able to bring them into the purview of the Bill.

The Bill, Sir, will not be exclusively the responsibility of the Minister responsible for Labour, but will, of necessity, involve the Minister responsible for Health in this island. We have at every level kept council with the Ministry of Health and the dual provisions under which the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Health will co-operate are clearly enacted in the Bill.

There were some modest amendments that we made to the original Bill. This Bill now reflects those amendments, and it will make for smoother participation between the two bodies which I have just mentioned.

I, Sir, would like to indicate that factory operations in Barbados, and the Industrial Development Corporation perhaps in particular, will have to become very concerned about the concept of industrial safety and not let it be an afterthought in the process of factory manufacture, but that the Industrial Development Corporation, as a matter of course, and all other factory operations in Barbados, will start taking the concept of industrial safety seriously and let the design of factory accommodations reflect this new concern.

I had the occasion to visit Intel Barbados only a short while ago and I was very satisfied to note that the level of sophistication evidenced in that plant for the protection of human life and health had come to a level which, certainly, I did not expect to find in Barbados. It was good to note that Intel brought to Barbados the same kinds of concern that characterises its behaviour in its central base of operation in North America.

I know, Sir, that there are many fire hazards in this country. What passes as a factory operation, in many cases, is nothing more than a fire trap, and we have to be eternally grateful to the good God of Heaven that he has so far spared us any serious catastrophe, because if any incident of fire broke out in many of these building, I am sure many of our people would be in serious jeopardy.

We are directing the factory inspectorate to come down very hard on people who continue to provide unsafe environments and who have not put into place the necessary safety precautions, with respect to fire hazards, that we expect to find in factory operations in Barbados today.

The Intel operation is equipped with a sprinkler system and I would like to see all new factories in this island paying regard to the new factories provisions. As a matter of fact, they will have to start paying attention, because we are no longer in a mood of reasoning with people or begging them. We are going to start, and we have started, to legislate, so that what a man fails to bring to his industrial activity by virtue of his own humane feelings will be brought for him through the process of legislation.

I mentioned the question of industrial fumes earlier. Sometimes, Sir, we regard industrial fumes as being unsafe at a level when we can detect them immediately as we walk into a new facility, but some of these fumes that are injurious to human health, like carbon monoxide that come out of motorcars, I believe, that carbon monoxide poisoning is one of the major considerations that we have to bring where internal combustion engines are concerned, and garages, where automotive work goes on and where a lot of repair works happens, frequently carry a higher level of carbon monoxide than is safe.

We feel, Sir, that these new concerns must be the new order of the day, and this Factories Bill will seek to take all of these measures into consideration.

I have been, for a long time, Sir, been deeply concerned that the machinery for the enforcement of an updated Factories Bill might not be adequate. The seriousness of this problem has been with me now for sometime and I have been speaking with the Minister responsible for Establishments for this defect in our staffing structure.

I am pleased to be able to report, Sir, that we have been given additional staff in the factory inspectorate in order to be able to further police this Bill, and where we have not been able to pay as close attention to inspections as we needed to have paid, that situation will now be redressed.

(Asides)

Hon. V. L. JOHNSON: Not "hopefully" we have more people and we will be policing them to make sure that they can carry out their new and expanded duties.

Additionally, the Ministry of Health will, from time to time, be in the field as well, and we will be collaborating with one another to make sure that if there is any inadequacy in so far as our staffing operations are concerned, that they may be taken care of by the collaborations which will be taking place between ourselves and the Ministry of Health.

We, Sir, at the Labour Department have been operating not only without factory inspectors, but we have been operating, for quite some time now, without a Chief Labour Officer.
1.45 p.m.

Obviously, this has been an area of concern to us as well.

I am also happy to be able to report that we will be having the services of somebody in that area not too very long from now — certainly in time enough to make sure that the new provisions of the Bill are looked after.

There will also be a Deputy Chief Labour Officer, and I believe, as well, we look forward to the appointment of an Assistant Chief Labour Officer. So we will have additional manpower at the top to make sure that the statutory provisions of the Bill are monitored and looked after.

Any equipment that comes into the island henceforth — I am referring to the unsafe nature of equipment that comes into Barbados — any new equipment, any old equipment that comes into this island from henceforth, when this Bill comes into operation, will have to be certified as safe and fit for operation in this Island.

Realistic penalties have been put in place to make sure that people understand that when we say something we are prepared to back up what we say by putting in place the kinds of penalties that would persuade them that we are serious about what we have just said.

(Asides)

Hon. V. L. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, I am being heckled from my side and the other side. I do not know if there is anything that you can do to help me out of this situation. *(Laughter)*

Mr. Speaker, the question of the exploitation of minors in the work place has always been a question with which we have been concerned in this island.

As a matter of fact, Sir, the history of child labour is not something that we are oblivious to. In certain parts of Latin America, child labour figures very prominently, and children at the age of seven are working in salt vats for long, long hours at a time.

We are fortunate in this island that we do not now have that problem operating in Barbados, but I am sure, in some instances, there can be found minors, who ought to be in school, being employed by unscrupulous employers who feel that they can reduce their wages bill by taking on persons who really cannot command full time wages as adult operators.

The Bill is also going to take close scrutiny of this question of minors, and we are going to be looking after the welfare and well-being of female employees.

Recently, Sir, the industrial relations climate in Barbados has been rife with a lot of charges and counter charges with respect to the working climate in our island, and we have heard all sorts of things relating to how factory operators exploit their work force.

The grimmest fairy tales, in many respects, are only hyperbolized recollections of what may well be just merely incidences of small mal-practices, and may not, at all, accord with the exalted state of hyperbole with which they are reported. But we recognise that there are instances in this island where some employers are not nearly as sensitive as they need to be with respect to the welfare of workers, and we are going to be very hard on persons who continue to provide a work climate that is not up to the standard which we would want to see.

The concern of the unions about the concept of industrial safety is understandable, and indeed, Sir, it is commendable, but we would like to assure all those who are engaged in union activity in this country that the Barbados Labour Party does not really need to be prompted in this direction at all, because the question of workers health and safety is something that we take very seriously, indeed our history has been a history of concern for the worker.

This party grew up around a manifesto that had an essential concern for the workers in this island. We believe that we have matured as a labour party, we have

heightened our sense of responsibility to those persons who first gave us birth, and will continue to do whatever needs to be done to make sure that the work environment in Barbados is one that accords with the highest standards that can be discovered and found anywhere.

I would only like to caution those who monitor our conduct and progress in this direction to bear in mind that this process of achieving the highest possible level of sophistication, in so far as the creation of an acceptable work environment is concerned, is not something that comes about overnight.

What I think you have to monitor is our intention, and I would like to assure all parties concerned, the Barbados Workers' Union, and indeed our own people, all of them, that we will continue to put the welfare of our workers as number one priority in so far as this Bill is concerned, and in the event that we can identify areas in which we need to make amendments, those amendments will be made.

I hope only, Sir, that when we begin to stress this concept, that all those persons who form the collective Barbados will each recognise that it is his responsibility to make sure that the work environment is safe — the worker and the employer in partnership, working together to create a safe environment.

We have published a logo, and we will be putting out posters on Industrial Safety Week, which will be immediately identifiable as the safety logo, and we are going to try to put that logo wherever work goes on in this island, and indeed we are going to put it even beyond those places where work goes on so that all our people will be aware.

It will be in schools, and we will start to teach industrial safety at the level of the schools, so that our children, as they pass through the educational process, will be assimilating the kind of values which are necessary for good, safe, happy survival in this present day, so that when they come to the point of working, they will already come with a series of set attitudes that will predispose them to assimilate the industrial safety regulations that they will find in their work environment.

Mr. SPEAKER: Will the Hon. Minister complete his address in ten minutes' time?

Hon. V. L. JOHNSON: No, Sir.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Mr. SPEAKER: This sitting now stands suspended until 2.45 p.m. today.
1.55 p.m.

ON RESUMPTION:

Mr. SPEAKER: This sitting is now resumed.

QUESTION TIME

Mr. SPEAKER: It is now Question Time. I am advised that there are no replies to questions ready.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

Mr. SPEAKER: We now go into Private Members' Business.

There is one item of Private Members' Business standing in the name of the Hon. Member for St. Michael South Central.

Order No. 1 was called — To move the passing of a Resolution calling upon Government to take immediate steps to withdraw Notices of Arrears of Land Tax sent to persons not in arrears.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Mr. Speaker, I rise to address myself to the Resolution before this Hon. House, which is couched in the following language:

"Whereas thousands of Barbadians, who are not in arrears in the payment of their land taxes, have recently received Notices of Arrears of Land Tax, and

"Whereas the receipt of those notices has caused serious and continuing distress to many law-abiding and honest citizens,

"Be it resolved that this House call upon the Government to take immediate steps to withdraw those Notices of Arrears of Land Tax which have been sent to persons who are not in arrears with their taxes."

This act on the part of the Government of Barbados perhaps constitutes one of the most serious bits of mal-administration that has ever occurred in this country, I want to make it absolutely clear from the outset that the Government is responsible collectively and that the person who is most culpable in this regard is the Rt. Hon. Minister of Finance, the Prime Minister of Barbados.

I would also like to make it clear — and I shall adduce evidence to demonstrate this — that it was not the fault of the Collector of Taxes, who had advised the Government that about 50 per cent of those notices were incorrect, and that those notices were deliberately and willfully sent out on the instructions of the Rt. Hon. Minister of Finance of Barbados.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: No, Sir. I think, Mr. Speaker, at this point, I may have to rise to draw to Your Honour's attention that the Hon. Member is imputing something which I think is not fair to the Minister of Finance — that the Minister of Finance directed, in the light of what the Collector of Taxes had advised him, he deliberately and willfully sent out tax bills, Sir.

I think that is not really a very fair comment to make, Sir — that he deliberately and willfully sent out bills against advice.

I believe you can get on with your debate without grandstanding at this time.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Mr. Speaker, to continue. I would like to make it absolutely clear that I am not here to defend people who owe the Government taxes and have not paid those taxes. I would recommend to such persons, who genuinely owe the Government taxes, that they should pay, and that there is.....

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Sir, on a point of order. I must draw this to Your Honour's attention, Sir, I did raise an objection. The Hon. Member for St. Michael South Central said that the Minister of Finance deliberately and willfully sent out false tax bills.

(Dr. R. C. HAYNES: I never said so.)

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: It would be nothing but false tax bills — the Minister was directed that he should not send them out; they were sent out calling on people to pay money which they did not owe. That is imputing improper motives on the Minister of Finance, Sir, that he deliberately and willfully, in spite of the advice given that these bills were not correct, sent them out, to get money from the taxpayers.....

(Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Under false pretences.)

Hon. L. S. CRAIG.....under false pretences, Sir.

I beg Your Honour to rule on that, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: If the Honourable Member for St. Michael South Central made that kind of statement, he would have to withdraw it.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Sir, I did not make that statement. What I said was, deliberately and willfully sent out the tax bills because it is a method of tax collection. I never said anything about false billing or anything like that.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Sir, he said that he deliberately and willfully directed that these bills be sent, despite the advice of the Collector of Taxes

Mr. SPEAKER: Please.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG:.....that they should not have been sent out.

Mr. SPEAKER: If the Honourable Member used "deliberately and wilfully", please withdraw that.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Sir, as directed by you, I withdraw the words "deliberately and wilfully".

(Hon. L. S. CRAIG: I am going to hold you like a horse today.)

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: To continue, Sir, persons who owe the Government money for Land Taxes should, of course, pay the Government. There is provision, Sir, within the Laws of Barbados where persons who are unable to pay can seek relief; so those persons who have been billed for taxes which they genuinely owe — should either pay or seek relief.

But, Sir, it is important to understand that this economy, and the taxation policies being applied in Barbados now, are conditioned by decisions and agreements taken with the International Monetary Fund which provides for such matters as maximization of taxation efforts, it provides, Sir, for what one terms demand management of the economy and for, in technical terms, corrective inflation measures. It is in this context, Sir, that one has to see this entire exercise.

Now, Sir, who were the categories of persons subjected to this distress? It is shameful, Sir, to have to say that many indigent persons, including old age pensioners, who have been granted relief for their land taxes both by the former Minister of Finance and by this Minister of Finance, have received these notices of arrears of taxes.

This, Sir, has caused considerable distress to a large number of elderly people, and I was shocked, Sir, even to discover that some of these elderly persons have even received notices of arrears going back to before 1971-72, which was the cut-off point in respect of arrears up to that time, when a so-called \$1.5 million was remitted in a previous Budgetary Statement by the Minister of Finance.

The second group of people, Sir, are people who did not own the land in the years indicated in the Notices of Arrears, did not even own the land. A third group of people, Sir, are persons who acquired Land Clearance Certificates at the time of selling the land. And, Sir, to obtain a Tax Clearance Certificate is a condition precedent to the registration of a conveyance in this country under the Laws of Barbados.

There are even situations, Sir, where persons have had multiple Tax Clearance Certificates, that is, the land has changed hands two or three times in the past ten years, which means that, at least on two or three occasions, Tax Clearance Certificates would have been issued for that particular piece of land — and, yet, notices of arrears have been sent to people.

Another very serious matter, Sir. Many persons have been receiving bills from the Collector of Taxes for the past nine years or so. In none of those bills was it ever indicated that they were in arrears with their taxes at any point in time, and now, all of a sudden, ten years later, they receive a notice of tax arrears indicating that they owed tax for the years 72–73.
3.00 p.m.

I would like to submit that that is wrong in principle, I would like to submit that whether the statute of limitation applies to the Crown or not, in my humble judgement it is quite unfair to subject people to harassment of that kind.

It amounts to harassment, Sir, because there are many persons, since the receipt of those notices, who have been turning their houses up and down trying to find old receipts and so on and cannot find them.

We even have situations where people have paid their bills in the past before the end of November and have benefited from the 10 per cent deduction because they paid their bills before November 30 when the bills come out, and yet those people are now being billed for the discount, plus penalty, plus arrears — although they have already obtained the discount by paying their bills well in advance.

Mr. Speaker, there are even cases where people have receipts showing that they have paid the full amount — and the corresponding receipts in the particular department would suggest that they did not pay the full amount.

It is not a task force that is required in this operation, in many instances it is a fraud squad that is required in this situation, and I think it is a very bad tax principle, that, if you are in doubt as to who owes you money, then you send bills out to everyone lock, stock and barrel and inconvenience those people who have been honest and who have been compliant in relation to paying their taxes.

I believe that that kind of harassment is wrong. It is not the first time it has taken place in countries which have found themselves under the management of the International Monetary Fund, and we can expect more of this kind of harassment as time goes on.

Mr. Speaker, there is also a very dangerous aspect to this, because the substantive legislation places the onus of proof on the owner of the land. It is unreasonable to expect people in Barbados to keep receipts of any kind for an indefinite period. It is unfair, it is unreasonable and, in my view, it amounts to serious harassment.

Now, Sir, I had good reasons when I made the statement that it was known beforehand, it was known well in advance, that at least 50 per cent of those bills were wrong.

There are approximately 66 000 land owners in Barbados. Is it reasonable to assume that 23 000 of those people are in arrears with their taxes? I would like to suggest that that is not so. Indeed, Sir, I would further like to point out that professional advice — and this will be detailed later in this debate — was given to the Collector of Taxes that the correct approach would be to send out a sample, of about 1500 or so, and see exactly what the response would be. That was done and it showed that about 50 per cent of those tax bills were wrong.

Mr. Speaker, I go further and I say this. If you were to look very carefully you will see that the Minister of Finance, if he had been doing his duty scrupulously, could never have come to the assumption that this amount of money was outstanding to the Government, because when you look at it, it does not make any sense whatsoever.

There is no way where you can have \$1.5 million in arrears remitted before the year 1971 — 72, which represented the punitive arrears from the time Land Taxes were instituted in Barbados, and for that to climb to \$14 million over a period of ten years, despite the fact that re-assessment would have taken place in that time. In any event, the Government owes the land owners in Barbados far more money than was owed to them.

Mr. Speaker, I will even go further. I have heard the Minister of Finance say that up to the end of October 2 038 have paid up, 1 317 had objected, and he came to the ridiculous conclusion that this represents only 6 per cent of the total amount of 23 000 objecting.

If you examine those statistics carefully, what do you find? You find that the total number of people who responded was 3 408, which represents a 15 per cent random sample of this population.

That means that any evidence that you get from that can be extrapolated in relation to all 23 000 bills. It is a higher random sample than you use, for example, for unemployment statistics or for statistics in relation to prices or anything like that.

What do you find, Sir? You find that, of that 3 408 who have responded, 60 per cent were correct and 40 per cent were wrong — up to the end of October — and I would say that it is reasonable to assume that that 40 per cent would climb to 50 per cent because many people are objecting through their lawyers and their objections have not yet been forwarded to the Collector of Taxes, whereas people who paid would have gone directly to the Department and would have paid. The error that has shown up on the 15 per cent sample is definitely 40 per cent and is likely to rise to 50 per cent.

Sir, we also heard from the Hon. Minister of Finance that he expected to collect \$8 million. The kind of reason he is giving — \$8 million not \$14 million — is that they would lose \$6 million or so because people were being billed where the Government had acquired their properties.

The Government would have had to acquire between \$200 million and \$600 million in properties over the last ten years for that statement to be correct, if you look at the percentage on which tax is paid either for undeveloped or developed land and you work an average period over a ten year period. This is utter nonsense, because there is no way that Government would have committed that amount of money, almost half billion dollars in expenditure.

Now, Sir, I said that this was a deliberate act, and I am going to produce the evidence that it was a deliberate act. I draw the attention of this Honourable House to the Estimates of 1982-83. What do you find in those Estimates? You will see that for 1981-82 the revised Estimates show a figure of \$10 million and for 1982-83 it shows a figure of \$16 million for Land Tax.

This is not a year in which there is any revaluation or re-assessment. Where will this \$6 million come from? I will tell you where it comes from. The \$6 million would come from what was the correct assessment made by the Collector of Taxes as to the probable amount of money outstanding in Barbados from persons who owe taxes. That is where it would come from.

So, the provision in the Estimates showing a jump of \$6 million in a year in which there was no revaluation or no re-assessment of taxation means that, before the beginning of this financial year, a decision was taken to take this step and use this technique in the process of collecting Land Taxes. The evidence is there, it is incontrovertible if you look at the Estimates passed by this Honourable House.

Mr. Speaker, I go on and I say this, that this is a technique that was introduced in Uganda, it was introduced in Jamaica, it was introduced in Uruguay in

relation to Land Taxes — as soon as the Government entered into an arrangement with the International Monetary Fund.

3.10 p.m.

I have evidence, Sir, that this Government, since last year, has been negotiating with the International Monetary Fund. And when I talked about demand management, Sir, and maximisation of taxation efforts, it is this kind of harassment, Sir, which will continue in Barbados, and it will spread not only in relation to Land Taxes, but, sooner or later, it is going to spread in relation to Income Taxes, Sir.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to submit to this Honourable House that we in Barbados managed to extract \$8.6 million in taxes relating to property in the year 1975-76. In this year, Sir, we are projecting \$25 million.

Now, Sir, this has important implications, because it has been stated again and again in this House that about two-thirds of the properties in Barbados are non-permanent structures, and what you are in fact projecting is a yield of \$25 million in taxes out of about one-third of the housing stock in Barbados, which represents about 23 000 properties in this country.

And, Sir, this whole business of threatening to sell out people's lands, I would say, on the basis of this statistical data, that this House should never tolerate any kind of situation where there is clear evidence that 50 per cent of the arrears recorded in a department of Government are wrong, and where you can go in on that basis and sell out people's properties.

Sir, I believe that the Ministry of Finance is responsible. I believe that there needs to be an investigation into that Data Processing Department. I happen to know, Sir, that all the relevant information was passed on to the Data Processing Department and they did not tick off those who were supposed to be in arrears, but who were not in arrears. They did not take them off the list, and these things were sent out.

I am not a lawyer, Sir, but I have obtained good legal advice, and I am saying here now that the first person who is prosecuted in the courts of this country, this Democratic Labour Party will come to their assistance in dealing with the matters before the courts, because this matter strikes at the very heart of certain Constitutional aspects of Barbados, and that question, Sir, of onus of proof, in a situation where a department has been negligent or a Government has been negligent, is something that has to be tested in the courts of this country.

Persons, Sir, who have received bills for the past five or six years not showing any arrears are now suddenly getting bills showing arrears. I believe, Sir, that a court in this country would certainly look very, very carefully at this question of onus of proof.

(Asides)

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Do not worry, I am taking good advice on Constitutional matters in relation to the law in Barbados. Never mind.

Mr. Speaker, in my judgment, I think, Sir, that those notices should all be withdrawn. I believe, Sir, that the correct approach, where you know as a matter of fact that about 50 per cent of the information you have is wrong, is that the Government should have sent out letters, polite letters, to the persons involved, and ask them to come in and assist them as far as finding a solution to the particular problem.

Having taken that step, then you would certainly be able to separate that 50 per cent who do not owe you any money and then you would be able to send your notices of arrears to those who genuinely owe you money.

You are in a ridiculous situation, Sir, where Government itself has acquired land, acquired, through this Parliament, an indefeasible title to the land, where part of the conveyancing requires a Tax Clearance Certificate; and, Sir, the people who sold them the land have not yet been paid by the Government and they are receiving notices of arrears for taxes during the period after the Government acquired the land.

Can you imagine that? Government has acquired land in 1976, let us say 1977 and 1972. The Government has not paid the person, but the person is now receiving notices with penalties and arrears and all sorts of things like that. You would not pay the people their money, you own the land on an indefeasible title, and yet you are billing the people and sending out notices to them. That is the kind of confusion that is going on in this country, Sir.

Now, Sir, I am perfectly satisfied that this is a taxation collection technique that must be deplored by all the citizens of this country, must be deplored by Parliament, must be deplored by all honest persons, and I feel very, very strongly that, if you allow this technique to be used in relation to land taxes, it is going to spread to other areas in Barbados.

Many of the persons sitting on the front bench of Government do not clearly understand what I mean by demand management, but I will spell it out clearly. They

do not understand what I mean by corrective inflation. It is not correcting inflation, it means hard "smetters" in relation to taxation, *inter alia* among another string of measures and I am saying that this is what we are seeing manifested in Barbados today.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, in the interest of allaying the fears, the anxiety, the distress being caused to many citizens at a time, Sir, when many of them do not have a single cent in their pockets, I am urging upon this Honourable House that they support this very clearly and simply worded Resolution calling, Sir, on the Government to withdraw these notices.

Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass. (Applause).

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to second this motion and speak on the motion.

The second paragraph of the Resolution before the House reads:

"Whereas the receipt of those notices has caused serious and continuing distress to many law-abiding and honest citizens."

I first knew of this development in the tax history of Barbados, Mr. Speaker, when I received a call from an old couple, both of them well over 78 years old, and they asked me to come to their home at East Point immediately, because they had some very serious news.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I immediately proceeded to East Point. When I entered the house, the old lady, who suffers from hypertension, was in bed, and her husband, Mr. Speaker, showed me two tax bills showing that they had been sent bills for arrears — one parcel of land was \$1,062 and the second parcel of land was \$462.
3.20 p.m.

The first thing I did was to ask the old man to have a seat, then I sent for his bills and all the documentation that he had, and my biggest surprise, Mr. Speaker, was that the very first documents that were produced by that gentleman were documents in which they had applied for tax relief and were granted tax relief. When I looked at the tax relief forms, the years for which they were granted tax relief were right there on those tax relief forms. The lady, Mrs. Bynoe to be exact, was in her bed. She could not come out because she said, "Oh my God, they are going to sell the piece of land that my aunt owns".

That is how I knew of this, Mr. Speaker, and, immediately, I started to have a look at it.

I am saying that if the Minister of Finance is not aware that the Tax Roll is wrong, he is incompetent,

because his Ministry has all the facts, and they were advised that there is a large percentage of mistakes in the Tax Roll. His Ministry has the information, his advisers have the information and I am of the opinion that the Minister was advised by his Ministry and his advisers that something was wrong in that.

I say so, Mr. Speaker, because if you observe the tax certificates, you will realise that there was a time that arrears used to come out on your tax bills, and they were stopped.

Do you know why those arrears were stopped, Mr. Speaker? An OAS expert by the name of Mr. Dubroof came to Barbados to advise on this whole matter, and when he started to look at it, the first thing is that he was critical of the DPU programme that was done and he came into contact with the Rates and Taxes Division to have a look. Because of that, he decided that the best thing to do was to have a sample carried out to do a testing. Fifteen hundred bills were sent out and the result of that sample.....

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: On a point of order, I may have missed the Hon. Member for St. Philip North. He mentioned a man's name just now but I did not get the man's name correctly, and I am trying to make a note here. I would like to find out if he was the Chief Valuation Officer at that time. I am not quite sure he called the man's name. Were you the Chief Valuation Officer at the time?

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: I was not, Mr. Speaker. This is long after my time. This was some time in 1978-79.

Mr. SPEAKER: Just repeat the name of the gentleman.

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: The name is Dubroof, and, for your information, he was from the OAS.

When the returns from the sample came back in, they showed that 50 per cent of those Bill that went out showing arrears was wrong.

I would like to go back to the Prime Minister's Statement in the House. In the statement recently made on this matter, it was pointed out that to today's date some 3 408 responded. The important point has already been made here, that that represents an excellent sample of 14.7 percent, and of that sample, it is interesting to note that 40.2 percent of those people objected on the grounds that they were not in arrears and 59.8 percent paid. That is in very close keeping with that sample that was taken and found, and that was the reason why the arrears had stopped coming out on the tax bill.

It is my opinion that if the Collector of Taxes had discontinued sending out arrears on the bills and

then started again, despite the fact that he was privy to the fact that there is a large percentage of error, it is only fair to assume that he was instructed by the Ministry, or the Minister, that there should be a continuation of arrears going out on the bills.

The Minister's advisers know for a fact, Mr. Speaker, that the following problems occur in the Land Tax Roll. The Land Tax Roll, Mr. Speaker, is taken from the Land Valuation Roll, and the rates are computed. His advisers know for a fact, and the Hon. Minister said so, that old age pensioners whose taxes were exempted are still on the Tax Roll. The Minister knows, as a fact, that in relation the hardship cases that went before the Tax Committee, the percentage of the taxes that was given off because of the hardship situation is still on the Tax Roll. He knows for a fact that a lot of land that an agricultural levy was placed on and people qualified for exemption of that levy, the levy is still on the Tax Roll. He must know that all Government buildings are on the Tax Roll. He must know that the properties of the National Housing Corporation are on the Tax Roll. He must know that all the properties of the statutory bodies are on the Tax Roll. He must know that, in a lot of cases, where there has been subdivision that, although the lots are now on the Tax Roll, the original and global parcel of land is still on the Tax Roll, therefore the property is still being taxed twice. He must know that, in a lot of cases, people who had had tax certificates for the conveyancing of land have now got tax arrears despite the fact that they have paid those taxes.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that all of that information is available to the Ministry, and it is only right to suggest that the Ministry, has been advising the Minister properly, and he must be aware of all the problems.

He is also aware, Mr. Speaker, that, on numerous occasions, the Collector of Taxes has been complaining about the work being produced by the Data Processing Unit for his department. He must know that on numerous occasions meetings were held, and some were chaired by Sir Carlisle Burton, in which the Collector of Taxes put his case quite clearly, and he must know that the DPU, on more than one occasion, has said that they do not have enough trained staff to take care of the Collector of Taxes programme.

I am saying that the Minister of Finance must be aware or should be aware, because he is on top of his Ministry, that these are the problems involved in the Tax Department. (*Applause.*) He is on top of his Ministry, Mr. Speaker, and it is only fair to assume that, if you are a Minister responsible for a delicate subject like taxation, you are well aware of what is happening within your Ministry, and he is so well aware, because he has

been advised about the movement of the Land Tax collecting agency, to put it in the Inland Revenue Department.

I am saying, taking these facts into consideration, that it is unreasonable for you to have this situation, where there has not been a purging of the Tax Roll, to send out some 22 000 arrears and now state that you are setting up a task force to purify or remove all of those from the Tax Roll.

What is the big urgency? Mr. Speaker, would it not have been in the better interest of Government, would it not be in the better interest of the peace of mind of the people of Barbados for you to have purified that roll before you embarked upon the collection of arrears? Is this an unreasonable request?

All those people out there who are now put to the problem of paying experts, accountants, doctor's bills, because of the attacks they have had because of this, would not have had these problems or this trauma. I am saying that this has been a very insensitive bit of work on behalf of the Ministry of Finance.

Now you come to the most serious point, Mr. Speaker, the way that the Minister is proposing to deal with these defaulters. The Minister is proposing to sell the land of defaulters for the tax, plus the interest, plus the cost.
3.30 p.m.

I would like to ask a few questions. Is the Minister aware of the deep connection and love of Barbadians for land? Is the Minister aware that, in a lot of cases, there are litigations before the court that cause this type of problem? Is the Minister aware that, in a lot of cases, it is not the fault of the people that they have not been served their tax bills? And, what is more important to me, Mr. Speaker, who would decide who would be able to purchase these lots of land?

Mr. SPEAKER: If those questions were filed with the Clerk.

(Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Yes, filed with the Clerk.)

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: I am asking, who would decide who would benefit from that parcel of land? It is very likely that you would have a situation where a parcel of land easily valued at about \$40 000 can be sold for \$2 000. Who would decide who would get \$40 000 in land for \$2 000.

(Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Braddy)

Are you aware, Mr. Speaker, of the long lines of people you would have waiting for that parcel of land?

Somebody would have to make the decision as to who would get that land, and I am wondering who is going to make that decision.

Do you realise the fact that you are going to seriously change the ownership pattern in Barbados if you go ahead with this situation?

Has the Minister given thought to the fact that a lot of these parcels of land that he might sell could well belong to Barbadians living overseas, who have remitted to Barbados thousands upon thousands upon thousands of dollars, used in Barbados for the development of Barbados, that they worked for overseas. Is it reasonable for these people to lose their little parcel of land, having remitted so much money, because of an error or somebody's fault?

In the interest of \$6 million are you going to create so many problems in Barbados, when \$6 million could be found that has been misused in some places? I am saying that this is not the right approach. I am saying that those bills that were sent out wrong should be withdrawn.

I would like to support the Hon. Member for St. Michael South Central in asking those people who know that they owe their taxes to pay them because this is their contribution to the development of Barbados.

But there are lots of people out there who had paid their taxes and their response is, "I am going nowhere near the Collector of Taxes, let them sell my land."

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: True, I am one.)

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: Lots of people out there who know that they have paid their taxes, and that is their response because they were mistaken in believing that in this Administration, there would be justice. They were mistaken in believing that. (*Applause*) But they could be very wrong, Mr. Speaker.

I am saying it is a very ill-conceived situation developing in Barbados, because I have demonstrated that all of the facts that made the tax road as imperfect as it is are well known to the Minister of Finance, and it is unreasonable, with this background, for him to have sent out some 23 000 tax arrears and to come and further frighten people saying he is going to sell their land.

Do you know what this has caused? It has caused a lot of old age pensioners, who were receiving relief before, to call people and say, "We are not going to take any relief any further, we are going to pay our taxes because we want our land for our people". This is what it has caused.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: Shame.)

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: So you are going to find that a lot of those old age pensioners are going to take the few cents they have for old age and they are going to pay the taxes despite what you are going to tell them, despite the fact that you are going to try and calm their nerves and tell them that they can get relief. They are going to say, "No, we are going to pay the taxes" because of a lack of credibility in the present Administration.

I am saying that the Resolution before this House is a very serious one. This is not a partisan Resolution, Mr. Speaker, it is one that needs to be looked at very, very carefully and dispassionately, and one that you should vote with your conscience. Your conscience should be your guide in this vote — no political filing up on the right side or the left side — you should be guided by your conscience in this vote, and if you are aware of these facts, as I know you are now aware of, you should seriously ask the Ministry to think twice before you sit down around a table with your other Cabinet colleagues and agree to any change of legislation in the Land Tax Bill to allow the Minister to sell people's parcels of land. And if it comes to this, the relatives of these people who own these parcels of land should be given the first opportunity to buy the land.

Let us have a quiet look, Mr. Speaker, at the possibility of selling parcels of land; up to 23 000 parcels of land, because that is what the Minister said — there are 23 000 people who have not paid their arrears. Let us pre-suppose that half of those do not pay any further — you are going to be selling 11 000 parcels of land, Mr. Speaker, about 20 per cent of the total parcels in Barbados.

Do you realise how this would disturb the ownership pattern in Barbados? Do you realise that it would mean that land, in most cases, would move from the poor people — because if there are people who have not paid their taxes; it would have to be the poor people — into the hands of the people who have the money, or into the hands of the people who are better placed to know the Administration and the bureaucracy set up to administer it and, therefore, would have a better opportunity to be up front to buy this land.

Do you realise that this is seriously going to open the possibility of some public officer being given a lot of power to administer 11 000 sales of land in Barbados? Do you realise what this will do to a public officer and the power that this is giving the public officer?

It is a very serious Resolution. Land in Barbados has always been a very sacred thing to people, and I do not really believe, Mr. Speaker, that people who have

worked all of these years and toiled with their hands, working them sometimes to the bone, would refuse to pay their taxes and allow their land to go. There has to be a more serious and more legitimate reason, and it is my contention that the real truth is that there are not these amounts of arrears that we have going here.

I wish the Collector of Taxes well, I know his heart is in the right place, but his contention is that he is coming to the evening of his days.

I do not even know what provisions have been made for him — so it is very likely that the Collector of Taxes might be pondering on his own personal future and be so taken up in his personal future that the weight alone might prevent him from concentrating on the task in hand.

It is very possible, Mr. Speaker, that the junior personnel down there, as intolerant as they are, would refuse to assist the taxpayers in Barbados of rightly researching to make sure that they have paid their bills.

The most difficult thing one has to do is to pay a bill, that you know you have paid, a second time. It is a very difficult thing to put your hands in your pocket and pay a debt that you know you have already paid, but because you have not kept your receipts, you are now going to have to pay that.

It is unreasonable. It is not a usual Barbadian practice for people to put down receipts for seven, eight, nine, ten years — it is not a usual Barbadian practice — and I am saying that it is creating a very serious problem in Barbados — and what is the result? The most you are going to get out of this, the very most you are going to get is \$4 million in taxes.

Can you seriously tell me that a Government spending as much money as this Government has been spending.....

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: So badly.)

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN.....would go to the extent of creating this type of problem that goes to the social root of ownership of land in Barbados for \$4 million?

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: Wicked Government.)

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: Is it worth it? Is it really seriously worth \$4 million to have the population of Barbados in this state of anxiety that they are now in?

I would say, Mr. Speaker, that it is not worth it, and I can only seriously invite the Members on the other side, when they have examined it, when they have

researched it for themselves — they do not have to take my word — and when they have spoken to a lot of people who would certainly come to them as representatives to tell them that they have paid their bills, to invite the Minister and their fellow colleagues to have some action taken to remedy this situation that has resulted in Barbados.

Thank you. (*Applause*)

(Mr. P. M. GREAVES: Let them talk.)

(*Aside*: Put the motion.)

3.40 p.m.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: Mr. Speaker.....

Mr. SPEAKER: I cannot hear the Hon. Member.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: I am not a Member of the House anymore?

(*A Pause*)

Mr. SPEAKER: The question.....

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Speaker.....

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: I do not understand what is happening. I honestly do not understand it.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: No, no!

Mr. SPEAKER: On what did the Hon. Minister rise?

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: To speak on the Resolution.

Mr. SPEAKER: I must hear the Hon. Leader of the Opposition.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: Mr. Speaker, I would like some enlightenment.....

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW left the Chamber.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: If you will kindly permit me, Sir. I paid very close attention to the contribution of the Hon. Member for St. Philip North. At no time — and I will request the Clerk to get the Hansard report — at no time did I hear the Resolution seconded. He said, "I support the Resolution." I understand he said, "In supporting this Resolution." I did not hear him at any time "second the Resolution." I may be wrong, but I would request that the Hansard report will be able to reveal this. I would be very grateful.

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: I said I would like to second the Resolution and speak on it.

Mr. SPEAKER: The question.....

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Speaker.....

(Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Why you don't sit down? You think you are talking to Marjorie?)

Mr. B. M. TAITT: You see you have gone and done it again, you have called her name again in here.

(*Aside*).

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I do not interfere with you.

Why do you want to call my wife's name in this House?

(Hon. L. S. CRAIG: I mean Marjorie Carter.)

Mr. B. M. TAITT: You would say so. One of these days you will go too far.

(*Aside*.)

Mr. B. M. TAITT: You are an unregenerate fool.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, please, the Hon. Member must withdraw that.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I withdraw it, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: And not only this, he owes an apology to this House.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I apologise to your Honour, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: And please take control of yourself.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Speaker.....

Mr. SPEAKER: Please take your seat, it is better. Please take your seat, please take your seat.

(*Asides*.)

Mr. SPEAKER: We must have some order in this Honourable House. The Hon. Member for St. Andrew.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to you for recognising me.

This matter before the House was so much touted about, and there was so much fanfare about seeking to

have the House adjourned on a matter of great public importance, that one would have thought that coming out of this introduction, would have been quite a lot of fireworks and a number of important revelations. On the contrary, the mountains have laboured to bring forth only a mouse. So very little has been said in all of this that I am terribly surprised.

I have discovered an excursion taken by the honourable introducer of this measure right through the area from Uganda to Jamaica and Uruguay in connection with explaining to us what measures must be introduced when the IMF is giving instructions to a country.

I am a member of the Cabinet and I think I take a very careful look and listen with quite a measure of attention when matters to do with finance and any external aid are concerned, and I have never yet heard that the IMF is ordering the affairs of this country. As a matter of fact, it is unfortunate that, every now and again, the honourable introducer of this Resolution seeks to give the indication that things are so terribly bad that we are told by external forces what we must and must not do.

Barbados, going through a difficult period like most countries in the world, must obviously control its spending and seek to get the finances which are due to it. Any country in the world that is going through difficult times, and even when the times are not so difficult, will seek to collect the taxes owing to it, direct taxes as well as indirect taxes.

This is no magic matter, this is nothing the Government is springing upon anybody, this is a sane financial measure that any Government will take.

To hear the Hon. Member for St. Philip North speaking, one would have thought that he is a completely new man to this affair, but the genesis of all that we are experiencing in the land today springs from the type of policies and advice which was given to the previous Administration by the same Hon. Member when he was setting up this system for the administration of Land Tax in this island.

It is unreasonable, and I go no further than to say that, to hear that Hon. Member speaking on this Resolution. As a matter of fact, it would have been good for him not to have spoken at all, and if he had got up, to get up and walk outside.

He lectured us on the question of two old people, who I imagine to be taxpayers, I think he said that as well, and he was called to see them and he went to advise them, and, when he went to see them, the state of their condition and the distress they were in depressed him.

I believe that with the knowledge he has, with his background and his training in the question of this system of taxation, he would have known that it is not the Government's policy to tax the people who are unable to pay taxes.

3.50 p.m.

He even said that the old age pensioners are on the Tax Roll. Yes they are. If you are on the Tax Roll, obviously you will get a tax bill — and that is how it should be. But as soon as you make an application to the Tax Relief Board for relief of taxation and an investigation is carried out into your ability to pay or otherwise, a recommendation is made to that Board for the relief of that taxpayer who cannot pay.

Because of the system which the Government has introduced all old age pensioners, non-contributory old age pensioners I speak of, all those old age pensioners are entitled to make application, no matter what is their position — they get a pension — and they can apply for tax relief.

But it does not mean that because a person who has 100 acres of land or 200 acres of land and can get old age pension, that that person is entitled to tax relief. It does not work that way. You are an old age pensioner, yes, but that does not automatically entitle you to a tax relief.

You may be an old age pensioner with two or three or four rent houses. Do you expect that, because you are an old age pensioner, you will be given similar tax relief? That old age pensioner, Mr. Speaker, might very well be better off than a person working for \$1 500 a month, but with no house of his own. Therefore that person, who might be a young person, working for \$1 500 a month, with probably a wife not working, and three children, might be very much worse off than an old age pensioner who has three or four houses rented out.

So you cannot entirely see it in the light that Government is putting pressure on old age pensioners at this time, and I want to move the focus entirely away from the old age pensioners and deal with the whole principle of the bills which have been sent out for arrears in taxes.

Now, we have heard from the two spokesmen from the other side that these bills should be withdrawn. They like to say that they are members of Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. I know about members of Her Majesty's Opposition, but as to the term 'loyal', I am always very doubtful about that. I would prefer to see the term loyal in inverted commas.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the Hon. Member to withdraw that, because I believe that

he is now casting serious doubts upon the loyalty of the members of Her Majesty's most loyal Opposition, and I will ask him, even without your intervention, Mr. Speaker, to withdraw that imputation.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: I am not aware, Mr. Speaker, that I have said anything wrong.

Mr. SPEAKER: You should withdraw it.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: I think that I am entitled to observe a situation in an honest way, in the manner in which I see it, and, from the type of arguments which I hear going forth today, I cannot really feel that you are really serious over there with the suggestions which you are making, because up to now you have not said from that side what the Government must do in order to....

Mr. SPEAKER: The Hon. Member for St. Michael South raised an objection and I intimated to the Hon. Member that he should withdraw.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Speaker, I am sorry. At that point I did not understand what you said, and I withdraw that remark.

But I feel very strongly, however, over the attitude which the Opposition has been adopting....

Mr. SPEAKER: I hope that the Minister does not feel very strongly about having to withdraw.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: No, no.

Mr. SPEAKER: That is alright.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: I am speaking about the Opposition and its attitude to the matters of finance.....

Mr. SPEAKER: Please continue.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: and their constant dereliction of duty to the country by way of just pulling down the Government at every stage and doing nothing to give the impression to those abroad that they represent a constructive alternative Government to the one of the day. That is what I am arguing about.

You have said nothing this afternoon to satisfy anybody in the country that you are serious about your desire to take over the control of these affairs.

You have said that we should withdraw the amount of tax bills that went out. The argument has also been put forward about the Constitution, fortunately not by constitutional lawyers — and I do not know how many

they are on that side — but I have not heard the constitutional lawyers in this Parliament talking about the constitutionality of the proposal which the Government has introduced, that if the tax bill does not have the arrears on it, you may not be able to claim the arrears.

Mr. Speaker, I know Barbadians very well. The Hon. Member for St. Philip North said that the Barbadian has an interest in his land and in his property. Agreed. I think we all largely agree that this is a fact. The mere fact that it is so means that the Barbadians make sure that all receipts for land are kept. That is one thing I am sure about. They do not usually get rid of them. They cherish those receipts like they cherish their very lives.

(Asides.)

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: I have mine. I do not mind what you hear. That is entirely a matter for you. I know my own business, and if you like to hear people's business that is a matter for you. I do not want to hear about yours. I know about mine and I know that I got tax bills for arrears and they were quite right, quite correct.

Mr. SPEAKER: Kindly address the Chair.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Speaker, I am not making excuses about anything. They are a lot of people, and I will tell you, the sooner we get away from this idea that everything must be for free, everything is to be given the better. The Hon. Member for St. Philip North said that if it is \$4 million, are you going to make a fuss about that? Why can you not give it away?

I would like to know if roads are to be built in his constituency, if water is to be put in in that area and if there are social services to be given to the people in his constituency, St. Philip North, if he would be happy to know that there is money out there uncollected that can go to the provision of those social services in his constituency and they are people who are freelancing.

Not necessarily the poor because the poor is provided for. Assistance is given to the poor in a manner in which your Administration never gave to them. This Administration listens carefully and attentively to the cries of the poor at all times and we have never failed to respond to those cries, and if they are among the people who have got bills for taxes which were due for a long period of time, from 1972, and they are unable to pay, all they have to do is to make representation to the Land Tax Relief Board.

It is still in operation, and my understanding is that it will go on until some time next year, and probably for a much longer time to come; because there must be some system of administration whereby people who are poor

and people who need relief from taxes would be able to go to.

I have seen the Minutes of the meetings of the Land Tax Relief Board where hundreds of people, poor people, old age pensioners and others who are unable to work make representation to Government through the Land Tax Relief Board, and they have always been given a very sympathetic hearing and consideration.
4.00 p.m.

But I want to make this very clear, and this is a view which I hold — I will tell my constituents and I will tell the whole country — the Government's taxes must be paid. The money must come from somewhere to run the affairs of this country.

I am not going to say it with tongue in cheek — I am going to say it broadly, I am not going to be fooling anybody, I am not going to be on the one hand something and on the other hand something else — as a former Attorney General with the then Democratic Labour Party, Mr. Hilton Vaughn, used to say — on the one hand this and on the other hand that — I am going to pronounce very straightforwardly that the taxes owed to Government must be paid.

The days of freelancing are over. The days of being able to get away because you have friends in high places are no longer in existence. This Administration does not believe in that form of governing, and if there are people out there who believe that they can always ride easy, always be free-wheeling and always getting something for nothing, that attitude must go.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to say this — it might not be popular to say it, but I am going to say it nevertheless — sometimes when I recognise the problems that the country and the world are going through at this point in time, I say it might be a good thing for stability in lands. It is a good thing to cause people to understand that they must stand on their own feet and not be too dependent upon others.

It is a good thing to let you know that they must pay their bills and meet their commitments, and I have a conviction that if politicians were to have the courage to tell the people the truth, the people would not be unwilling to respond to those truths when they are known.

But some of them are too weak-kneed and spineless. Some of them are too afraid to tell the electorate the truth of the situation. It takes a big man and a big Government, and the Prime Minister was very courageous to have stood up here and told the country his true and honest conviction about matters affecting the collection of taxes in this island.

There was a time when a number of people felt that they should not pay taxes, any taxes at all: Property

Tax, Income Tax, National Insurance, Health Levy, Transport levy. They must always be free riders, and so long as Government does nothing but to let them free ride, the Government is the best in the land. But as soon as you tell them the time has now come when you must pull your socks up and do something, everybody seems to be offended and set their backs up.

Mr. Speaker, I venture to say that most of those tax bills that went out for arrears in taxes were genuine and the people who are keeping noise about them are doing so because they feel that justice has waited too late to catch up with them; not because they do not owe, but that justice delayed is justice which should not be applied, a bit different from how the Hon. Member for St. Michael North would have put it. I have put it that way for a good reason.

Mr. Speaker, this side cannot accept the Resolution as moved. The Resolution is certainly not a Resolution that this Government can support. It is a Resolution which, to me, has been prompted by an attitude to let people understand and to see that the Opposition is probably still alive, even if not kicking. It has not even given me the impression that they have had a slight infusion of blood, let alone any form of worthwhile life.

The Government sees it as just another attempt to highlight the problems which confront this country, like most of the countries in the world, and since we are a fragile and open economy, we cannot hope to exist in a hostile world without getting some of the effects of that hostility.

An Opposition which is loyal must at some times resist the temptation of cheap popularity, allow itself to stay on the ground and keep its head firm, and at some time see the wisdom and the justice of something good which a Government will do.

The easiest thing one can do, like a bulldozer set in motion without even a driver in it and put into forward gear, is to destroy. Any person can come, with all of us being in here today, and push this building down, but to ask them to reconstruct it, based upon what is presently here, it may take them a generation to replace.

You have a long time in waiting, but, during that period that you are waiting, I advise you to groom yourself with great care for the time when the opportunity will come. Probably not you, but maybe your generation, but the time is long away from here; but prepare yourself in an adequate way and do not be in a hurry.

The people in the country are in no hurry to remove the present Administration. You believe so. You thought so in 1981; you were attempting it from 1977

and you have not succeeded. You will not succeed easily in the future.

The Government will continue to stay on the ground, will continue to maintain a level head and will continue to work towards the interest of the people in this country, and with the support which they have been giving – and don't you believe that they are not giving support, because in their quiet way they tell us, "We appreciate what you are doing, we know this is a difficult time for all Governments."

West Germany, France, Great Britain, for a number of years, Canada within recent times, and the mighty South Africa, in the face of its horrid deeds, have always been rich countries. They, too, are in the hands of the people whom you say you dread, and who will also dictate to them.

But I am sure we are not dictated to in the form in which you have just outlined, and I hope that we will never see the day, because this Administration has the courage to take decisions, even though they are unpopular, in the interest of this country and its population.

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Mr. Speaker, considerable emotion has crept into the discussion of this matter. The tone of the Mover of the Resolution apart, you will recall the moving story that was given by the Hon. Member for St. Philip North when he spoke of his visiting the elderly couple, 78 years and beyond, one in bed, the distressed that was written all across the faces and the trauma and the anxiety resulting from the fact that they had received Land Tax notices in relation to a period for which they had already paid.

At the very outset, Sir, we ought to concede on this side, as the Government has already conceded, that there are errors in the Land Tax Register and that a proportion of the Land Taxes that have been sent out are faulty, in the sense that they have been sent to persons in relation to a period for which they have already paid or they relate to land which has long gone out of their possession and so on.
4.10 p.m.

My first concern, Sir, however, is really with the charge which was made by the mover of the Resolution to the effect that the errors in the tax bills that have been deliberately sent out and that it is part of the IMF inspired measures adopted by this Government to maximise the collection of revenue.

In support of that thesis, Sir, he.....

(Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Demand management.)

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: cited the examples of Paraguay.....

(Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Uruguay.)

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: of Uruguay – I am advised not Paraguay – of Jamaica and of Uganda, and said that we were following the same pattern of demand management and he proceeded, Sir, to predict that what is happening in relation to the Land Tax Register and that sector of taxation, Sir, will soon be applied to other sectors, in particular to Income Tax.

That speculative thesis, Mr. Speaker, really flies in the face of the facts and ought, I think, to be rebutted.

The facts are, Mr. Speaker, and they have been clearly set forth by the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister last week in the statement which he made to this Honourable House, the facts are that when Central Government took over the collection of Land Taxes from the Vestry and, at a later stage, the Local Government system, which was abolished in 1969, the Land Tax Registers of the three Local Government Councils, the Northern District Council, the Southern District Council and the City Council, those Registers, Sir were in a state of absolute chaos.

Land was mislocated and misdescribed. Many owners, Mr. Speaker, were misidentified. There were several instances, Sir, of the register not having any record whatsoever of people who had owned land for more than a generation, and who had consistently paid the Vestry and, subsequently, the Local Government Council their taxes.

(Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Do you want the IMF agreement? Do you want this?)

Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Strenuous efforts were made, Mr. Speaker, to correct these deficiencies in the Register when the Local Government system was collapsed in 1969 by the Democratic Labour Party Government.

Notwithstanding the efforts that were made by the Democratic Labour Party in office, between 1969 and 1976, when they left office, the register remained in a state of incompleteness, in a state of chaos, to the extent, Sir, that in 1977, the Minister of Finance, the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister had to write off to the tune of \$1.2 million arrears of taxes which were not paid and which we felt we had little or no prospect of collecting.

Since then, Mr. Speaker, continuing attempts have been made to put the register in order, to computerise the register to correct the misdescriptions and the misidentifications of parties. But notwithstanding that,

Sir, what the recent issue of land tax has revealed, Sir, is that there is still a far way to go in the exercise of correcting the chaos which has existed for a long time in the Land Tax Register of this country.

Now, Mr. Speaker, it is not easy to put it right, because the public does not always cooperate in this exercise, as has been rightly pointed out by the last honourable member, Sir, who spoke. There are a lot of people in this country who are anxious to avoid the payment not only of Income Tax, but also of Land Tax, and, to that extent, many people do not honestly come forward and say, "Here are my papers, I am the owner of forty perches in Welches, Christ Church, kindly ensure that the register reflects the fact that I am the owner. Let me know what I owe. I have not paid since 1969 or 1970, I am anxious to put the record straight and to pay my taxes."

In addition, Mr. Speaker, we have a situation in which many Barbadians, who own land have migrated in the last thirty years; some of them have left agents here and others have been so careless about their business that they have not left any agents to whom the Government could look to pay the taxes or on whom they could serve notices.

The result is that something like 4 800 Land Tax notices are returned every year to the tax collecting department. Owners cannot be found. Parties cannot be found.

There has been considerable mobility in Barbados in recent years. People move from St. Michael and go to St. Philip from St. Thomas and go to Christ Church, and no attempt is made to notify the Land Tax Department that they have changed their address and, therefore, notices should now be sent to an address in Silver Sands or Chancery Lane rather than Hopewell, St. Thomas and so on.

So, without the cooperation of the public, Mr. Speaker, the exercise of correcting the limitations and the deficiencies in the Land Tax Register is not an easy one.

What I want to reject at this point, Mr. Speaker, is any suggestion or any contention, such as has been advanced by the other side, that the Prime Minister wilfully and deliberately sent out these Land Taxes to cause anxiety, trauma and distress even though he well knew that there were errors and that the Register was in an enormous state of deficiency.

That, Mr. Speaker, is not the true position. Not only does it impute bad motives on the part of the Prime Minister, but it suggests, somehow, that this Government is run on the basis of spite, and there is an attempt to

punish, to cause distress and anxiety to the very people who support us in preference to the Democratic Labour Party Opposition. *(Applause)*

It is a nonsense argument but, nevertheless, it is the sort of argument to which the Opposition repeatedly resorts in order to attract public attention and grab the headlines.

4.20 p.m.

The message, which the Prime Minister has sought to send forth from his office and from this House last week, and which we must continue to emphasise, is that errors have been made through no fault of the Government, that every attempt is being made to correct these errors, that in the collection exercise the Government will exercise all humanity and ensure that no distress and anxiety is caused to land owners in this country, and that if only the persons adversely affected will come forth, with their documentary evidence, and discuss the problem with the Land Tax Department, that everything can be put right.

That is not the impression that the Opposition is trying to give those affected out there. They are trying to give the impression that it is a wicked and vicious Administration, uncaring for their plight, that is concerned to cause the elderly people in this country for whom this Administration has done so much; it is our intention to cause them anxiety and distress in the evening of their days.

That, Mr. Speaker, as I have said, is to distort the facts, to turn them on their heads, and I thought that, in my brief contribution to this debate, I ought to restate the history of this matter and the difficulty that the Democratic Labour Party in office experienced, and the Barbados Labour Party is continuing to experience, in correcting the deficiencies in the register and putting this matter on a proper footing.

Now, Mr. Speaker, in the course of the Prime Minister's statement last week, mention was made of the fact that we are likely to have a system whereby land for which tax has not been paid for a long period will be put up for sale, and, in particular, that derelict and abandoned properties in circumstances in which the owners cannot be found, that they, too, will be put up for sale, and that the lands will be put back into use mainly for the purpose of urban development and for the purpose of house building.

The Hon. Member for St. Philip North, in the course of his contribution, used that as the basis for making the speculative charge, again designed to cause anxiety, that it is an attempt on the part of this Administration to distort the ownership pattern in this country, and to make sure that people who have will be able,

through a cheap route, to acquire further property at the expense of poor people.

That may appeal to them on the other side as political sense, but we know that that is political nonsense, and that is why we have such a rich record on this side of equalising the distribution of wealth in this country, because we know that that is political nonsense. That is why the Plantation Tenantry Act could not have been put on the Statute Book, even though they claim that they were addressing the problem of the plantation tenancies from 1961, until the Barbados Labour Party came back to power.

The country pays them little attention, and I propose to ignore that particular contention — that this is an attempt on the part of the Barbados Labour Party Administration to ensure that the rich people of this country, through a cheap route, get property which really belongs to poor people.

I will make this point, however, in support of the move. Between Bay Street and Oistins, Mr. Speaker, on the coast road, I am advised that there are over 50 properties that have been abandoned for in excess of five years. The owners cannot be found, they are believed to be living overseas, they have no agents here.

These properties are, for the most part in a state of disrepair, many of them are run over by bush, Rastas are living in some of them, they are attracting rats, they constitute a hazard, nobody is living in them, for the most part — except in the case of a few Rastas — on the premises, and there are people in the community that would like to own those lots, would like to put houses on them.

In many cases, they are choice lots, and the Government is supposed to stand by idly, appear to be helpless in the face of this development across the country and do nothing. That is what the Opposition would have us do.

Many countries in the world have been faced with this sort of problem and they have devised a strategy, similar to the one enunciated by the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister last week, whereby an attempt will be made, after giving adequate notice to all those who are the owners or are likely to be the owners, to come forward and pay the tax; and if that fails, the Government will set up the lands and make sure that the taxes are paid, and, moreover, we will make sure that the lands are put back into productive use, for the most part housing purposes.

Now, that will have a very important consequence, Mr. Speaker. If that is not done, it means that we will have to continue trespassing on good agricultural land in Barbados for housing purposes, unless we can get back into use some of the hundreds — it is believed that they

now run into thousands — unless we can get back into use some considerable portion of the thousand or so lots that are in a derelict state and have been abandoned by their owners for one reason or another.

Here again, Sir, Government has gone out of the way to make it clear that, in executing this strategy, every effort will be made to ensure that hardships are reduced to a minimum, that properties are not sold in error, that there is a proper knock-down price for the land.

I know the Hon. Member for St. Michael South Central would like to go and buy up half the properties. He is a well known land grabber in this country, but notwithstanding the fact that he has such large ambitions to acquire more of the arable land, I would hope that he would give poor people a chance, who have not got any property, to acquire a piece for the first time in their lives.

I am satisfied, Mr. Speaker, that even though these Land Tax bills that went out with errors caused confusion in some circles, that the message has now gone forth to all those affected that it is a difficult problem, that the Government needs their cooperation in putting it right, that no attempt will be made to force those who have already paid to pay again, and that, given a little patience and cooperation, the entire register can be put in a proper state whereby these errors would be avoided in the future.

With the passage of time and the intervention of the Prime Minister last week, this issue now has the status of a non-issue. Many people have gone forward, their problems have been corrected. There is a recognition in the country now that a mistake was made in some cases, and that, if they go with their receipts and with the evidence of their ownership of the land to the right department, the whole thing can be put right.
4.30 p.m.

To that extent, Mr. Speaker, there is no need to withdraw the tax bills, because by issuing some of the tax bills in error, those people who claimed to be adversely affected, have had the opportunity to go forward and to put the situation right. To that extent, it has turned out to be a blessing that some bills were in error, because in so far as the error resulted in a misidentification of the owners or a misdescription of the lots, the real owners have been able to go forward and say, "Something is wrong with this bill, these are the facts, please allow the register to accord with the true facts of the case."

I am satisfied, Mr. Speaker, that the Government has addressed itself to the difficulties created as a result of the bills, that proper steps have been put in frame and that the register for the future, and as a result of the

issuing of these bills, will be largely corrected. I have no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that we will see that this problem has been largely reduced, and that the next time there is a valuation and an issuing of tax bills we are not likely to hear the human cry, which I believe has been greatly magnified, which we heard on this occasion.

It is because I am satisfied, Mr. Speaker, that the Government has acted, and has acted correctly in the circumstances, in setting up the corrective machinery, that I must join with my colleagues on this side in rejecting the Resolution which was moved by the Hon. Member for St. Michael South Central. (*Applause*).

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: Mr. Speaker, I am really amused by the efforts of the two spokesmen for the Government, who, from the front benches, have attempted to put some kind of saving face on to a very bad situation.

The Member for St. Andrew.

Mr. SPEAKER: Honourable.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: The Hon. Member for St. Andrew used all of his rhetorical devices in order to make it appear as though the Government had a case, and it reminded me of the occasion, I believe, more than once, when we sat down together in some public discussions, forums or fora, however, you wish to pronounce it, when the great debates in this country used to take place and we tried to bring some sanity into the discussions and the debates.

Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, not being a lawyer constitutional or otherwise, I understand, Sir, that there is a legal maxim that a person is innocent until proven guilty. I understand that that is still the cornerstone of justice and legal impartiality in this country — although some assaults on that particular principle has been made in recent times.

The sending out of these tax bills appears to me, Mr. Speaker, to stand that particular legal maxim on its head, because what the two speakers who, in this Honourable Chamber this afternoon, had risen to prove, is that the Government is right to send out notices.

Mr. SPEAKER: You said what the two speakers? There is only one in here.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I was not speaking of you. I was referring to the two of them. There is only one Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: There are all Hon. Members.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: There are all Hon. Members. I am referring to the Hon. Member for Christ Church East and the Hon. Member for St. Andrew. What they attempted to say amounts to this, that the Government is right to send out these tax bills and arrears to persons who are not in arrears in order to correct some particular fault.

Something has to be wrong with that approach, and I really wonder if those on that side, if they sat around the Cabinet table, the Hon. Member for St. James North, the Hon. Member for St. Andrew, for Christ Church East, and all of the Hon. Members, both on the front bench and the back bench, did they sit around the Cabinet table and take such a decision that this matter should be handled in that kind of way?

I have no doubts about that....

(*Asides*).

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: I know you do not know anything about it. That is exactly it. That is why I can say, Mr. Speaker, the confirmation has now come. We know all the debating techniques in here. I know that you knew nothing about it.

It happened, and then when it broke, through the investigating skills of the Member for St. Michael South Central, who can ferret these matters, when he actually pointed out the grave injustice that was being done to the people of this country, that is when it came to your attention — and you are now trying to put some of bold and corrective face on to a bad situation.

(*Asides*).

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: I know you did not know anything about it because you do not know..... Sorry, I am speaking to the Acting Prime Minister. As Acting Prime Minister you will get a look-in now. You will get a peep-in now. Get a panoramic view of everything that is going on.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Chair is looking at the Hon. Member for St. Michael South full face, at full face.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: I know they will not let the Chair get a peep in.

Mr. SPEAKER: Address the Chair.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: But, Mr. Speaker, let us look at it. I have heard from the Government Benches that they cannot support this Resolution. The Resolution speaks in these terms:
4.40 p.m.

"Whereas thousands of Barbadians who are not in arrears in the payment of their land taxes have recently received Notices of Arrears of Land Tax"

Are you going to deny that? It is a fact. I am going to take this clause by clause, and I am going to ask the question of each one of you, how are you going to vote against a matter that is so patently factual and so reasonable in its terms? Which Member, voting according to his conscience as the Hon. Member for St. Philip North has asked, could actually vote against it? It is a fact, Mr. Speaker, that Barbadians have received Notices of Arrears of Land Tax. That is the first clause of this Resolution, the first "whereas."

The Second clause and the second whereas is:

"Whereas the receipt of those Notices has caused serious and continuing distress to many law-abiding and honest citizens....."

Are you going to deny that. While, for purposes of debate, you may deny that it is urgent, no one will deny or can deny that these Notices have been received and that they have caused serious and continuing distress. There is no doubt about that.

Tell me, Brath, you will deny that? Are you going to deny that? I am talking to the Member for St. Lucy. Are you going to deny that?

Mr. SPEAKER: In here you are talking to the Hon. Member. All Members in this House are honourable.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: Do you have to repeat that every time, Mr. Speaker, when we know it? The Hon. Member for St. Lucy. Are you going to deny that the issuance of these Notices of Arrears of Land Tax has caused serious and continuing distress to the law abiding and honest citizens of St. Lucy? I do not think you can deny that, and I know you to be a very honourable person and I know you would not deny that, because it is a fact.

Now the operative clause:

"Be It Resolved that this House call upon the Government to take immediate steps to withdraw those Notices of Arrears of Land Tax which have been sent to persons who are not in arrears with their taxes."

What is unfair about that? You have sent out notices.....

(Asides.)

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: I am law abiding, too.

Mr. SPEAKER: This brings us to the end of Private Members' Business for today.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. SPEAKER: Government Business is the instant Order of the day.

When the suspension was taken, Order No. 2 was being discussed and the Hon. Minister of Labour was addressing the Chair. He may continue to do so if he so desires.

THE FACTORIES ACT, 1982

Hon. V. L. JOHNSON: Mr. Speaker, when the suspension was taken I was in the process of winding up the introduction on this Bill, and I would like to draw attention to the fact that this Bill, in our opinion, is a Bill that has taken carefully into consideration the present and future needs in the area of safety, and we have made an attempt to anticipate, to the extent that it is possible in these matters, the need for legislation that is capable of keeping pace with the ever changing circumstances in an area as dynamic as industrial safety.

We have not, to the extent that it has been possible, omitted any facet, and we would be grateful for anybody's indication as to where we could have gone a step further. So far as we can gather, and with all the consultation that has gone on in so far as the preparation of the Bill was concerned, we believe that we have made a very significant step, indeed, towards satisfying the immediate and future needs in so far as the area of safety is concerned, taking full regard of the circumstances of the industrialisation process in Barbados.

When we brought the Bill in to make the amendments that were done, we looked at all the little areas that were likely to create problems, and we believe that we have identified those and that we have taken the necessary action with them.

The fencing of doorways and hoisting equipment are areas which have been included in the Bill.

As you will recall, only a few days ago, down at the Arawak Cement Plant, a young man, who incidentally, was here without the proper work permit, sneaked into Barbados some kind of way, lost his life in the process of working on some kind of hoisting mechanism, and the Ministry of Labour has investigated that accident and recognises that it would be covered under the new Bill, and directions that we have issued to Arawak Cement Plant have now been

Mr. SPEAKER: I take it that the Hon. Minister must be aware that that particular matter to which he now refers is the subject of litigation.

Hon. V. L. JOHNSON: Yes, Sir. I am not going in that direction. Suffice it to say that hoisting equipment and these kinds of mechanisms, which might not ordinarily in the past have been described as factory operations, have been covered in the Bill so as to bring them under control of the legislation, because a number of cases which would not ordinarily have qualified used to be able to get away with certain dangerous procedures, and we thought that we should stretch the definition of factories sufficiently to give us jurisdiction in these areas.

In all the circumstances, I believe that we can feel relatively comfortable that we have a Bill with which we can live and which will serve us well in the foreseeable future.

Mr. Speaker, in the light of the agreement that has been graciously accepted by Hon. Members of the House

that further consideration of the Bill ought to be postponed until later, I would like to move that further consideration of the Bill be now postponed.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: I beg to second that.

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

THE ADJOURNMENT

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn until Tuesday, November 16, 1982, at 12 o'clock noon.

Hon. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division, and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

4.50 p.m.

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