THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1981 – 86

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, April 19, 1983

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 12.25 p.m. o'clock.

PRESENT

His Honour C. L. Bolden, LL.B., (Deputy Speaker)
Hon. L. S. Craig, (Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Leader of the House)
Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. Adams, Q.C., M.A. (Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Planning)
Hon. H. B. St. John, Q.C., LL.B., (Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Trade, Tourism and Industry)
Mr. L. E. Sandiford, M.A. (Econ.)
Hon. Miss B. A. Miller, (Minister of Education)
Hon. L. B. Brathwaite, (Minister of Housing and Lands)
Mr. J. G. Odle, B.Sc., (Chairman of Committees)
Hon. V. L. Johnson, M.A., (Minister of Transport and Works)
Mr. B. M. Taitt, B.A. (Hons.), M.A., LL.B. (Hons.)
Hon. L. R. Tull, Q.C., M.A., (Attorney General and Minister of Legal Affairs and Minister of Foreign Affairs)
Hon. DeL. O. BRADSHAW, (Minister of Labour, Social Security and Sport)
Hon. Dr. R. L. Cheltenham, M.A., M.Sc., (Econ.), (Minister of Agriculture, Food & Consumer Affairs)
Mr. P. M. Greaves
Mr. R. E. Brathwaite
Hon. Dr. D. G. Blackman, B.A., M.A., PhD., (Minister of Health and Community Services)
Mr. A. Truss

Prayers were read by Archdeacon F. A. Cayless.

MINUTES

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Minutes of the meeting of Tuesday, April 12, 1983.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: I beg to move that the Minutes of the meeting of April 12, 1983 be taken as read.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: If there are no objections or observations, let the minutes stand confirmed.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

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

A Resolution to approve the compulsory acquisition of land at Cheapside, St. Michael.

A Resolution to approve the compulsory acquisition of land at President Kennedy Drive, St. Michael.

A Bill to amend the Income Tax Act.

FIRST READINGS OF BILLS

On the motion of Hon. L. S. CRAIG, seconded by Hon. L. R. TULL, a Bill to amend the Income Tax Act was read a first time.

ORAL REPLIES TO QUESTIONS

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Reply to Parliamentary Question No. 31, asked by the Leader of the Opposition is ready.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: I beg to move that Government Business be the instant Order of the day.

Hon. L. R. TULL: I beg to second that.

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

Mr. H. A. BLACKMAN entered the Chamber and took his seat.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: I beg to move that Standing Orders 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 be suspended for the remainder of today's sitting.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I beg to second that.

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

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

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Order No. 5, Sir.

HOUSING (AMENDMENT) ACT, 1983

Order No. 5 was called - To move the Second Reading of a Bill to amend the Housing Act.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE (St. Andrew): Mr. Deputy Speaker, in rising to move the Second Reading of this Bill, I would like to crave the House's indulgence to make a few brief comments on the reasons that led to the desire to increase the numbers of the National Housing Corporation.

The Act specifically sets out to raise the number from seven to eleven. The idea behind that is primarily to beef the Board up to a large extent and to permit greater scope for the injection of a new body of opinion within the National Housing Corporation.

The National Housing Corporation as it stands is not, in my considered judgment, geared to meet the needs of housing for the present or future generations. A look at the number of reports which have been made over the years would reveal that most of the Ministers and most of the people who carried out services in the National Housing Corporation have addressed the issue of the ability of National Housing to carry out the work it was created to perform.

The feeling abroad is that National Housing is primarily an area for the giving out of keys to all homeless persons in the land. I want to dispel the idea that is generally abroad that National Housing is a welfare Ministry in the first place. It has no status in law to perform such functions. There is a Ministry that is responsible for that, and a brief glance at the budget of that Ministry would reveal that it has an allocation to the tune of about $1 200 000 to provide for people who are homeless, and also to carry out needed repairs to the homes of those people.

Another look at National Housing as it now is would also reveal that the Government is actually subsidising the rents on the housing estates to well over 200 per cent, and when people question what Government has been doing for housing, they must, not only look within the National Housing Corporation to observe what Government has been doing.

In addition to this, you get rebates in terms of Income Tax concessions if you carry out repairs to your home, and people who have chattel houses are able to claim for repairs done to those houses. In the past it was not so; and people who had chattel houses were also given an opportunity to have chattel mortgages as well. This is as a result of enlightened legislation which this Government introduced.

Looking down the road, I have looked at a number of things which should come sharply before the eyes of the National Housing Corporation, matters, I believe, they should seriously address.

From time to time, we have heard complaints within this Honourable Chamber about inadequate conditions under which people within the housing areas live. Although I have only been there for just over 2½ months, I have been looking myself at those problems and the Ministry has now set about on a programme of inspection – the Ministry itself as distinct from the National Housing Corporation.
12.35 p.m.

Too often we have complaints, and when you speak to National Housing Corporation you hear that there are no problems; but, privately, you will get revelations that there are problems. So the Ministry thought that there should be independent personnel to go around and to see and to examine where the problems are.

I also want to look at the question of rotation in relation to the rent collectors and the people who do the inspection. Even though you may have people within the housing area who carry out day to day repairs and are called upon from time to time, you still get feedback within the Ministry itself that even though you give kickbacks to the workers there – the carpenters, masons and the plumbers – they are never too anxious to do the remedial work. I feel that is because you have allowed them to stay at one place too long so they have become too rooted and unaware of what their duties are.

It is fashionable in the country today for people to believe that only certain sections of the society have rights and not others, but I want to let the National Housing Corporation personnel know that the National Housing Corporation was not designed for finding work for people. It was designed to assist in the carrying out

of a programme of house building and resiting to create better conditions for the people who may not be able to provide those conditions for themselves.

It is my considered view as well that National Housing must now be a trend-setter in terms of creating new ideas and new technology for the construction of housing which would be much cheaper than the conventional type of houses which we have been seeing over the years. This must not necessarily be a wood structure, but could probably be a structure such as designed in North America and other in the foreign areas, where you can have panels constructed of steel and a concrete mixture. I have seen one or two of these designs myself and I believe that Barbados is very suited to such an arrangement.

I feel that the present staff can be looked at with a view to doing serious maintenance work and to ensuring that the housing stock of the Government continues to be properly maintained. After having a very short and careful look, I am not persuaded that the Government has been getting the best out of the National Housing Corporation for the money which it has been providing in that direction. I also believe that there is too much dead wood there, and that dead wood has to be removed and proper growth be allowed if the system is to be properly worked.

Another message I want to get across, and this is a very serious message, is that people who are living in the developments created by Government and who are called upon to pay heavily subsidized rents, must pay these rents. It has been drawn to my attention that even in areas like Fernihurst, areas that were recently settled with new tenants, there are people who are in a serious state of arrears.

Now, that is not the type of situation that we need to have and encourage. The rents are not heavy. We can appreciate a situation where a person may not be working and may probably fall into arrears, but I do not feel that people ought to believe at all times that Government must provide conditions for them where they must be freeness forever. Things that are too cheap are never any good, and that is something which must be borne in mind.

I do not subscribe to the view that the poor will always be with us. I do not feel it should be so. Neither do I subscribe to the view that it is easy in this world to create an egalitarian society. Even if you create a situation where you take all the money in the banks and wherever it can be found and distribute it equally between the people in Barbados, the 250 000 people, within a year's time you will gradually find again very poor people and very rich ones. And this is a situation which has nothing to do with how the wealth is really distributed but, rather, with the attitudes of people to life generally.

You have a housing development: You give people structural facilities and you feel that they will take care of them. Some set about to improve and add to the buildings you create for them. Others set out to destroy and pull down. Now, those are the most undesirable creatures that you can have.

Government's money for the building of houses must come from somewhere, and it comes, in the main, from the taxpayers; and if you destroy the buildings or you fail to pay your rents, heavily subsidized as they are, it boils down to the fact that the monies which go continually into the fund will not be revolved to the point where you can look to that money to help buy more properties.

The Government will continue to sell the single units which are on the estate lands to the tenants and also provide reasonable conditions under which monies can be borrowed in order that those owners can be facilitated.

It is my personal view that people of a certain income, and no higher than a certain income – of course, that is spelt out to a certain extent by National Housing – should occupy those developments. But as money becomes less valuable than what it used to be in the past, you may have to look at an upper limit to what now exists.

In addition to this, it is my view that the occupancy of a Government property should be for a given period of time, that is if a person comes on into a house at age 24, 25, or what have you, that living for 10, 15 years – you can plan it as you consider best – would give the person an opportunity, having been living in a heavily subsidized rental house for a number of years, say 15 years, to be able to build a house for himself or go and rent a house which is not subsidized, or to move out on their own and give a younger person, or a person less able to afford a more expensive house in the open market or build one for themselves, the opportunity to come into a Government estate.

12.45 p.m.

Very often you have a situation where people who have been in these houses over the years acquire properties outside, continue to live in the Government estates and to rent those properties out. That situation will not continue under my administration. I am researching the estates to find out what is going on. You can only plan for the future by knowing what exists, and I want to make an appeal to each and every person in this society, especially those who are enjoying the facilities of the National Housing Corporation, to pay up

the rents that are owed to the Government. The Government cannot continue to build and to repair without rents being paid.

You will recall that very recently my friend, the honourable Member for St. Michael North West (Mr. L. A. Weekes), was to some extent concerned with conditions within his constituency. He was right, I presume, to be so concerned, but we can only give of our best, we can only carry out the necessary repairs when the necessary funds come in.

As a result of a committee set up by the honourable Member for St. Michael North (Mr. P. M. Greaves) consisting of Mr. Burton as he then was, now Sir Carlisle Burton, Mr. Lewis and Mr. Payne, some very important revelations came out. Of something like 7 600 people's accounts that were investigated, it was discovered that just over 500 had been paying their rents on a regular basis. That tells you a very clear story and gives you a very clear picture of what is happening. Over 7 000 people were delinquent tenants in terms of meeting their commitments.

At the moment $2 500 000 is owed to the National Housing Corporation for house rent, and in the region of $½ million for land rent. And when you consider that the land rent is just a peppercorn rent and only a few short years ago the Ministry of Finance and the Minister in a Budgetary Statement waived all the arrears of rent owed by the old people, the aged and the indigent, you can understand that the build up of $2½ million in house rent could only have come between that time and now, less than six years.

It cannot go on forever. People have to pay up. It is as simple as that!

I myself will re-examine the question of construction, and the Government is committed to the provision of sites and services in order to assist people in the construction or the renovation of homes and provide easy means of mortgage money for them to be able to do the necessary work.

It has always been the case that Barbadians take pride in what is theirs. They are never inclined to be concerned with what is Government's, even though what is Government's is theirs, and therefore it becomes necessary that if we are to fulfil our requirements in terms of national need, we must improve the existing housing stock and seek to create means whereby people will be able to build their houses from time to time.

The passage of this Bill will give an opportunity, as I said in my opening remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to inject new blood into this Board, and I would hope to have a Board that will take the necessary initiatives in putting forward ideas which will help to solve the housing problems in this country.

Too often the National Housing under this Administration and other Administrations has looked to the Ministry of Housing and Lands, and the Minister in particular, to guide them in everything that they are to do. They seek to do nothing for themselves. They operate only as an agency for distributing keys, and I do not like that approach. They must be able to understand the policies of Government, interpret those policies, and implement them with advice coming from the Minister himself.

I have said what I had to say in connection with the administration of National Housing. My views on that are well known, and I do not know that I need to be probed. I hope to see National Housing approach the task of building and construction in this island in the manner in which they should approach it, and be, as I said, a trend-setter in providing good and cheap houses for the people in this island. I believe that within the National Housing Corporation you have the necessary technical expertise, which, if given the encouragement and the necessary assistance, can produce for you the type of plans and the type of models that are necessary in order to construct a reasonable house.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, with those few remarks, I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. L. R. TULL: I beg to second that.

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN (St. Philip North): Mr. Deputy Speaker, the speech just made by the present Minister of Housing is an alarming speech. As a member of "The Great Combination", he has destroyed two of the previous members of "The Combination" in his speech.

Let me go slowly. The first statement he made is that the National Housing Corporation Board is not geared to suit the needs of housing at present, in the future and it was not in the past. So he starts with being dissatisfied with his Board.

The second point was even more alarming. The statement went like this, that the National Housing Corporation was not designed to find work for people. So, I can only conclude that the National Housing Corporation has been employing people that they do not need. And as if to confirm this, the third statement was that there is a lot of dead wood in the National Housing Corporation.

To conclude all this, he summed it up very nicely by saying that the National Housing Corporation is not giving production commensurate with the funds they have

been receiving from the Central Government. In other words, we are not getting value for money from the National Housing Corporation.
12.55 p.m.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: Hear you!)

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, those four statements are as condemning of the National Housing Corporation as you can ever hear coming from the present honourable Minister of Housing. He has obviously portrayed the picture to this Opposition that, on assuming the portfolio of Housing, he is totally dissatisfied with what he has found as far as the National Housing Corporation is concerned, and he has reached the stage where he feels it is now necessary for action.

In introducing the Bill, he said that he needs to increase the Board from seven to eleven because he needs to inject new blood. And the need for injection of new blood was further stressed when he said that, in the past, the Board did not exhibit any initiative, that the Board depended on the Ministry of Housing, more particularly the Minister, for direction, and that the Board only acted as an agency for the allocation of keys for houses that have been completed.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us examine in detail, one by one, the serious statements made by the honourable Minister of Housing. Under the Laws of Barbados governing the establishment of the National Housing Corporation, it is expected that any competent Board would act under very broad guidelines from the Ministry – but, within those guidelines, the Board would direct its technical staff and its management staff to produce the things that are needed.

The present honourable Minister is obviously of the opinion that the Board as presently composed either does not have the quality of persons to carry out any of these instructions adequately or that the Board, because of directives from former Ministers, feels so inhibited in functioning that they are now at the stage where they rely very heavily on instructions from the Ministry of Housing, and therefore, it is necessary – to use the words of the honourable Minister – "to introduce new blood into the National Housing Corporation".

I can only assume that, in addition to expansion of this Board by four persons, it is very likely that we will see the replacement of a lot of the persons who are presently members of the existing Board, because it is very obvious from the statements made that this present honourable Minister does not think very highly of the ability of members of the National Housing Corporation to function. We can await the necessary remedial work to be carried out by the new honourable Minister of Housing.

The statement about the National Housing Corporation not designed for finding work for people, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has far and wide implications. In this statement, one can read the fact that it is the opinion of the present honourable Minister that the staff at the National Housing Corporation is far in excess of the staff that is needed to function adequately.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, for too long statutory boards, in this country have been used as a way of placement for persons who, because of some allegiance or otherwise, are in a position of favour at the appropriate time with the appropriate board.

I am one of those people who believe, wherever possible, that the Government should be an agency of employment. But it must be constructive employment, because wastage at the level of Government is even more serious than wastage at the level of private enterprise. Wastage at the level of Government is an erosion of the tax base which is subscribed to by all the people of Barbados. And what has been said here today is that a lot of the taxpayers' money is now being wasted either because there is a surplus of personnel or because the present personnel at the National Housing Corporation is not properly supervised. I need go no further to confirm that analysis than to use the words used by the honourable Minister of Housing, "dead wood".

Mr. Deputy Speaker, "dead wood" is wood that is now useless, wood you throw out in the backyard, wood that you expect the garbage people to collect and to dump on the garbage heap.

Aside.

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would not go into the other definition of "dead wood" in this august Chamber.....

(Laughter.)

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: .....because I would hate to believe that that is the position at the National Housing Corporation. It would not be very complimentary of the staff of the National Housing Corporation if I used the other definition. I would want to think that the "dead wood" referred to the fact that they are useless as artisans, or they are useless as clerks, or they are useless as managers at this corporation.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, housing, in my opinion is the biggest need in Barbados at this present moment of time. All of us who are parliamentarians have two problems now with our constituents:

(1) our constituents are badgering us for jobs, particularly the younger people, and

(2) our constituents are badgering us for houses. It might even be the reverse, that houses as the number one priority in Barbados, and (2) is employment, particularly for the younger people in Barbados. And when one considers the serious implications that that holds for Barbados, and the serious shortage, you cannot take the speech made by the introducer of this Bill lightly, or have any room for comfort.

I am one of those parliamentarians, Mr. Deputy Speaker, who, believes it or not, am governed by certain principles that were imbedded in me from the time I was small. I put Barbados first, I put the needs of the people of Barbados second, and then, third, I put the political affiliation to which I belong.

I would have been the first person, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if I figured that the Ministry of Housing and its body had been performing the type of function that is needed in Barbados, to have got up in this Honourable Chamber and openly offered my congratulations to the Ministry of Housing and their Board. But, I am afraid, I cannot reach that conclusion, for obvious reasons which I will go into very slowly.

The functions as I see it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, for a National Housing Corporation in Barbados can be based under three or four very broad headings. The first function, as I see it as necessary throughout all the developing world and even in developed countries, is that it is a social obligation and requirement by any government to provide houses for those who are not in a position to provide for themselves, and who seem likely not ever to be in a position to provide for themselves and their family.

1.05 p.m.

It is a justifiable and legitimate expenditure of Government funds to so provide housing, because the natural spinoff of money in housing, Mr. Deputy Speaker, goes far and wide. Improved housing has a direct effect on the improvement of the health of the people of a country. Improved housing can be easily linked with a decrease in the level of crime in a country. Improved housing adds an asset to a country and it brings with it the joy of ownership, and with that joy of ownership the pride of being a proud member of the country in which you were born. Ownership also allows you to be able to say I have my own key to my own house, and that statement goes very far, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Very often you will hear people say I have got my own key. In other words, I am a man in this country because I own a property in this country, and it is not too much to stress.

I have always been saying that I have viewed with concern the fact that, housing in this country has not been given the priority that it should have been given, unfortunately I must say, over the last two terms of the present Administration. I will give this House my arguments for saying that.

The second duty of any National Housing Corporation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as was said earlier, is to have a vigorous sites and services programme for the people of Barbados. I will demonstrate to you quite simply the importance of a sites programme in Barbados. Those of us who are keen observers of the development and the evolution of the housing stock of Barbados, if you cast your mind back to the days before the Tenantry Control Bill and you went through any Plantation tenantry, or any tenantry, you were sure to find that 99.9 per cent of the derelict houses in Barbados had always been situated in tenantries. If you examine this, there is a very close connection to that. I am fairly certain that this is true.

I would also venture to say that if you took a survey of the means of people living in and off tenantries prior to the Tenantry Control Bill, you will find that people of similar means had a different quality of housing, depending on whether or not they were on their own lot or whether or not they were renting. I am positive that there is no one who has observed, who could point otherwise than to the fact that the connection between derelict housing and the insecurity of tenancy has been a very obvious connection, and that connection had been further seen by the time you introduced the Tenantry Control Act in Barbados. You started to see that in every single tenantry in Barbados there was improvement of the housing stock, and from that improvement of the housing stock you started to see the extension of the housing and a removal of the wooden section of the housing into the permanent structure.

It does not only have a connection between the improved living conditions of people and the improved standard of living of the country, but the connection is also there between the lack of security of tenure and the security of tenure as is seen in the housing stock. And with the further movement towards allowing these people now to own those lots, I am certain that all of us, particularly those who have tenantries in their constituencies, can see the improvement of those houses.

I go further to say that I see the Government's sites and services programmes as an extension of those two bits of legislation. In other words, you are now extending beyond the tenantry in providing for the people of Barbados, who cannot otherwise buy at the present market value of lots, a portion of land, that it is their right to have, on which they could put a house.

I would like to invite the Minister to consider that as a further improvement to the sites and services programme, he considers the provision of sewerage wells. If you do this, you would see the immediate position of

people at all levels of earnings having an internal bathroom, which is so necessary.

Your sites and services programme also has another purpose to serve. I would like to see the time where the Ministry of Housing or one of its agencies provide a sites and services programme that would act as a regulator of land prices in this country – and it could happen. If the Ministry or one of its agencies got into the act of providing service lots at a cost which would cover the cost of the land plus the infrastructural cost, and allow them to be bought by people – the selection process to be decided – I am certain that you will find that that would act as a way of further forcing down the price of developed lots in Barbados.

It is a fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that the most expensive lots in Barbados now are lots for people to put chattel houses on. The reason for that is that in most of the developments now, there are covenants which state most specifically that you cannot build a house for less than sixty or seventy thousand dollars, and you find that the people who cannot meet those covenants are at the mercy of a few people who have been developing lots for chattel houses. If you do a survey at the moment for anyone to get a lot to put a chattel house on, you can be very certain that he or she has to pay between $4.00 and $4.25 per square foot for a lot.

Aside.

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: I know it might not sound right, but I am inviting all of them, through you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to go on the market and make that survey.

It is a fact that, despite the fact that chattel houses today in Barbados are in the majority, lots available for chattel houses are far less than lots available for the other type of houses. Therefore, if you have the majority of structures competing for a smaller amount of lots, it is quite obvious that the market conditions will force the prices of those lots up, and that is what is happening. I am saying that any Ministry of Housing, or a similar agency, has to seriously consider the provision of serviced lots as a way of trying to regularise and regulate the real estate market in Barbados for housing at the working class level.

I am very particular, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to divide the housing situation in Barbados. I see Government's obligation to zone into that area of providing shelter for the working class people, and I see Government's obligation, when you come up the ladder, of creating the climate and providing the mortgage market for the so-called middle class people of Barbados, who either build on their own or go into the market where there are private developments.

I did an analysis very recently, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and some of the concepts which I need to find out are these. If you take the present situation, if at this moment you call any of the people that are in the market of constructing wooden houses for sale, and you ask for the price of those wooden units and you get the area of those wooden units, you would be surprised to find out that those wooden units are costing the people around $38.50 per square foot. And when they have purchased those wooden units, they have to provide their own groundsills. If they want a sewer, they have to provide their own sewer and they have to connect them to the wells.
1.15 p.m.

So when you take the salary scale of the artisan-type person in Barbados, who we expect and who would of necessity have to go into this type of housing, you will find that it is a very serious burden on the working artisan-type class in Barbados. And to have a situation where the cost of land is further added to it, you are creating very serious problems.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, a couple of years ago you had a situation where the housing market in Barbados was such where persons bought a lot of land. They paid off for it over 4 to 5 years. When they had finished paying off for it and they were able to get a mortgage, they started to build and then they moved in their families. So it was customary before to see many developments of the open lots, not that they were not sold, but they were sold and the people were waiting to move on to those open lots.

Then, a strange thing happened in the market. You found that with the availability of 90 per cent mortgage coming on to the market a couple of years ago, people found it cheaper to go into a situation of contracting for a house than to go into a situation of buying land and then building, because the cost of the land before now came as their deposit on a 90 per cent mortgage situation and they were able to join either with their wife, brother or sister etc. and they could afford a unit.

Things have gone seriously wrong since then. Because the cost of building has outstripped the increase in wages, you are now finding the reverse, where people are once again now going back to the purchase of a lot of land. Look at the development patterns and you will see, when you open the newspaper now, that people who were in the complete housing section before are now back in the service lot situation. The two reasons for that are mainly (1) a slow-down in the mortgage market and (2), the fact that the people can no longer easily qualify, even if there was a 90 per cent mortgage, to....

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I do not want to interrupt the honourable Member, but I must remind the Member that his speech must be relevant to the question

before the Chamber. You are now moving far away into mortgage and housing development and that is not what is before this Chamber at this given time.

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Sir, getting back then, I agree with the honourable Minister on his first two premises, that National Housing must provide housing for working people and they must provide sites and services. I am also in agreement with him that the National Housing should begin to get into market and introduce modern technology into Barbados.

It is not fair to expect private entrepreneurs to test a market in Barbados about which they are not certain, or that they would introduce new technology into Barbados out of their own pockets. It is, in my opinion, a role that can usefully be carried out by National Housing Corporation, and I am in agreement with the Minister of Housing that the National Housing Corporation should look into the new technology in housing in Barbados.

They must be trend-setters because Barbados' entrepreneurs are not very riskful people, and unless they see something proven, they are not going to get involved, because the Barbados clientelle for housing is a very difficult one to accept anything new. They are accustomed to either the wood house or the concrete block house, and until any other entrepreneur is certain that any other unit is acceptable to the people, it is not fair for Government to sit back and in the meantime the country is having a problem of waiting until people get interested.

I would like to have a look at what was necessary for the present Minister of Housing to refer to the situation that some of the housing estates have not been properly maintained. This is a very serious point that must be looked at, because a proper maintenance programme by the Government is essential.

There is no point adding new housing stock to your numbers and at the same time you add 10, 4 or 5 lapse into dilapidation. That is not increasing your housing stock. The only way you can increase your housing stock is to construct new ones and maintain the old ones that you have, and it is absolutely necessary to have a proper preventative maintenance programme worked out by the Ministry of Housing for the maintenance of the present stock in their estates.

I have been saying for a long time that not only the National Housing Corporation, but in my opinion the Ministry of Housing have not taken the fact that the Government is the largest owner of real estate in Barbados seriously. The reason I say that is that if you look at the present structure, even in the Ministry of Housing, to administer the Government's property, you will find something sadly lacking.

I have been to the Ministry of Housing on one or two occasions and I have asked for the Housing Management Section. I was completely alarmed to find that the officer – doing as good a job as he could under his restricted circumstances – who is supposed to be the housing management man for the Barbados Government, is not a trained man in housing management, is not a trained man in estate management, but has come through the ranks. And in my opinion, he is doing the clerical work of National Housing.

Asides.

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: I am talking about the person in charge of the present Estate Managing Section. If you go up to Government Hill now, directly below Government House, there is a property there owned by the Barbados Government in a high rental area that is vacant. Only the watchman is in there every night in an airconditioned room, and it has been there for a long time. There is another property in the same area, high rental property, owned by the Barbados Government, with watchmen sleeping in there at night in airconditioned rooms.

This is the type of situation you get, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and the structure to administer this real property is a big joke. It is the nearest thing to a big joke that I have ever seen because for too long people in the administrative level – and this is a direct attack on the Permanent Secretaries in this country, who have come through the ranks – feel that the technical people have always been a threat to them and they have been doing everything possible throughout the history of the Civil Service of Barbados to stop the proper placing of technical people in appropriate posts to advise the Ministers properly. The thing which has alarmed me is that the Minister, who is ultimately responsible to the people of Barbados, has allowed this type of thing to continue all the time.

1.25 p.m.

You have got a situation in Barbados, Mr. Deputy Speaker, where people in Bayville have completed payment for houses for over seven years and cannot get their conveyances for the property. You have a situation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in Bay Land where Government paid a tremendous amount of money some years ago for the surveying of the lots, and within the same Ministry the Town and Country Planning Department refused the Government the allocation of those lots. That is the situation you have in this island, Mr. Deputy Speaker! Could you imagine in the same Ministry people who have been paying the National Housing Corporation cannot get their title to the individual parcels of land?

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I wonder whether honourable Members would allow the honourable Member for St. Philip North to make his contribution in this Chamber.

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. This whole area of housing is an area that I invite the Administration to look very seriously at. As a representative the requirements of the people, because they come to us, and if you have, as was said earlier, a Board at the National Housing without the expertise or foresight to see what is needed in housing in Barbados, the problems will continue to multiply.

It is known that there have always been problems, quarrels and allegations about the allocation of Government units, and there is another serious development, which I have personally drawn to the present Minister's attention. Mr. Deputy Speaker, you are getting a situation in Barbados now, and it is an area you have to look at very closely, where tenants in some of the more modern houses built by the National Housing Corporation who have to pay a modest rental of $120 a month – and I am not saying it lightly, I am saying it with distress – cannot afford the rent and the cost of services.

I am saying it as a fact. There are people, or there have been people up to recently, who had houses in a modern development and who could not afford to pay the water and electricity bills, and they were going without water in their houses and were using a public tap nearby. I have already spoken to the present Minister of Housing and advised him to look into it.

What this illustrates is that you are now moving away the price of your rental units from the reaches of the same people whom you expect to use them, so that when you go into these rental units now, you find the teachers, you find policemen, you find clerical officers and you find the nurses.

Asides.

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: It is either the allocation policy or something else.

If there is no provision for the middle man, what are you going to do in the Ministry for those people who cannot meet that rent? It means you are back to the situation where the Ministry of Housing and its agency must devolve a policy of either subsidy of rent by the personal method, taking each individual and the individuals circumstances into consideration, or providing a cheaper unit that the individual can afford to rent.

In the area of housing you have put considerable strain on your middle-income people in Barbados, and these middle-income people are not yelling out for everybody to hear, but you have a strange phenomenon where they enjoy a high standard of housing but a low standard of living. Do you know why that is? It is because so much of their income is now going towards the servicing of their mortgages or their rents that when this comes out as a necessity, there is not enough money left at that stratum of the society for them to continue.

I am not concerned about that bracket at all. I am concerned about the working people, because the middle-income people in Barbados can fight for themselves. I am really not getting into that. I am concerned that the National Housing Corporation must see to it that the artisan, the maid, and those that need a shelter over their heads have access to these units at a reasonable rent which they can afford without having to forego too many things.

I would hope that the Minister's aim and objective by increasing the size of the Board, by injecting new blood into it will bear the fruit that this is expected to bear, and that is, that you will have a vibrant Board that would be able to look at a comprehensive plan for housing in Barbados and take the initiative. I would like to see that, because it is a serious condemnation on any Board when it can be said that they look almost cap in hand for guidance from the Minister. The Minister is a busy person, and it is expected that he should have the competence at the level of Directors of a Board to just spell out a broad policy and they take it from there.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, in previous sessions of this Chamber the Minister of Finance had made reference to the fact that he is hopeful that monies will be available from the mortgage market very shortly, and particularly he has made mention of a programme in which up to $20,000 will be available for the people with chattel houses to improve their housing by putting on some wall and internal sewage facilities. I sincerely hope that that programme is put in place very shortly, because that would be the first direct move towards getting the housing stock in Barbados that we need. If we can assist persons with chattel houses to put on a little wall back and have the internal sewage system, it is a move in the right direction, and I am positive that if this is done, the risk would be taken.

I would like, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to wish the present Minister of Housing God's speed in the work that he is setting out to do. At the end of the day, if our brothers and sisters are better housed, all of us who might be slightly more privileged would be able to sleep better at night, because we feel that people would all have a shelter over their heads and they would be less likely to be out there envying the other people and committing crimes.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN (Christ Church East Central): Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is very refreshing to hear in such clear and explicit terms the outright condemnation by the honourable Member for St. Philip North (Mr. W. O. Franklin) of the policies which were pursued by his party during the fifteen years that they were in power. I can understand, now that he has made it abundantly clear, that he had a tremendous amount of frustration while he held a technical office and he was obstructed night and day by the administrative machinery which he had to deal with.

I think that housing is now regarded in the light of an issue which should be looked at from a national point of view. All of us are groping, moving, trying to find a proper mix of policies which will satisfy the urge and the demand of all Barbadians to have their own homes. A common characteristic of Barbadians, whether they be BLP, DLP or ZLP, is that they wish to own their own homes.
1.35 p.m.

Now, Sir, in order, however, to cater to this desire, it is necessary for all of us to educate the public that home ownership demands sacrifices. It means that there must be a deliberate policy pursued by every wage earner from the time they become a wage earner, that a given proportion of their earnings must be devoted to saving in one form or another in order to get the requisite deposit or down payment for a house.

It also means that we must create institutions in our society which have as their object the gathering of capital to get a flow of funds which, when matched with the initial downpayment, would be sufficient to cover the current cost of building a house.

A lot of progress has been made in this area in the last five or six years. I was one of those who fought from the very outset, since I have been in Parliament, for a change in the attitudes of lending institutions in Barbados from a six months' term of defeasance to a long term.

I believe it is true to say today, and the honourable Member will acknowledge this, that there is more awareness of the need for having a longer term mortgage than ever before in the history of Barbados. And what is a fact is that we do have some institutions in existence now which have been encouraged, pushed and prodded into granting, as a normal course, a long term mortgage.

We only had one previously, the Barbados Mortgage Finance Corporation, which was started in the Democratic Labour Party's time as a joint venture which CDC, and which was brought into full public ownership by this Government. That is probably the pioneer in this respect. You started to extend it a little bit and we extended it further.

But in other countries of the world, they are arguing and battling with a thirty year mortgage with a 95 per cent amount on loan. We are now talking about trying to get twenty-five years with 80 per cent.This is a very important point of principle. We have to grapple with it.

Secondly, the number of times earning of a person that you can borrow has to be looked at again. Only recently I saw that building societies in the United Kingdom – one of the most conservative countries in relation to mortgage, lending – has now decided as a matter of course that it should not only be two and a half times the head of the household's income, but also, in the context of the reality, of today, a man is very often undertaking this expenditure in conjunction with his wife or his girlfriend, and you also have to take into account the girlfriend's or the wife's income. So they have now agreed that it should not only be two and a half times the husband's or the man's income, but it should also be two and a half times the combined income.

We have not reached that stage. Not even in the Public Service have we reached the stage where you can take both of the incomes and give them two and a half times that. So these are matters to which we have to address ourselves.

We also have to address ourselves to the question of whether, in the context of cost of transfers, all of the fees of the lawyers on both sides, the surveyors or valuers and thing of that kind, cannot be brought together in one package, together with an insurance guarantee. So the necessity to have two lawyers to close a transaction of this nature will be removed. It is not going to be popular among conveyancers to say so, but the truth of the matter is that two and a half to three per cent of the cost of a house is made up of the conveyancer's fees, the stamp duties, the valuation or surveyor's fees, or whatever you call it, and things of that kind.

Now, I remember arguing this out very strongly when they were doing the Land Law Reform in Barbados, because there is a specific clause in the Land Law in Barbados which says that a vendor cannot require as part of the sale that the purchaser hired his lawyer, or things of that kind, that it shall be void and of no effect.

We have to address these matters because if you are having developers who are delivering a total product, surely, one lawyer can transfer the property. And the interest of the purchaser is protected by having a statute which says that the title must be guaranteed for the whole of the mortgage term, or forever. It is easy. You pay a little insurance and you get around this. These are very important things. We have to address our minds to these things.

Let me get back now to the amount of mortgage money, because this is very important. We suffer from a lack of interested institutions in this area in Barbados. The commercial banks in Barbados are genuinely not interested in house mortgages. We do not have the savings and loans traditions nor the building society tradition in Barbados.

What we have introduced here is the Canadian trust companies' concept, whereby the banks all have trust corporations, which are supposed to be the arm of the bank which raises the long term money. We have to address our minds now to the question of the dichotomy which arose, where, before the trust company could lend a long term loan, you had to get a bridging loan, which was classified as a personal loan transaction and subject to certain restrictions.

I would would like to see, Sir, the offer that Government has put on the table, in law, taken up by the credit unions which we have in Barbados, which are not performing the role that they could really undertake in this area, in Barbados. The Government has allowed credit unions to get savings from their members, and the members' savings are deductible from tax. That is one of the reasons why you will find that the share capital, or whatever it is, of an organisation like the National Union of Public Workers has increased so phenomenally. It was as a result of the policy measures taken by this Government, an attempt to bring credit unions into the same position as building societies and savings loans associations in other countries of the world.

I have not heard any comment on that at all from the other side. Do you agree with that policy? Are you going to go out with a joint campaign with us and decide to persuade people that it is a good measure? I know it is going to hurt your "craw" to say that the Government introduced it, but just say that new opportunities have arisen and we would advise you to take advantage of them. Do not say where they come from!

But this is a very significant point, because if we can get a flow of capital of a sufficiently large amount into these institutions, their administrative costs are much less than the so-called banks. And the trust companies are much more of a co-operative nature, and they, themselves, will be able to deliver this money at a much cheaper rate than the traditional institutions.
1.45 p.m.

Now, as I understand it, part of the new facilities that we are getting for people up to a certain level of income – I think it is $16 000 a year – is that these Credit Unions are an integral part of the institutions which are recognised for disbursing this USAID loan. I hope that everyone will take advantage of this.

There has been a shift, or an emphasis, by this Government in relation to housing, and I think it must be recognised that Barbadians have shown that they will pay all the instalments necessary for their own house purchase, but they have great difficulty in paying rent, even though the rent is reasonable, to the Housing Authority. Therefore, the emphasis now has been to see whether we can create the necessary institutional framework where the delivery of a greater proportion of the housing demand can be delivered by private sector institutions, aided by tax inducements and by help.

But we still have a gap in that there will for ever be in this society, as there are in all societies, sections of your community who have to be housed to a reasonable level, but who, no matter what anybody says, will not be able to pay back for a house. That is true, whether they be alcoholics, drug takers, drifters, people with broken homes, all of that you will have, although one of the statements of significance which has been made by the honourable Minister of Housing is his observation that we have a number of people living in houses now who could move out, who have a sufficient income level to build their own houses, but we are only now getting at the delivery of the houses.

That is my view on the total institutional framework. We have a lot more to do, a lot more education to undertake. But I think that provided we approach this matter in a non-partisan manner, provided we approach this as a matter which is of such fundamental importance to all of us in Barbados, and that we can do it in a collective way and try to educate Barbadians as to the demands and the constraints that are required if they wish to perpetuate their desire to own their own home, if we do all of that, we will go a long way in solving this problem.

I have never had any difficulty in explaining to any of my constituents that the policy of this Government is that it is better to own your house or own land than to own a video set, a television set or a motor car. So when you talk about abusing people, of depriving people, of spending foreign exchange on certain consumer durables *vis-a-vis* spending the foreign exchange on housing, I have never had any difficulty in making the choice. To me, the house is more important to have, and a lot longer lasting, too!

We have reached the stage now where a combined effort is necessary for us to see that all the institutional framework is established and that the maximum amount of education takes place in this area.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES (St. Michael North): Mr. Deputy Speaker, this debate has developed in a very

interesting way, and I believe that the honourable Members on this side and from the other side who have expressed themselves in this debate have done so out of a great heartfelt concern for housing in this country.

I do not believe that the comments made by the honourable Members were intended at all to score any political points on housing, and I would like to see this debate kept at that level. However, we must say a few things.

In 1977, the then honourable Member for Housing, Mr. Ronald Mapp, now Sir Ronald Mapp, declared that he had turned housing around. Then came his successor, the honourable Member for St. James North (Hon. L. S. Craig), and he too claimed that he had turned housing around. The honourable Member for St. Michael South East (Hon. DeL. O. Bradshaw) succeeded him, and he, too, claimed that he had turned housing around. Quite honestly, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not know in which direction housing is facing at this moment.

I merely want to say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that there are tremendous problems in housing, and as the honourable Minister of Housing said in an earlier debate in this Chamber, there are tremendous problems in housing which will take more than his lifetime to clean up. He said the mess that is in housing.

Now he is attempting, as he sees it, a start towards cleaning up all this mess, but I want to warn him that a mere increase in the composition of the Board at the Housing Corporation will not clean up the mess. As a matter of fact, the increase might create other problems. That is what one might have to look at. It might very well create other problems – it will certainly not clean up the mess!

I think the Minister is bold and strong, and if in his opinion there are members of the corporation who are not pulling their weight, and are, as he called them, dead wood, instead of increasing the membership of the corporation he should get rid of them and start all over again. This is where I think the Minister must start, not simply increasing the composition.

(Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: Who put all the dead wood there?)

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: I did not put them there.

Get rid of those he considers to be a block and a hindrance to the further improvement and development of housing in Barbados. Be bold, be strong, and do it! We will support you from this side, because we believe that housing is a very sensitive area in this country. It is dear to the heart of every single Barbadian, and the stroke of the pen is not going to clean it up, because the problems exist with people, that is where the problem is. Unless you deal with the people, you can bring as much legislation as you want to bring, there is no way that you will find any improvement at all in housing. We all want to see housing succeed because we all have our concerns, our national concerns, our constituency concerns, about housing.

The Minister in his presentation made a very interesting observation, and it was adverted to by the honourable Member for Christ Church East Central (Hon. H. B. St. John), that he would like to see young people, who are being given houses for the first time, given houses for a fixed period, say ten years, and thereafter that they should move on and get their own houses.

Now, I find that an interesting observation, but it is not going to be easy, I must warn the Minister, to cut loose that tenant who has been in housing for a while unless some effort is made to assist him in moving on.

In this country, we take great pride in housing. We always say there is this great mobility in housing, this upward mobility. You move from your rental house into your little self-owned house, maybe timber. You convert that into stone and then you move on to the Terraces, the Heights, the Gardens, the Ridges and all of them. 1.55 p.m.

The Urban Development Corporation was established to assist delinquent persons. I do not think that the ideals of that corporation should be discarded. It is now being de-emphasized, but in ten years' time, that same 25 year-old person will probably move from low income to middle income, and considering the way in which the prices of housing has been moving, unless he is given some assistance, when you turn him out what is he going to do?

It was a policy of Housing under my administration that we would assist, in particular, the low income earners; not by a subsidy from the public purse, but by providing the houses for them to purchase. In other words, it was intended that the outlay for these houses, what I call commercial houses, would be met by the purchaser.

Asides

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: By disaster? There was nothing disastrous in that, because persons bought those homes in Wildey and Lodge Terrace, what I call the low middle-income houses, there was nothing disastrous about that.

(Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: What about the people who went in and paid neither rents nor mortgages?)

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: I do not know of any persons who went in and did not pay their rents, because those houses were not for rent. Those houses were for sale, and if they did not pay mortgages, well, then, the Barbados Mortgage Finance Co., which Government had a small equity in at that time.....

Aside.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: The biggest shareholder was CDC. The Barbados Mortgage Finance Co. was entitled to deal with them, and some of them were dealt with. Perhaps they were not in long enough and their state of delinquency probably was not great enough for them to deal with them at that time. Maybe they became delinquent during the time of this Administration. Perhaps that is the case, but in our time, if they were delinquent, they were entitled to be dealt with by CDC if you prefer that. We had no control whatsoever over the Barbados Mortgage Finance Co. We had a voice, but we did not have control.

I still believe, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have to have a proper balance, a proper mix, in housing. We have to provide for the poor people and, despite what we say, we are going to always have to provide for the poor people; in other words, for the low-income earners. And we should make some provision, not in terms of subsidising, for the low and middle-income earners.

I am not here boasting of anything. I am merely making statements which I hope will be of some help to the present Minister in his administration.

We talk about service lots. I think there is a great need in this country for what we used to call "landing schemes" as well as serviced lots. I say this because not every person who owns a house is in a position to necessarily purchase a serviced lot, unless, of course, Government is prepared to give some assistance. That may very well be the case. But I believe that what we call the Sites and Services Programme, goes a far way, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in assisting the development of housing in Barbados, and let us not forget those persons who own houses and who are not in a position to purchase lots.

One of the serious problems with timber houses in this country is termites, and it is something that we have not done anything about. I would like to see Government do something about this. One way to do it is to assist persons in converting their timber houses into stone. But they would still have to use timber lumber, so it would still be necessary for the termites problem to be tackled.

I believe, Sir, that when we import timber into this country, it should be imported treated. I had a problem with that and with the persons who owned plants in this country when I imported treated timber. I honestly believe that we should not import any timber into this country unless it is treated, and we should try and do something about the termite problem that we already have here.

Now, modern technology. I agree that we should try every avenue towards improving and quickening the pace of housing in Barbados. But, again, Sir, I shall have to sound a bit of warning about this modern technology. The Minister is going to find, especially with the change of Ministers, that persons who see an opportunity to make some money are going to bombard his office with all kinds of new schemes. It is something that the Minister must be warned against. It happened to me and I have no doubt that it happened to other honourable Members who held that portfolio.

It looks attractive and it sounds attractive, but when we try some different technology, we find that there is no saving, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in terms of costs. The first seven houses built by Urban Development Corporation, a private contractor, in Wanstead Terrace, were built using technology at the time that was new to this country.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW (St. John): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to draw to your attention that we are lacking a quorum.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let the bell be rung.

The bell was rung and a quorum formed.

2.05 p.m.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable member for St. Michael North may continue.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I was saying that the houses built in the area known as Wanstead Terrace were built using a new technology. It was found, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that those houses that were built using this technology were in fact no cheaper than the houses that were built in the conventional method.

The Housing Authority itself even some years prior to that, some time in the middle sixties, also built houses using at that time what was a new technology. They constructed various concrete panels which they tied together and these houses were built principally in the Long Gap area, and some were built in Lodge Hill, now Eden Lodge. Here again, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it was found that there was no great saving there.

Some time in the middle Seventies we tried with about three or four, maybe five houses in Lodge Terrace

using a technology that had been developed in Columbia. We even brought in some Columbian technicians.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, I beg to draw to your attention that there is lack of a quorum.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Mr. Clerk, please ring the bell.

The bell was rung and a quorum was obtained.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Member for St. Michael North may continue.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this sitting be now suspended until 1.45 p.m.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: I beg to second that.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move an amendment in view of the advanced time that the.....

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Before the honourable Member continues, I am seeking a clarification.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: I mean until 2.45 p.m., Sir.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: It still is inadequate, Sir, and I suggest an amendment until 3 p.m. because we would only have 32 minutes if we suspend until 2.45 p.m.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Member for St. John is moving a motion as an amendment to the motion moved by the honourable Member for St. James North.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: I beg to second that.

The question that the sitting be suspended until 3 p.m. was put and resolved in the negative, the House dividing as follows:

Noes: Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS; Hon. H. B. St. JOHN; Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM; Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE; Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER; Hon. V. L. JOHNSON; Hon. Dr. D. G. BLACKMAN; Mr. R. E. BRATHWAITE; Hon. DeL. O. BRADSHAW; Mr. J. G. ODLE and Hon. L. S. CRAIG – 11.

Ayes: Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW; Mr. B. M. TAITT and Mr. P. M. GREAVES – 3.

The question that the sitting be suspended until 2.45 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division, and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the sitting accordingly.

2.15 p.m.

On Resumption:

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This sitting is now resumed. When the suspension was taken, the honourable Member for St. Michael North was speaking.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, before the honourable Member for St. Michael North resumes his speech, I would like to have "Papers" re-opened, Sir, for a statement to be laid.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Leave is granted.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, I am commanded to lay:

A Statement relating to the ex-refinery prices of Mobil Oil Barbados Limited.

This statement substantially contains the reply to Parliamentary Question No. 31, Sir. I have already made a copy available to the right honourable Leader of the Opposition.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW rose.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Sir, as promised, when I moved the suspension of Standing Orders.....

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: There are two honourable Members on their feet.

QUESTION TIME

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: .....As promised, Sir, when I moved the suspension of Standing Orders, I normally make time available for Question Time. It is at this point, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I would like to deal with Question Time, Sir.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Leader of the House is requesting that Question Time be now taken. If there are no objections, then we will go into Question Time. It is now Question Time.

Question No. 31 standing in the name of the right honourable Member for St. John.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: Mr. Deputy Speaker, to enquire of the Prime Minister and Minister of Finance.....

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The right honourable Member is reminded of the Rules dealing with Questions. According to the Standing Orders, the right honourable Member can only call the number of the question.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: Question No. 31.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: The reply to Parliamentary Question No. 31, asked by the right honourable Leader of the Opposition, is as follows:

I draw to the attention of the right honourable Member the Statement which I have today laid in this Honourable House referring to this matter.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: Mr. Deputy Speaker, a supplementary question. In the statement which was laid by the right honourable Member a few minutes ago, but which I had the advantage of seeing a little earlier, the last paragraph of the statement states:

> "In fact, the first shipment of feedstock at the lower price was received at the refinery on April 9, 1983"

I am asking as a supplementary question whether the Minister is aware that shipments of feedstock were received as early as October, 1982 at prices which were substantially lower than the present reduction of the feedstock which arrived on April 9. Is the Minister aware that there was such substantial reduction in October?

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: I am aware that there have been reductions in oil prices and that for various of the items there were substantial reductions.

However, I would draw a number of factors, which may not be contained in the statement and may not have been published to the honourable Member's attention.

The first among them is, that in respect of the supply of reformate, which is a necessary component in the mix of products that are produced by the refinery, there was very considerable uncertainty of price, since in response to our request to the TRINTOC Company in Trinidad to supply us with reformate through the CARICOM Multilateral Clearing Facility, they replied that they would not so supply it and that they were going to increase the price by ten cents a gallon. It was therefore very difficult at that time to contemplate any permanent price regime since the feedstock prices and availability were very much in the melting pot.

I would also draw to the right honourable Member's attention that what is fixed in Barbados, ultimately, is the ex-refinery price, because, due to movements in oil prices, the way that petroleum products are price controlled in Barbados starts at the end, with a retail price; a certain margin is allowed to the retailer, a certain margin is allowed to the wholesaler, and, therefore, an ex-refinery price is going automatically to be fixed.

Mobil is obliged to make available gasolines, kerosines, distillates and fuel oils in bulk quantities to the marketing companies in Barbados at the refinery, as I have said in the statement. But if the arrangement, which was entered into by the previous Government in October, 1962, was observed to the letter, the profit would not be made by the refinery, it would be made by the marketing companies, because the refinery is obliged to offer those companies the prices which are posted at the Curacao and Aruba refineries.

This has distorted petroleum pricing for many, many years, and we have been allowing Mobil a surcharge to absorb the difference between the cost of your feedstock and the ex-refinery price of your products. It is therefore impossible, in any given situation, to come to a conclusion that either the refinery or the marketing companies are making excessive profits.

I would draw to the attention of the honourable Member that since he asked the question, there has been on Order relating to petroleum prices which did not affect final prices, but did remove the surcharge which the marketing companies were getting, because we found that, not the refinery, but the marketing companies were making excessive profits.

And as from April 1, the beginning of this month, that surcharge has been converted into revenue. So the marketing companies have had their profits cut down to size and the Treasury is benefitting from the excess.

The honourable Member, intelligent and perceptive as he is after thirty years in public life, will readily understand the meaning of the words which follow "April 9, 1983", and, perhaps, he would not wish to press me very much more at this stage.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: A further supplementary question. The honourable Member has stated that the Government is benefitting from the removal of the ten cents surcharge. Is the honourable Member prepared to say that Mobil is not benefitting from the reduction in prices despite the removal of the 10 per cent surcharge?

And if I may just ask one more supplementary question following on that: Is the honourable Member aware that Mobil, because its imports from a parent company in Venezuela, is capable of indulging in transfer pricing of their products in arriving at the final price?

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. ADAMS: The honourable Member's information on this subject is obviously very complete, and I am in no position to give the confirmed

assurance which the honourable Member seeks. All that I can say is that he may not have very long to wait to receive a more complete answer to the problems which he has, I think, quite correctly identified.

It is impossible for us to say that Mobil is not going to make a profit from a five dollar reduction in the feedstock pricing. And, equally, it is very difficult for us to identify the true price paid for the feedstock.

But I would say this. Mobil to our knowledge, has sometimes had to absorb the cost of very expensive feedstock when their sources of supply have broken down. Mobil no longer has a controlled company in Venezuela supplying the feedstock. It belongs to the Venezuelans. And while I have no doubt that the marketing arrangements have remained in tact, despite the change of ownership, there have been occasions when, to meet Barbados' demands, Mobil has had to buy spot oil from Amsterdam, it has had to buy refined products to put together its mix, and we have resisted, generally, any special surcharge to allow them to recover the cost of these special purchases.

The policy of the Government from the time that the portfolio was held by the honourable Deputy Prime Minister, through the time that it was held by me and now that it is held by Senator Griffith, has consistently been to apply public utilities approach to Mobil – to allow Mobil to make a reasonable return on its investment but not an excessive return, and not to force it to lose money. We have tried to achieve this balance over the years.
3.00 p.m.

A slightly different situation may, of course, have arisen now that Mobil no longer has a production capacity in Barbados. It may very well be that since the Barbados National Oil Company will be losing gross revenue as a result of the fall in the price of oil, because Mobil pays BNOC the same price for oil from the Woodbourne field as it pays for the Venezuela oil, we will have to make new arrangements in the future now that we have our own oil company to look after, as well as the interest of maintaining a refinery in the island for the time while it is so maintained.

Rt. Hon. E. W. BARROW: Will the right honourable Member not entirely dismiss the possibility of importing refined products from the West Indies Oil Refinery in Antigua?

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: I cannot promise the honourable Member that. We have not entirely dismissed the possibility of importing refined products, but we would want to be sure that we were obtaining refined products from a refinery which has a source of crude, that can give us an assurance of continuing supply.

It would be true, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that if we imported refined products we would be able to drop the price of virtually all petroleum products in Barbados, except perhaps fuel oil, but we have to think of the existence of the refinery, that is Mobil Refinery, as an outlet for our own crude, as well as the employment at the refinery. And while we are considering the other option in the light of offers we have had from a particular oil company, we are investigating the whole matter in a rather more catholic way than concentrating on one refinery in one CARICOM territory.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This brings us to the end of Question Time.

RESUMPTION OF GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Order No. 5 – Housing (Amendment) Act, 1983 – Cont'd.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Government Business is now resumed. The honourable Member for St. Michael North may now continue.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: (St. Michael North): Mr. Deputy Speaker, at the time of the interruption for lunch, I think I was speaking about the question of improved technology. I was sounding a warning that persons who have some form of technology are normally seeking new markets, particularly the markets of developing countries, on which to dump these technologies, and therefore the Government should be very careful how they get involved with these persons who have, or claim to have, this technology, because sometimes they do not work out any cheaper.

I cited some examples, and one example was cited at the time we were going to lunch. One example was the houses that were built in the Lodge Terrace, what we called Eternit houses. I think there were about five of them which were built using Columbian technology. The Columbian authorities even made some of their own technical people available to us, and when the houses were finished, Mr. Deputy Speaker, there were really no cheaper at all than the houses traditionally built in Barbados. I believe, in fact, that they were inferior to the houses that we normally build here in Barbados.

But we have to look, and continue looking, at ways and means of reducing the high building costs, particularly for those houses that are built for the lower income earners. I do not know what the building costs are now in the National Housing Corporation, but they must be very very high indeed. Reference has been made to persons who have been allocated these houses who normally would not be given these houses. But because, I believe, of the high building costs and the need therefore to charge a kind of rent not to make any return, because

it is still a high subsidy content in this, we have to rent them to persons who have a slightly higher income than one would normally rent them to, so in this case it is the lower income earners who really and truly suffer.

They are the persons you are aiming at in the first place, and if we are bypassing them, well, then, in fact we are still leaving ourselves with a tremendous problem. Therefore, you must look for this new technology appropriate to the country. That is what is important. It must be appropriate to the country in order to help reduce the cost of building and at the same time make your own policies easier to implement.

In doing this, we will have to retrain persons. Persons who are trained along certain conventional methods are not necessarily suited for production when you come to new technology, and we are going to have to retrain those persons in order to take full advantage of the new technology that we want and we will find desirable. Unless we do this, we are going to find that although this new technology would be normally much cheaper, or would be within economic reach, because we are not properly trained to implement it you will find that in the long run, chances are that it might very well be more expensive.

I would like to see, too, Sir, something done for persons who are converting their homes from wood to stone. I would like to see some help given in that direction in the form, perhaps, of incentives, because the home is more durable, and maintenance is less when it is converted from wood to stone. I would like to see Government give those persons, who are making an effort and who want to convert their houses from wood into stone, some incentive at some point to assist them in converting from wood into stone. And maybe that could assist the Minister in the new policy he was trying to enunciate here this afternoon.

I agree with the honourable Member for Christ Church East Central (Hon. H. B. St. John) that we need longer term mortgages in order to reduce the burden of servicing those mortgages. I believe that Barbados Mortgage Finance Company was allowing a mortgage of 25 years for quite some time now, but this is not generally the case. As far as the debt service ratio is concerned in relation to the salaries of the persons who are owning their own homes and paying mortgages, as I understand it, it used to be 331/3%. At that time the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company would take the full salary of the husband, plus one half of the salary of the wife, if she is working, and would also take one quarter of the salaries of children up to a maximum of two. I do not know what the position is nowadays, but I think there may be some improvement on that. I do not think that that is a bad arrangement, but I believe there might be some improvement there.

Again, I must support the honourable Member for Christ Church East Central in his concern about the commercial banks in relation to the housing problems in this country. I support him and I agree with him that they are generally not interested in offering mortgages for persons to own their own homes, and certainly not to own any type of home. I recall very well, probably some time in the middle 1970's, when the National Housing Corporation was going to develop a timber house for low income earners, I approached BARFINCOR, the Barbados Finance Corporation, to see if they would be interested in financing mortgages for those timber houses, and they said, "No". They said they would consider it, and they came back and said they were not interested.
3.10 p.m.

Subsequent to that, I think some private developers, I believe it was the Barbados Lumber Co., started developing a housing section and Citibank gave very short term mortgages for those houses. It is only after this that Barclays Bank then got into the act, I believe, with houses that were developed by Manning, Wilkinson & Challenor.

But something should be done to interest those commercial banks to invest more of their funds in mortgages. Unless this is done, we will forever be having a problem.

I also believe, Sir, that the Minister is very serious in his aim to run an efficient administration, but he is going to be plagued with problems. I warned about this before. He will have to pay some close attention to matters like giving out houses.

I know, Sir, that there is a very high political content in the question of the allocation of houses. This is where one will have some problems, and I am warning the Minister that he will have to pay some close attention to this question of the allocation of keys; very close attention. There have always been problems in this area and those problems can be compounded when you find some people insisting that only certain persons within their area should be given houses. I think the Minister is going to have to pay some close attention to that.

So we, Mr. Deputy Speaker, will be watching the Minister, helping him along. We will give him all the assistance to see, Sir, that things run smoothly. We will be watching to see how he will be attacking the problems with the new administration block that has been designed. We know that there is a problem. We know there is a dispute to this. We know it has ended up in the law courts. We will be watching this as well.

I want to say, Sir, that we wish him well. I join with one of my colleagues in wishing him well because,

as the honourable Deputy Prime Minister has said, housing is an area that politics should be taken out of as much as possible. It should be a national concern, and we on this side are prepared to abide by that and offer him any assistance that may be necessary.

Mr. R. E. BRATHWAITE (St. Lucy): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to support this Bill, and I believe that all the honourable Members in this Honourable House should have done the same thing this morning.

I would like to agree with the last speaker who just sat down, when he said that all of us should watch the honourable Minister and try to encourage him. We all know that that honourable Minister has proved himself to be a Minister of class, I believe this is probably four Ministries that he was assigned to since this Government took over, and I am sure that all of us are very happy and satisfied with his performance.

This morning I was very surprised when the honourable Member for St. Philip North (Mr. W. O. Franklin) started, and I have a few points here that I ticked off. The honourable Member for St. Philip North said that we should have a cheaper unit for renters in a day like today.

I believe that we have more technology now than we ever had in housing in the history of Barbados. We are doing all that is in our power to see that we can get things built at a cheaper rate, but we all know the labour costs are going up every day.

I had the privilege, Mr. Deputy Speaker, of visiting a few countries as a member of the National Housing Corporation Board, and I am very happy to know that when even compared with the United States, we have one of the highest standard of housing in the world. You go to Georgia; you go to Guyana; you go to Trinidad; you go all over the place! When you see the standard of housing in those places, it makes you happy to know that Barbados is one of the leading places in the world in housing.

When the honourable Member speaks about a cheaper unit, I do not think that he would ask to have a cheaper unit where he lives. Having cheaper units now will mean lowering the standard of the kind of housing that we are building now-a-days, because the only way we can have a cheaper unit is to have a unit not painted, a unit not sealed, or a unit of wood. So when you sat down there and you heard that honourable Member talking about a cheaper unit, you understood that he really would like to bring back the standard of housing in this country to the ebb where we took it from in 1951.

I would not say that the Democratic Labour Party did not do a fairly good job as far as housing, but it was not as fast as the Barbados Labour Party. We all know that we built more houses from 1976 – 1981 than the Democratic Labour Party built from 1961 – 1976. We all know that, and we built houses with a difference!

You have to commend the honourable Member for St. James North (Hon. L. S. Craig) because he has a little style as an architect. As a Minister, he said, "Let us try to improve the recreational areas so that on evenings those people indoors can come out in their little galleries. He appealed to the then architect to put on a little verandah where these children could come out on evenings, away from the sun, and have a good time there. We really should commend the honourable Member for those things.

The honourable Member spoke about the fact that when he came in there was Sir Ronald Mapp and he made a turnaround; then the member from St. James North, and he made another turnaround; and now we have another Minister, and still up to now things are not moving. I can say that all three of those Ministers have done a good job.

When we came into power I became a member of the National Housing Corporation Board. The rate in that day used to be $7 a week and we found people owing as much as $3 000 and $4 000. So you would understand that it would take a number of years at $7 per week, 52 x 7, for that amount to accumulate, and you will see the amount of years that those people were living in those houses free.

The honourable Member attacked the Minister about people not pulling their weight in the way they should. It is there, it is practically in front of you, because you cannot tell me that in a very short space of time you put somebody to rent a house at $7 a week and it could run to $3 000. That is a lot of years!

I would like to draw another point here as a Member of the Board again. I remember when we first took over that Board from the Democratic Labour Party regime, we had a poor, humble lady, a pensioner, who used to pay her rent on her rented spot. The then Manager, and his Board, told a gentleman – and I can call his name because he died since – Mr. Racketeer Clarke, that was his name, not to build on this lady's land because the lady's rent book was up-to-date.

3.20 p.m.

A policeman went on the site. Mr. Clarke ignored the police and said the Minister told him to build on it and he was building on this site. So you would understand that was something out of the ordinary. The Manager of the National Housing Corporation is telling this man not to build on the site, and this man off the street can come in and tell him the Minister told him to

build on it, so who are you Mr. Policeman. He just ignored the police and the gentleman went on and built.

But good luck for that lady, I would say, the Government changed and when the Government changed, I, as a member of that Board – you know I would be taking care of the poor people of this country – sat on that Board and I am happy to report that all the big bully Mr. Clarke was, he had to go back and beg the lady to let him pay her out, because he had put in a water-borne system and all these things by that time. You would understand, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the kind of advantage that used to be taken of the poor people of this country in those days.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there is another point I would like to touch on. When the honourable Member spoke about political affiliations of the Board members, I believe that used to be true, but it is not so on this side, and I will prove to you why it is not so. I remember one afternoon we discussed something on the Board and the next day at 2.30 p.m. Senator Greaves, I am sorry to call his name, could make it a document of the Senate. You could not believe that any member on that Board as a supporter of the Barbados Labour Party would get that information to a member of the Opposition to make it a document of the Senate the next day, so you would understand the way this Government operates.

This Government operates on the basis where they feel there should be a carpenter on the Board, you have a mason, you should have a surveyor, you should have people really that know something about housing. You are too much accustomed to having Boards that once people go around and shout loudly and clearly for the Opposition, these people will be put on Boards as a kind of recompense to make them feel happy.

The same honourable Member spoke about the new look of the Tenantries Act. Mr. Deputy Speaker, would you believe that when we introduced the Tenantries Act in this country that same honourable Member spoke against it? He said that when you buy a spot of land you have to pay taxes, but when you rent from someone you do not have to pay taxes, so I really do not understand how he can talk about the improvement in the tenantries and everybody now having a waterborne system.

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Tenantries Control Development Act was introduced in 1965.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: On what has the honourable Member risen?

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: On a point of elucidation.

Mr. R. E. BRATHWAITE: I am speaking about the Tenantries Freehold Purchase Act. I don't want to go back on that one, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but it just shows the hypocrisy of certain members in this place. Now today he is praising the Tenantries Freehold Act and saying we should have more sites and services and all these types of things.

Another point, on which he spoke, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that you have to buy a more expensive spot for a chattel house than for a well-to-do house. Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is not true. You know for sure that throughout this Island when you go to a built-up area where you cannot raise chickens or keep even a big barking dog, you have to pay for that. It is a dearer spot than anyone with a chattel house. On any chattel house spot you can raise stock, you can do all kinds of things and you always have these spots at a cheaper price.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, listening to the honourable Member for St. Philip North you will see that he is trying to hold the wool over our eyes, and I do not think we should sit here and allow it to pass lightly.

When we came into power, the Democratic Labour Party had the ceiling rate for someone who would want a house to rent at $600 per month. From the time we came into power, we said we did not think this would be fair, because we had people like bus drivers, policemen and others in that category who would like to rent a house, and who would have the privilege of renting a house. We therefore raised the $600 a month, which was too low, and we raised the ceiling to $1 200 a month. We went to the general workers loan that was $5 000 under the Democratic Labour Party and we raised that to $12 000. You will see we were always thinking about moving ahead and trying to get things in a way where people would be able to help themselves, because as you know, in those days there were a lot of people that would not qualify.

One of the other things that I heard the honourable Member speak about is that it is law in Barbados where one man should own one rented house. On that Board I was sworn to secrecy, but I would have to let you all know this: we found one man owning three houses in the National Housing Corporation under the Democratic Labour Party regime. I did not understand how it used to operate, but we had to call one gentleman and tell him if he wanted to keep one of the houses to pick out any one of the three, but he could not have three houses. We had people keeping houses as ranches, where they would go and have a good time. When a one man applied for a house, we said "no way". We were thinking about families, we were trying to see things moving in a direction where we could help the masses.

When you look around again and see the movement of the Democratic Labour Party on housing, they should be ashamed to get up here this afternoon. I agreed with the last honourable Member who sat down, who said he would wait on the Minister and see how he would go. The Dems never thought of the parishes in the north whatsoever. When you think of a parish like St. Lucy where the Democratic Labour Party could always relax and say, "we are sure this is our seat," they never saw fit to put anything up there. But I am commending the honourable Minister. He has been there now only a few months, and all day long as you listen to the T.V. and to the radio you can hear that Checker Hall is in line. It makes me feel very happy to know that this Government is thinking about the people all over Barbados.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would like to let the Minister know that the canes have been cut at Checker Hall, the lands there are ready, and he can make a start down there so that we can see a little difference over there. As far as sites and services are concerned, I recommended that also. We have quite a lot of people over there waiting for places where they can put their houses.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am very happy and satisfied that we have a Government with a difference and it is a Government that is taking care of all sorts and conditions of people and not thinking only of the hierarchy; they are taking care of the small people in this country.

We all heard the honourable Member for St. Philip North talking about dead wood. I know when I was there we had approximately 1 700 people on the National Housing Corporation's staff and you cannot expect that you could have 1 700 people who would all be solid workers. I know we have hardworking people up there, but then you will find a few people that, however you turn, would not try to pull their weight. Well the honourable Minister has sounded a warning, and I believe that will cause the ones up there who are not pulling their weight to adjust themselves, because we all know that if we can get everybody in this country to produce, the cost of things could have been half the price they are today.

When the honourable Member is speaking, he should be talking about one of the work sites. He knows there are some people who, as soon as they get on Government sites, have a tendency just to relax.

I feel this is a Minister that has proved himself to be a Minister of class at Communications and Works, he has proved it with Agriculture and he did a fine job in Health, and I believe he will do a good job in Housing also, but I would feel that all of us should join hands together, Mr. Deputy Speaker, encourage him on his job, and give him any kind of information or telling him of anything that is going a bit awkward.

3.30 p.m.

The Barbados Labour Party will be in power for a very long time and I feel it would be better if all sides would join together and if we see any slack screw any place, we should inform the Minister. It is all our money! And if all of us would join together and give the honourable Minister information so that he can continue to do even a better job, I think that will be better for us.

I thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. B. M. TAITT (St. Michael West): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, we have just had a very interesting interlude from the distinguished and honourable Member from St. Lucy, I would like to return to the serious matters of this House again, Sir.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, when housing comes before this Chamber, it is treated with a certain delicacy and a certain amount of kid gloves.

I notice that the Minister is seeking to expand the Board. And, as you know, Sir, when one is seeking to remedy a situation, there is usually some mischief which is being sought to be corrected. When the honourable Member introduced this Bill he indicated in very clear terms that there is total dissatisfaction with those honourable Members, either in this place or the other, who have held the portfolio of Housing so far.

It is clear to anyone, who read between the lines and who heard the honourable Member, that he is saying that the National Housing Corporation is in a complete mess. He is saying, as I understand him, and as is a fact, that some four Ministers later, he has got to come and put the National Housing Corporation Board into a shape that would begin to place housing in the perspective that was outlined in the Manifesto of the Barbados Labour Party. That is my understanding of what he is saying. What we have to do is analyse whether what he is saying is correct.

Sir, in the last six years, we have been promised a White Paper on housing no less than seven times in this Honourable Chamber. I recall that the honourable Member for St. Michael South East (Hon. DeL. O. Bradshaw), some time in July of 1982, promised the public a White Paper on housing. He had taken over from the honourable Member for St. James North (Hon. L. S. Craig) and it is clear, even to the gentleman who ran in the St. Michael South Central by-election, with a naked eye, that the honourable Member for St. Michael South east believed that the honourable Member for St. James North made a mess of housing policy – that is clear! and he was attempting, according to the information which

we heard displayed in this honourable Chamber, to put in place a policy for housing. Now, Sir, today, we have yet another Minister attempting, via the methodology of increasing the Board, to put a housing policy in perspective.

You will recall, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that just prior to the 1981 elections, we had a housing policy which saw the Government going around to places like Lammings, places like Maynards, and putting up signs saying, "We are about to start housing developments here! Soon after the 1981 elections those signs came down, or were beaten down by the weather. Recently again, I hear there is talk of putting housing development in Maynards.

You will recall that when the honourable Member for St. James North was the Minister responsible for Housing, he indicated, after a relatively short time, that the 3 000 housing units which the Government intended to build, according to the Manifesto, embraced all the housing in Barbados.

Now, we have what the honourable Member would call a political joke, because we can only call the statement a joke, that the Barbados Labour Party has built more houses than the Democratic Labour Party. Five thousand people who are on the list at the National Housing Corporation waiting for houses are totally disinterested in who built more houses that whom. And even if it were true – and it is not, that the Barbados Labour Party built more houses than the Democratic Labour Party – it would have no relevance to the state of housing in this community today.

What people wish to know is how long will it be before an average Barbadian can look forward to his Government, through his Government's agencies, to get a decent place to live at a reasonable cost?

Certain remarks made by the honourable Member for St. Michael West were ordered to be expunged from the Record by Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: But, the honourable Member for St. James North – now this I know to be a fact -- made a television documentary, through the Government Information Service, and he outlined the housing policy and showed visually some of the things which he anticipated would be done.

(Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Not anticipated, that you saw on television.)

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I will be corrected. He showed us some of the things which he had started to do, and he dreamt and had visions of what would happen in housing. But the honourable Member for St. Michael South East, soon thereafter, told us that the National Housing Corporation was in a mess and that – I formed the impression that a Daniel had come to judgment – for the first time, we were going to get a proper housing policy.

There is no question that the honourable Member for St. Michael South East constantly, deliberately, and successfully demonstrated that under the honourable Member for St. James North, National Housing was nothing more than a lot of words. And I believe the honourable Member for St. Michael South East was trying his best.

And now, the honourable Member for St. Andrew (Hon. L. B. Brathwaite) comes and tells us that the National Housing Corporation is in a mess and he needs to get some more people on the Board to help him pull it out of the mess!

I really have a lot of difficulty – I, along with a large majority of the people in Barbados. Here we have one Minister praising the workers at National Housing Corporation – you must remember, Sir, when the honourable Member for St. James North, on the Floor of this House, in a definitive statement said that the National Housing Corporation had the most committed workers in Barbados. I challenge him to get up and say that he did not say that.

(Hon. L. S. CRAIG: True.)

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Alright. Now you know he would not say true unless it was true. But here is the honourable Member now saying that up there is in a mess, and they have a lot of dead wood.

(Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: True.)

Certain remarks made by the honourable Member for St. James North were ordered to be expunged from the Record by Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Deputy Speaker, you heard for yourself. The words struck from the Record are not the word, "True" coming from the honourable Member for St. James North, or the word, "True" coming from the honourable Member for St. Andrew, which means that one of them in misconstruing truth; they do not understand truth.

3.40 p.m.

The honourable Member for St. Lucy (Mr. R. E. Brathwaite) said there are 1700 people working at the National Housing Corporation. I would say inferentially, Sir, that it was very revealing that the honourable Member for St. Lucy said that he went on a trip. I did not know that the members of the Board of the National Housing Corporation used to go on trips. I thought only

the Tourist Board used to have that facility, but apparently in this system now we have all the Boards going on trips. I remember the Chairman of the Natural Gas Corporation goes on trips, and we heard revealed today that a member of the National Housing Corporation's Board goes on trips. No wonder the whole housing policy is in a mess!

I said that was inferential, I really do not wish to deal with that. I want to deal with a substantive destruction which has brought about by the ineptitude of the Prime Minister in the allocation of Ministries, because here we have three Ministers – the other Minister, according to their statement, is not worthy of recollecting and he has made a contribution to the country, and I would rather not....

Mr. R. E. BRATHWAITE: On a point of order. Mr Deputy Speaker, I would like to explain to the honourable Member that when I went on the trip it was not on behalf of the Government, it was people who deal in lumber who asked to have members from the National Corporation Board to come so that they could introduce them to a different type of housing, and things like that. It was not on the strength of the Government, it was on the strength of the places, Georgia and Guyana, that I visited.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is a point of explanation.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Is he now saying that people who sell lumber to the National Housing Corporation paid for the trip? Is that what the honourable Member is saying? Is he saying that it was at no expense to the Government? Is he saying that it was the practice for private suppliers to the Barbados National Housing Corporation to pay for trips for members of the National Housing Corporation? I am going to sit down and let the honourable Member explain himself clearly, because surely he cannot be saying that, Sir. I would give way to let the honourable Member explain what he has said.

The honourable Member said it was not paid for by the Government. That is my understanding. He said it was private people who supply Barbados with lumber who invited members of the Board to come to see the different kinds of lumber. Is that my understanding? I am going to be generous and assume that the honourable Member paid for the trip out of his pocket.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Member must stop repeating himself and carry on the debate.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I wish to be certain, because when I say subsequently that I would like the Government to explain in detailed terms the number of trips taken by members of the National Housing Corporation, by Ministers of Housing, by anybody connected with housing, outside of Barbados at the expense of persons who supply lumber and other materials to Barbados, when I call for detailed information on this I would not like anyone to say I was irresponsible. That is why I have to be certain in my own mind.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: And I would like the honourable Member to look at Standing Order 28(2) and keep within the Standing Order.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I am endeavouring to do so, Sir, but my capacity is strained in the presence of the kind of information which seems to emanate from the honourable Member for St. Lucy every time he gets up. But I will move on, Sir.

I will say this. The people of Barbados will soon have another aspect of some of the difficulties in the National Housing Corporation as soon as certain matters reach a certain stage.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we had a Hanschell Report and I recall that the honourable Member for St. Thomas (Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. Adams), and the Deputy Prime Minister, raised a lot of questions about the Hanschell Report. Earlier today we had reference to the Burton Report. We heard the Minister saying that of 7 000 rentals, only 500 were paid on time. What we need now is another definitive investigation of the National Housing Corporation during the last six years.

Based on what the Minister has said today, it is clear that during the last six years housing policy has not taken any definitive straight line. It is clear from what the Minister has intimated to us today as his reasons for wishing to expand this Board that the National Housing Corporation is crying out for the removal of the dead wood. That dead wood does not exist only at the level of artisan, according to what the honourable Member for St. Lucy seems to say, that dead wood apparently exists at a level where the Minister now finds himself tied, his hands are tied apparently, and the only way he can get around it is to add. I am sure he will get up and tell us whether what I am saying is accurate, whether I am going in the right direction. Good heavens know that I would prefer to be wrong, but I get the impression from the Minister that he is finding his own solution to the whole problem of staffing the Board.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot draw you into the debate, Sir, I am sure you are aware of the extreme difficulty with which a representative is presented if and when he faces his constituents on this question of housing. The promises that have been made by the successive Ministers of Housing of a new day are at the lowest unfortunate. We have been promised money from the United States for housing for two and a half years now.

That money was supposed to filter through two and a half years ago. We are still awaiting news of that money, and no doubt as another Budget comes along, we are going to hear about the money coming from the United States to be on-lent to the National Housing Corporation for their use.

It is becoming a little bit of a syndrome, Sir. It is not fair to the people of Barbados. People accepted the sincerity of the various Ministers. People believed that the honourable Member for St. James North as a Minister for the Environment was committed to the development of the environment. Their views of his commitment changed somewhat when they heard statements coming from the honourable Member for St. Michael South East, but it is only a matter of.....

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: .....time before the honourable Member takes his seat.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: My time has run out. I thank you very much for your indulgence, Sir.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: (St. James North): Sir, I am going to be very very brief. It is needless for me to rehash all that I have said in the past when I was Minister of Housing. I will be very very brief, Sir, not even five minutes, and you know, Sir, it is a subject which is very dear to my heart.

Members on the other side have been accusing my colleague, the Member for St. Andrew (Hon. L. B. Brathwaite), of condemning his predecessors as Ministers of Housing. That is not my interpretation. There was Sir Ronald Mapp as Minister of Housing before me, and then my successor was the Member for St. Michael South East (Hon. DeL. O. Bradshaw).

As to whether I was a good Minister of Housing or not, there is nobody in here who could judge that. No single person in here can judge that, it is the people outside. One's opinion is only a matter of perception. 3.50 p.m.

I believe that the Member for St. Philip South (Mr. H. A. Blackman) would argue that Kanhai can bat better than Sobers. That is only an opinion, but what I know is a fact of life that runs determine that. The runs will determine who can bat. I have the runs from the Dems already. That is the point I want to make, Sir. So when the Members of the Opposition are trying to stir up a hornet's nest as to who is a good Minister or who is a bad Minister, Sir, it is just an opinion. It is as simple as that.

The Member for St. Michael West (Mr. B. M. Taitt) believes that Lisle Austin should be the candidate for the City, but his council says he is dead wood. Only last night they said he was dead wood. That is only an opinion.

I would not like, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to rehash all of the things that were done in housing during the tenure of this present Administration. Very briefly, Sir, I would like to say that when I was Minister, I saluted the workers for what I perceived was a job well done by them. If the present Minister does not see them in the light in which I saw them, it is a matter entirely for him to make his pronouncement. He is entitled to that. But trying to stir up a hornet's nest as to which Minister was good, that, Sir, is child's play.

What I know is that in seven years, this Administration performed in the field of housing better than you did in 15 years, and that is all I have to be concerned with, Sir. I am not concerned with which Minister did a good job. It is which party, while it was in power, did the job, and I know that this Government has made great strides in housing within the past seven years.

Now, on the question of new technology and so on. All the time you hear of people coming in from overseas. I remember Kayfus was a big thing. When you checked out Kayfus, Kayfus was a smart company.

You talk about the technical people at the National Housing Corporation. I believe they did a good job at the time. The Board I had at the time worked well with me. If you came into office tomorrow, you would change the Board, no matter how good they are, because you are going to put the people who you believe would do a good job for you.

I just briefly, Sir, would like to salute my colleague, the Member for St. Michael South East (Hon. DeL. O. Bradshaw) for doing whatever he had to do during his term of office. Whatever strides and success he made there were made for this Government and the people of Barbados, and that is all I am concerned with.

If the strides are made in housing, agriculture, tourism, industry, in the environment, in the economic area, I salute the party, because in the long run it is going to be in the interest of all concerned. But in relation to stirring up a hornet's nest as to whether I was a good Minister, or the honourable member for St. Michael South East was a good one, and that my colleague for St. Andrew condemned his predecessors, I am not getting into that. It is a matter of interpretation.

I will speak for myself. Go out there and take a poll and ask the people if I was a success. I believe the poll would turn you back. Go out there and ask them! It is needless for me to make reference to the [illegible] developments in the various areas, a show-piece in five years, a real show-piece, a new concept, a show-piece in

Bonnett's, in the Ivy, Sir, in St. Joseph, where we started and recession caught up with us.

If you look at the world news you see large buildings in various countries throughout the entire world unfinished because of the economic bite which is tearing holes into the entire world economy. So if you had to shelve projects which you started, there is nothing wrong with that. Look at Maynard's in St. Peter.

Then there was the separation of the technical wing from the administration block, which gave Mr. Redman the opportunity to spread his wings. These were my views. If my colleagues feel that they should bring them back together, there is nothing wrong with that. All I am concerned with, Sir, is that it has to be in the interest of the people.

There was a statement made by the honourable Member for St. Philip North (Mr. W. O. Franklin) conveying the thought that the wrong people are in the houses because they cannot pay their rents, that $30 a week is too much and you should build a house to suit a person's income.

I do not share that view. I have been through that over and over again. If you want to know something, go into some of the houses and you will see why the rents have not been paid. The priorities are wrong. It is the videos which they have to pay for. It is colour television first. It is a colour television downstairs and one in the bedroom, and you will see a car outside. The priorities are wrong. That is all. I know these things. I go into the houses.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: How many?)

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Thousands of them, thousands.

You go through St. Stephens, for example, or you pass through the Farm, and you will see the light, a beautiful blue and then a red, a yellow; not a black and white or a small television, a 19 inch. I know, for example, of a man who was living in Wildey who had owed the National Housing Corporation some $6 000 in rents.

I am not even going to make a reference to the former Minister of Housing in your time. I would consider him a shameless man to get up on his feet and make a contribution in here in relation to housing. If one examines the Hansard Report and talking about the houses up in Lodge Terrace, he directed and put people in the houses coming up to election without a cent. I know of a particular family who was unable.....

Asides.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: He is an invalid. I will ignore him.

What I would say about the Member for St. Michael North (Mr. P. M. Greaves) is that he is a brave man. His physical stature deceives one. He is a brave, brave man. If you look at him, he is an invalid; but on the inside he is a very, very brave man. To get up in here and talk about housing, he has to be a brave person! I would not really go into detail about what transpired during his time as Minister of Housing. The records are there, history, Sir. 4.00 p.m.

When the honourable member for St. Michael North can get up on the Floor of this House and talk about housing, then I am really satisfied that this world has some strange people and the honourable Member for St. Michael North is one. He has to be one.

Sir, I do not think it is necessary for me to say much more on a subject which I have recited in here long ago. If there are problems at the National Housing Corporation, I have no doubt that the Minister who is responsible for this area has the capacity to make things right, because he has demonstrated this in the Ministries he has worked in.

I made a note of some fifteen points, but on reflection it is not necessary. I am going to support the amendment and join with the honourable Member for St. Philip North in wishing the present Minister of Housing good luck in his new Ministry.

Hon. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: (St. Michael South East): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I rise to give my support to this Bill. I wish to make it quite clear that I do not consider the comments of the honourable Minister of Housing and Lands an attack on me while I was the Minister of Housing and Lands. What I must say is that most of the things he has said are true, and I think that in saying these things, he has been rather outspoken. I know that sometimes when you are outspoken you serve only to invoke and incur the wrath of people. However, there are things that have to go be said, and I must say that I am one who says things when I believe in them, though at times I incur the fury of people.

I want to confine my remarks to the National Housing Corporation, because the National Housing Corporation has a very bad history, and this Government is unfortunate in that it inherited some very bad policies and habits of the National Housing Corporation, which were sowed and encouraged by the Democratic Labour Party.

In 1974, a sum to the tune of $1.3 million was owed to the National Housing Corporation as rents, and

the then Government did not take steps to collect this money. Far from that, some persons were allowed to remain in the houses. You have had the honourable Minister of Parliamentary Affairs (Hon. L. S. Craig) alluding to a gentleman who owed some $6 000. He was put in a house in Wildey by the Democratic Labour Party and he paid not one cent, and it was left for us...

Mr. B. M. TAITT: On a point of elucidation, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Democratic Labour Party cannot put anybody in a house. What we have said.....

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: That is not a point of elucidation. You can only elucidate a point made by yourself. The honourable Member did not say you made a point.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: He said the Democratic Labour Party.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: You are not the Democratic Labour Party. You are the honourable Member for St. Michael West.

Hon. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this person was put in the house during the time the Democratic Labour Party was in power. I can only assume that the Minister should be made responsible for that if this was allowed to happen in his time. But the point is that this young man owed some $6 000, and it was only after this Government took office that we were able to round up this man and actually take very drastic steps to force him to pay the money. Thank God he is no longer in the house, because we put him in court.

There were other occasions when one person was allowed to have three houses, Mr. Deputy Speaker. One woman was allowed to have a house for her children, one house for herself and one house for a band, because she was a friend of the honourable Members on that side; and she did not pay the rent for either one of the houses.

The rents accumulated and we took action to get these people to pay the arrears. What did we do? We appointed rent collectors and we also appointed arrears officers so that they could go out and try to get in some of the rents that were due to the National Housing Corporation. We have succeeded in some large measure in collecting some of the money, but some of the outstanding arrears are so great that it is impossible in some cases to realise all the money that is outstanding.

Sir, we have taken steps that were not taken by the former Administration, because they had put in the people, they encouraged them to go in the houses without paying the rent, and it was difficult for us, on assuming office, to get the rents from them.

Another mistake that was made by the former Administration is that they allowed six full years to go by without increasing the rents on the housing estates. Although the cost of building and the cost of maintenance had increased significantly, yet the rents were not increased commensurately.

Now all of this meant a loss to the National Housing Corporation, so the collecting unit within the National Housing Corporation found itself with a somewhat Herculean task of trying to collect all the bad debts. There were people who were put in the houses who were supposed to be welfare cases, and because those welfare cases were treated with some special consideration, those persons were allowed to accumulate vast sums of arrears, hence the National Housing Corporation was unable to collect the rents so that they could carry out their maintenance programme and even build new houses. As a result of that, the National Housing Corporation, year after year, had to appeal to the Ministry of Finance for a considerable subsidy.

I felt that the National Housing Corporation should not year after year be asking for a subsidy, but rather be made to charge an economic rent so that they would be able to defray the expenditure incurred from maintenance and for building of new estates. So we have embarked on such a programme. We have made significant dents in the rent collections. The target for last year was realised, $3.8 million. The largest sum of rents ever to be collected by the National Housing Corporation was collected last year. That goes to show that some effort was made to correct the problems within the National Housing Corporation.

We knew that the rent books were old-fashioned, outdated. It was difficult for the tenants themselves to understand what the rent books really reflected, and there was considerable confusion with the tenants and the National Housing Corporation staff in determining what was the true rent owed. I took a decision to make the National Housing Corporation draw up new books so that the rent book would reflect, at first sight, the true or current position of the status of rents.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, there are lots of things that were done. As I said, it is a Herculean task. No one Minister would ever be able to correct all the evils or put the National Housing Corporation on its footing. I have tried and I have put my best in it, day and night I worked in order to improve the National Housing Corporation.

I have identified several weaknesses. In addition, you have got the National Housing Corporation administration and the staff of itself; some of them have been put in there that have no special skills, they are not

competent, but they were given jobs because of political considerations. We inherited that in 1976.
4.10 p.m.

(Mr. P. M. GREAVES: And you added to it considerably.)

Hon. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: Sometimes, you call upon persons to act as Manager in the absence of the Manager and so incompetent are these persons that they tell you, "Mr. Minister", or "Mr. Board Chairman, I do not want to assume that position because I do not think I will make a good job of it."

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

Hon. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: So, where do you go from there?

You cannot operate a corporation as important as the National Housing Corporation with one manager and no back-up staff. You must look at the structure of the National Housing Corporation.

Apart from the Senior Technical Officer, apart from the Engineer, who works part-time in any case, a rather competent person, what else do you have at the top of the National Housing Corporation? Absolutely nothing short of personnel!

If you look at the Ministry, you have an officer there, as the honourable Member for St. Michael North has rightly said, who has no relevant training in the area of housing. He is a town planner, but he is charged with the responsibility to man a planning unit and, therefore, most of his time is taken up with the book work, a lot of paper work. But he is ignorant of the practical side of housing. Let us face it!

So the honourable Minister is correct when he addresses himself to the very fact that he needs personnel, proper, competent, technical staff, within the National Housing Corporation. If he does not do that, then his efforts will be short lived.

All of this must go into play. But, as I said, successive Ministers have tried and each of us coming with new views and new ideas and new concepts, decided to do a good job and we tried to implement things as we saw them. Therefore, I do not think that the Minister is reflecting on the integrity or the good management or the capability of his predecessors. This is the point. The policies of the Ministry of Housing are policies that were endorsed by the Cabinet of this Government.

We have entered into sites and services for the new areas that we have gone into. The sites have been selected and we feel that by providing house spots for lease or rent, or even eventually to be purchased, is a good policy. That has found favour with the public of Barbados.

We feel that Government, through the National Housing Corporation, should provide lots on which persons can be given an opportunity to build their own homes. I have said, and I will repeat, that we must try and encourage the banks or the financial institutions and the Barbados Mortgage Finance Company to make more mortgages available to potential home builders. When we can succeed in that area then we will see the real housing boom that we all look forward to.

What we have done is established the Cement Plant, because we feel that in 1984, when cement is available locally and we do not suffer from a shortage of cement, we will be able to realise part of our objectives. All of these are problems that we, as a Government, have addressed ourselves to.

We have also, as a Government, gone a bit farther. I do not understand what the honourable Members on that side think about. We have now gone into joint ventures with private developers. We have encouraged them. We have enunciated a policy. Several private developers have come into the Ministry of Housing and have sat down with us; they feel that it is a good concept and they are co-operating.

Aside.

Hon. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: We have one in Wildey. There is a joint project with Ideal Homes. We undertook to have that joint project because the developers in Barbados were complaining that they were unable to get land on which to construct houses. We felt that we should make land available so that they will be able to realise their goals.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Sites and Services Programme is new and we have tied this in to our Plantation Tenantry Freehold Purchase Act, an Act which was opposed by the honourable Members on that side. It is only today, now that they are brought to their senses by the honourable Member for St. Philip North (Mr. W. O. Franklin), that they agree that this is a move in the right direction.

What I would wish to say is that the National Housing Corporation should be addressing itself to the petty squabbles that continue to exist within the corporation itself among personnel. That is a problem to which the Board would have to address itself. That, in many ways, has prevented the National Housing Corporation from achieving its goals. There are too many petty squabbles, personality squabbles. You have the Technical Division not willing to co-operate with the administrative section, and everybody operating like a separate entity. There is no cohesion.

And, as I said, you need to have a Board that can dedicate most of its time, or more time, to the work of the National Housing Corporation. I will repeat; with a corporation as important as the National Housing Corporation, you must get a Chairman who will devote more of his time to the work of the National Housing Corporation. It needs the presence of a Chairman and it needs better back-up staff for the Manager and for the corporation. It is too loose, and until this particular problem is addressed and we find some solution, we are going to be at square one. These are the problems that come out of National Housing Corporation.

It does not matter who for a Minister goes there. Once the problems continue to be there – you have management problems, you have personality problems and you have the non-collection of rents and officers who are not willing to go out and collect the rents – it would be just like cold soup being warmed up all over again.

I feel that the new honourable Minister is very keen on correcting some of these evils.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: Hear you!)

Hon. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: I did not have enough time to do all.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: Hear you!)

Hon. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: The fact is that something has been done. I do not mind the honourable Members talking about a White Paper. Those are things that take time and they need inputs from other persons, other than a Minister or from an individual, and that is why it would take some time. Every day problems arise in the area of housing like in any other thing, and we try to address.....

Mr. B. M. TAITT: On a point of elucidation, Sir, if the honourable Member would give way.

The honourable Member missed the gravamen of the point I was making on the White Paper. I made the point that the White Paper was promised two and a half years ago and the last pronouncement on a White Paper was nine months ago. That was the point I made!

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: That was not a point of elucidation.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: But he did not understand what I said, Sir.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: No, no, no, no, no, no! The honourable Member clearly said that other persons need to make inputs into the White Paper and it takes time. That was not critical of, or misunderstanding your speech.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: But I....

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: You talked about the White Paper as well. And I would like to mention that honourable Members should stop repeating themselves and repeating others...

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Oh!

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: .....and get on with the debate.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Point taken, Sir. Point taken! There is no point of elucidation at this point.

Hon. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: You see, the honourable Member does not understand. You cannot have a White Paper that is worth its salt unless you have good figures or statistical information which would come, and can only come, from a census report. And, if that is late, it means you cannot have a White Paper that would make sense.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: You must not say you are going to have one.)

Hon. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the position is that, as the honourable Member for St. Lucy (Mr. R. E. Brathwaite) has said, what we need to do is aim at taking housing out of the political domain. I have appealed on a number of occasions for this, and I am here repeating, for the benefit of Members who tend to make housing a political football, that it is too sensitive and important an area for us to see it in the narrow confines of partisan politics. We must address ourselves to the problem.

If the economic situation is such that we cannot have money ready and the banks are prepared to hold fast and hold strain on mortgages, then, no matter what initiatives you have, you are not going to realise the goals in housing. All I am saying is that it needs a collective national effort on the part of all of us in this country to see that everything is done for the benefit of housing.

4.20 p.m.

We, as a Government, understand that housing is very important and vital to a country. The whole social stratum of society can be brought down if you have inadequate or poor housing. All of us are striving. The mere fact that Government has entered into an arrangement with USAID to get $20 million to help with this programme means that we are keen to get on with solving the problems in housing. Honourable Members must give us credit. Apparently they did not have the credibility to approach USAID and get them to agree to a loan of $20 million. Nobody would notice them, and

this Government has been able to convince the United States Government that we are worthy of entering into the market and soliciting or utilising $20 million.

The money will go towards home repairs, helping people to purchase some land on the plantation tenantries, and helping them to build new homes. Most of the money will go towards helping those people at the lower end of the social bracket.

Now, this is a Government that is thinking. We feel that something must be done to inject new life into housing, and that is why we must welcome the new initiatives of the new Minister, because it all goes a long way to show that this is not a party of all persons following the same course, all of us have new ideas. We can innovate and initiate and conceptualise, and that is what the honourable Minister has demonstrated.

I welcome the Bill, because I feel it would augur well for the future of a housing policy in Barbados.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD (St. Michael South): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I sat here very quietly today listening to this debate and I will say one thing: if talk could solve the problems in this country, Barbados would have the best Government in the entire world, because as far as housing is concerned, we have heard more talk, and talk upon talk, and talk about talks, than the actual solution of the problems.

Let me start by saying that I represent a constituency in which the Government, through its agency, the National Housing Corporation, owns a considerable amount of land, has a large number of tenants who rent that land and also has a number of tenants who rent houses from the National Housing Corporation. As such, the National Housing Corporation delivers and should deliver a range of services to persons who live in my constituency, and indeed who live in other constituencies where the corporation has property.

What I am certain about is that, when I talk to the persons who live in my constituency, there are a number of complaints about the non-delivery of services which should be delivered, or the poor quality of the services which are delivered. Those who live in the Government units complain about lack of repairs, either of the floor, roof, window casings, or other parts of the building. They complain about the way in which the entire property is kept.

Those who own their houses, who rent the land, and who may be in straitened circumstances, and who rely either on the National Housing Corporation or the Welfare Department to carry out the necessary repairs, complain that when they do get repairs carried out it is not to their satisfaction, and sometimes the repairs are incomplete. So in this particular area we have a situation in which the services which are to be delivered by the National Housing Corporation to its tenants, and to those for whom it has responsibility, are not carried out as efficiently as they could.

Speaking on this particular Bill here, the Housing (Amendment) Bill, 1983, this Bill refers to a proposal by the Government to increase the membership of the Corporation by four additional members. I will say this much for the Minister who introduced this measure. I believe that he is genuinely interested in improving the housing situation and the housing stock in this country. I believe he is a man who would put all of his talents at the disposal of his Ministry and try to do a good job.

At the same time, the speech made by the honourable Member for St. Philip North (Mr. W. O. Franklin) was one of the best speeches on housing and related matters that I have ever heard in this particular Chamber. In it he dealt in a very calm and rational way with the problems confronting the housing sector in this country, with the many matters that are outstanding, and he was constructive in putting forward proposals.

The Minister, himself, identified a problem, and not all the talk, not all the oil in Arabia, can simply ooze those problems away. There is no point talking about rents being outstanding when the Democratic Labour Party was in power. The Minister in his own words said that since 1976, the new housing developments to which the honourable Member for St. James North (Hon. L. S. Craig) referred as show pieces, are not only show-pieces – I suppose architecturally – but there are also show-pieces in the speed with which arrears in rent have been accumulated.

He said there were other problems in housing, and what I am amazed about is that today we have not heard any series of proposals from the Government side as to how these problems are going to be dealt with.

What we have is a proposal for increasing the membership of the National Housing Corporation, I do not know how increasing the membership of the National Housing Corporation is going to improve the collection of rents. I do not know how the increase in the membership of the National Housing Corporation is going to deal with the "dead wood" in the present National Housing Corporation.

You know, this is the first occasion of which I know that you deal with "dead wood" by adding more wood on top of it! It is only going to increase the pile of wood, that is all, as I understand it!

4.30 p.m.

I believe that is a matter which it would take one of our outstanding young creative writers in Barbados to

write a play about for the BBC and win another prize. I believe it would be a suitable topic for the exercise of the creative imagination of one of our outstanding creative writers in this country. It is really amazing!

I want to ask the Minister, and I would like the Minister to tell us specifically and in concrete terms, how this particular measure that is before us is going to deal with the large number of problems that he and other Members on both sides of the House have identified.

Now, I do not know what is the dead wood that we are referring to. Could I see that Staff List there? It has something about membership of the National Housing Corporation. I want to find out what is the dead wood, or which particular limb or branch, the xylem and the phloem, and whatever else that you get in the dead wood. I want to find out. I hope this is the current Board.

I am looking at a document here, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is entitled "Barbados Public Service Staff List." It is a publication which is the property of this Honourable Chamber. Under the National Housing Corporation it says: "R. Hinkson – Chairman". I believe I recognise the name R. Hinkson. He is dead wood? You see, I am asking a question. Is he dead wood?

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Member must address the Chair, and you cannot ask questions of the Chair.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Through you, Sir.....

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: That was not provided for in the Standing Orders of this Chamber.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: Yes, Sir. We then have a "Miss C. Herbert – Deputy Chairman". This must be the second Attorney-at-Law. Dead wood? "A. S. Howell" This cannot be St. Clair Howell! I think this is a former Permanent Secretary. Am I right though? This is A. S. Howell. You know him well! You used to call him often. Is this A. S. Howell here dead wood? This is not St. Clair. I know this is not St. Clair. This is a former Permanent Secretary. Dead Wood? "N. Taylor", dead wood? "V. St.C. Rock" – this is the Barbados Workers' Union – dead wood? "T. Prescod", dead wood? And even the J.P. "A.Seale," J.P., dead wood?

I think this Honourable Chamber is owed some explanation. I do not think we can allow the Minister to get away with it. Here we have a situation – and this Government seem to run into a lot of problems with Boards, you know, when they do not do more damage than a serious hurricane would do in this country – in which members of a Board are being dismissed as dead wood. I really do not understand. We are having a serious problem in public administration in this country!

(Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: Deal with Housing, man).

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: But the Bill is dealing with the Membership of the Housing Corporation. And the Deputy Speaker is very keen; I heard him very earlier on calling on Members to speak about the Bill. I do not want to talk about interest rates and that kind of thing. I want to talk about the membership of the corporation and the dead wood and I would like you to get up and tell us where the dead wood is.

I think I have made the point which I wish to make in respect of this particular corporation.

We have a problem now where the Ministers themselves do not know how to deal with Boards which are under their control. This is the problem in the country. It is a problem with the public administration of this country; and it is a problem in which the areas of responsibility for the Ministers in terms of policy, and the areas of responsibility for the corporations in terms of the functions which they should be carrying out, have become completely blurred.

If the Minister believes that, in order to carry out this new policy, he wants a clean sweep now, and he must therefore assume responsibility for areas which the National Housing Corporation, under the legislation passed by this Honourable Chamber, may have responsibility for, he must come and say what is his clear thinking on this issue.

I have detected a certain impatience with the way in which the Board, and by inference the staff which is responsible to the Board, has been functioning, and therefore he wants to take some measures to deal with that particular problem. He has reached a little further and he has said that some of the inspectors, or rent collectors, or whatever it might be, probably need a little shuffling of the pack, and that he may do something about it!

But we are tending to avoid the basic question in this country. If the Board has responsibility for a certain range of functions in relation to housing in this country, and the Board is not carrying out those responsibilities to the satisfaction of the Minister, there is one clear responsibility on the shoulders of the Minister. He must change the Board so that it will carry out the functions; or he himself must tell the Prime Minister, "I cannot handle this problem because it is now too big for me."

But I do not see how he can tell the Prime Minister that, or how the Prime Minister can respond, because the

Prime Minister himself gets into problems with the statutory corporations in this country! So we have a situation now that we have the Ministers and the Boards in conflict; and we have the Ministers and the Ministers in conflict!

This Combination is no longer combining. The Ministers, one after another, do not know how to behave publicly in their public functions in relation one Ministry to another Ministry.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I cannot accept that from the honourable Member.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: You are no longer a Minister, Sir.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Member is one of those Members, I believe, who should know the Standing Order quite well. I have allowed a lot of latitude in this debate for the entire day, but I would now like to draw the honourable Member's attention to Standing Order 28(2); which says:

> "A Member must confine his speech to the subject under discussion, and may not introduce matter irrelevant thereto."

I will not tolerate the honourable Member raising a debate other than the matter before the House at this stage.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: I thank you for your guidance, Mr. Deputy Speaker, but, you see, this particular matter that we are debating raises the question of responsibility of at least three Ministers.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: It does not raise the matter of the Prime Minister in relation to these Ministries, or Minister to Minister. As I understand it, it is a Bill seeking to increase the number of members that are eligible to sit on a statutory board.
4.40 p.m.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: All right, Mr. Deputy Speaker. As you will have it, I will pass on.

We have a number of problems here in terms of the presentation of the Minister. One which he raised related to the occupancy in the houses. He would like to see that occupancy be limited to ten or fifteen years, if I understood him correctly.

I do not believe he was speaking definitively on this matter, so I really would not hold him too closely on this. I think he was giving some kind of indication. I do not know if this is the thinking that will come out in the White Paper or not. He was speculating and, I believe, making a suggestion as to how we may get a greater circulation in the occupancy of houses, in which a larger number of persons may benefit.

I may have my doubts at this moment as to whether such a policy would work; because it implies that within ten or fifteen years a person might be in a position in which they, after ten or fifteen years of employment interspersed with period of under-employment or unemployment, should be able either to build a house or rent at more commercial rates. I may have my doubts about that, but as I said, I am not really holding the Minister to this particular one. I believe that he was merely speculating.

I think, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that we have said enough on this particular matter to make the Government stop and realise that the problems in housing are not going to be solved merely by accusing the Democratic Labour Party of doing something, or of not doing something. The seven fat years or the seven lean years have passed, and the Government will now have to stand on its own feet. It will have to issue a policy for housing in this country within a short period of time.

And there is no point saying that it takes time to produce a White Paper. I believe the present Minister will produce it shortly. And if it is not produced, I will be the first one to get up in this House and remind the Minister of his responsibilities to the people of this country in this particular regard. He should set out clearly what are the policies of the Government and the National Housing Corporation in respect of implementing those responsibilities and functions that the Legislature has laid down for the Corporation and for the Minister and let the people see some kind of outline whereby the many problems in housing can be solved to the satisfaction of the people of this country.

Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have certainly had a very long and wide-ranging debate on housing. I am sure that the honourable Members opposite delighted in the fact that a very small, rather innocent amendment to an Act dealing with National Housing came before this Chamber today, because it gave them an opportunity which they denied themselves when the Estimates were on.

Let me start off by saying that I invariably admire and applaud the honourable Member for St. Michael South (Mr. L. E. Sandiford) for his intelligent contributions to debate in this Parliament. I must confess that I am not too willing to applaud him this afternoon. Even though he made a few good points, he was not his usual self. I believe he was certainly out of his range on the subjects that he generally deals with in this Parliament.

I know that he would certainly want to let his constituents realise that he is still alive, bearing in mind he is still representing a constituency that has a large number of people who are tenants of Government. I assure him that, in terms of tenants within his constituency, the Government is not unmindful of their problems.

I heard the honourable Member for St. Philip North (Mr. W. O. Franklin) adverting to the fact that there are a number of people out there who cannot get their lands surveyed or their conveyances done, and that the Town Planning Department, which was under the Ministry of Housing and Lands at some time, could not relate to National Housing by way of getting the lands conveyed.

I want to assure him that because of certain confusions within the Town and Country Planning Office and National Housing, they were not aware that the old Board of Health had originally given permission for the cutting up of that land. But since permission was given, a number of people have gone on to spots that were not actually laid out for them and therefore there is a bit of a complication. But in the main, these issues will be straightened out.

Now let me put the position in its perspective. I am going to say exactly what I have to say on issues. I am not a diplomat, I have always said that, and I want to say exactly what I want to say – and I am going to say it, too! My predecessors in office, and I mean during the time of the Barbados Labour Party since 1976, have tried desperately hard in their way to promote a good housing policy, to improve the housing stock within the country and to make more houses available within the Government estates for the people of this country.

If I have to come here to address issues dealing with a statutory corporation, it does not necessarily reflect upon my predecessors in office; not even the members on the opposite side. Whatever I say reflects my own view. For example, the corporation itself might be working perfectly well for another good Minister, probably better than I could ever be, but the policies of the corporation might not be what I like, and therefore I set about to give it the type of course which I have charted. But the corporation has functions under the Act and the corporation must act and the Minister must not act for the corporation.

When I was quoting when this debate started, I was quoting mainly from the report of Burton and Mr. Lewis and Mr. Payne. I was dealing with that report and the number of recommendations which it made. They said that, according to the provisions of the Act, the corporation really was not functioning. The corporation feels, and continues to feel, that the Minister give directions on all matters, and if they fail to act as they are entitled to, they should be told in no uncertain terms that they must act. They have functions in law to perform. All they have to do is to satisfy me that they are acting and performing correctly and in the public's interest.

Under the Act I have the right to tell them how they must be guided in certain matters of public interest, and there are certain responsibilities which the Minister has. In other words, I am not sheltering behind any person; I am not sheltering behind the Government either in this matter. If I am given a Ministry to run, the Government expects me to be able to do the job, so I have to run it. When I fail to run it, then I will be held responsible, and therefore if I come in and I see certain defects, and I believe that there are certain areas that need to be strengthened, I will advise that those areas need to be strengthened. There can be no question about that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that a body as technical as National Housing, and one charged with that type of responsibility, must have on it people of certain professional qualities, people who are dynamic in their approach, people who are prepared to assist me in charting the necessary course for National Housing to take.

I want to see a body sufficiently vibrant as to make sure that the Government does not continue to lose money. There are people who are just free riding. As a matter of fact, it will soon reach the stage, if we continue at this rate that we are going, that nobody would want to build for themselves, but would rather go and dwell in Government houses.

Therefore, you must have a Board that has the will and determination, and the management structure must be so geared and prepared to carry out the instructions of the Board to ensure that a proper rent is returned. By "proper rent" I do not mean the terms of a rent equal to the amount which is put out. I mean, as I imagine a financier would say, on a base of a rate of interest equal to the amount put out.

4.50 p.m.

But I would say – and we have already conceded and I made this clear in my opening remarks – that the Government's rent is not an economic rent, and that the Government is subsidising the housing estate to the tune of 200 per cent. Let us assume we continue to do this. Is anybody going to quarrel if Government insists that its rents be collected?

The honourable Leader of the House (Hon. L. S. Craig) mentioned the case of one man who had owed $6 000. There are still people who owe thousands of dollars. There are still people who continue to escape the collection net. And you cannot tell me that in a new development – Ivy, for example, or Bonnets – you

should have situations where people are moving into new housing and not paying rates.

I am not saying that people are not to have good houses. All people, in my view, should have good houses. If houses are being provided – people should have water borne systems in those houses, obviously – and you are to move in, you must have a down payment and you must have the money to pay for the water. If the situation is so bad that the person cannot have water in their apartment, a health hazard is going to be created; the toilets would not be water borne and the people will have to come out to collect water to flush their toilets and this sort of thing.

The honourable Member for St. Philip North said that my speech was alarming. I do not know what was so alarming about the speech I made, because I was very straightforward. He said I attacked my predecessors in office. I never set out to do so, and I am sorry that he interpreted my speech in that way. Fortunately for me, and unfortunately for him, my predecessors were quick on their feet and said that they had interpreted my remarks in another direction.

The honourable Member also said that the two burning issues in this country are the questions of housing and jobs. As a matter of fact, he put it the other way. He said jobs and housing. He said that, on reflection, he would think that housing became even more important than jobs.

Now if you know that a house is so important and you know that you must have somewhere to go, you should act accordingly. You need water and things to go to make food, and you must, of necessity, have a house to go in at night. You can be just a free and easy-going man, callous about the place. At least women are not that way, because women always think in terms of a shelter, they must have somewhere to go and to take their children, if they have children. But men, I suppose, can be very liberal in their approach in the day and even late at night. But even after a certain time comes at night, they too must look for somewhere to go. And if you know that you must have somewhere to shelter, you must ensure that the rent for that place is paid.

As the honourable Member for St. James North quite correctly pointed out, people in Barbados have the wrong priorities. Before they think in terms of a home, if a home is necessary, they think in terms of a motor car. Well, if you must get to work, if a motor car is necessary, by all means have a motor car. The motor car may help you to get a house. But do not go and buy a hi-fi set and pay the instalment on it, pay for your telephone when the month comes, pay your electric rates – because you must pay them – you must pay the water rates, too, because the General Manager at the Water Authority is very adamant that the rates must be paid – and then do not pay your rent. You must pay your rent as well.

A lot of play was made about my comments on dead wood. The honourable Member for St. Michael South, who is normally very cogent, but was not too cogent this afternoon, took up a list and read out the members of the Board. Except for the fact, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that he would have taken up too much time, it would have been a good thing if he could have looked at the whole structure and read out every employee of the Board, the casual people, the maids, and to bring in all of them.

Why do you have to look at the Board and single out people to be regarded as dead wood, when I dealt with the whole structure, the whole gambit of rent collection, and said how I felt about the question of maintenance?

The honourable Member for St. Philip North was cogent when he said that you have to look at preventative maintenance. It was that issue I was addressing when I said that you should move the people around from time to time so that they would not become too familiar with one spot, not too well known, not too well rooted in any particular place. These are the problems with which you are faced in National Housing.

A number of very valuable points were raised by the honourable Member for St. Michael North (Mr. P. M. Greaves). I do not know if I need to go through all of them, but he raised the question of the treatment of wood and the treatment of the spots on which the buildings are going. I believe that with the type of technical know-how which we have around, when the National Housing itself is building they would want to treat the foundation on which they are building. People may not have this type of expertise, but I would hope that they are given the advice; and I am sure that the Government would be able to give assistance to them from the point of view of the National Housing Corporation.

Another area which the honourable Member dealt with was the question of a new administration block, and he talked about problems that might be flowing from that area. I, myself, am aware of that situation. In the light of the Government's finances, I do not believe that an administration block for National Housing Corporation is immediately necessary, even though it is important, because we cannot afford it at this point in time. And when I look over there, I still see that there is space and opportunity for people to function, except for the fact that, to me, there are more people in that building than is necessary.

You can obviously prolong that situation for another year or two. There are things that are of greater priority, things that are vital and necessary. You have to complete the St. Cecelia flats and apartments first – they are very vital – before we can get to that. The blocks in the Ivy will also have to be dealt with.

I agree that there is a crying need in this community for housing. People want houses to rent. Young people are leaving home today very early. They want to be on their own. They are not waiting until they get to 25 and 30. They want to leave at 15, 16 and 18. That is the situation with life today.

You not only have that situation, but people are not dying too fast now. People are living fairly long and looking very well for it. Despite the talk you hear about the problems of people not able to buy this and not able to buy that, they still look very well. Very recently, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I saw a man of 83, and when he told me that he was 83, I could hardly believe it. He looked as fit as ever. So people are living very long, and therefore, the question of your housing needs become greater as you have these various factors playing.

As far as the actual Board is concerned, the limit will be at eleven, but you do not necessarily have to comply with the upper limit. You can make changes to suit yourself.

There is no question of any blood-letting in anv particular area. I think one speaker mistakenly said that I was critical of the Technical Division. I cannot say that I am critical of the Technical Division. I have found the Technical Division within National Housing Corporation comparatively co-operative and willing to get on with me.

The view was also expressed that, sometimes, Permanent Secretaries try to keep the Ministers away from the technical people. I do not have that type of operation at National Housing. The Permanent Secretary is never unwilling to encourage me to see any technical person who wants to come in.

5.00 p.m.

There are some people who come into a Ministry at a very difficult time and may want to start from a zero position, but I do not believe that you can very well do it this way. In that case you will operate as though no Board exists, no staff exists, nothing exists, and start from scratch, but I do not think that is the best situation at this time.

I share the view that, within the Ministry's management staff on properties, you do not have the best arrangement there in terms of technical know-how, but the Ministry has already put forward a proposal to the Establishments Division with a view to strengthening that area.

Mention was also made of Marlborough House at the bottom of Government Hill. I can tell you that some person has spoken to the Ministry with respect to the purchase of that building, and while I do not want to anticipate what decision Government will take on Marlborough House, it is my view that if Government has buildings that are not usefully employed – and I have made that position clear already – Government should not be the offenders as far as allowing rats and burglars to take over its property – but should sell them.

Somebody said that one man is there in an air-conditioned bedroom. I am not even aware that the air-conditioning unit is operating. I do not know if the watchman is so close to this gentleman as to allow him to utilise the bedroom sometimes. I want to tell him that if I see his car around there I will just ignore it, so he should have no fear with me.

I agree that Government properties might not be the best managed, but we are looking in that direction with the hope of putting them in good shape. Money is in the Estimates for that purpose. Those that are not, in my view, immediately useful, or will not be in the foreseeable future, I will make a submission to Government that they be sold. Not because the IMF will be advising that, or that we are so badly off for money, but it is better to have the places sold to people who will keep them and keep them in good condition, because, invariably, these are properties of historic value and you should not allow them to drop to pieces.

If you allow people who will go into them and put them in good condition, and maintain the type of character of the house – of course, you can make that a condition within the sale – the Government should be amenable to any such sales.

A lot more questions, Mr. Deputy Speaker, have been asked, but, I have answered those I consider most germain. By and large, I would say that the debate on the amendment to the Housing Act was largely a very useful debate, I assure all honourable Members that I appreciate the valid points which were made, and I believe that most of the points were valid, and that I will take them into account.

My primary objective in seeking to have the amendment to the Act is to put National Housing on a better foundation than what it is on at the moment. You have a Tenants Committee that must consist, in my view, of people who are capable of articulating the problems of tenants when they come. You have people who would be on the Finance Committee and people who would be on the Establishment Committee, as you must of necessity have, and if the scope of choosing is wide you might be better able to satisfy those needs.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am looking at the number of areas to see how best I can make the problems less difficult for the public, by way of getting knowledge with respect to houses. A figure was put out today of about some 5 000 people who require houses to rent. The Government is not in a position even to give out five this afternoon, as I do know. We are looking at the old estates at the moment with a view to cleaning them up, to looking at what is available in the old housing estates, and to give those houses to people who are desirous of utilising them.

I do not even know if the National Housing Corporation is fully aware of the total tenants that operate within National Housing estates. I am not quite sure. Probably they have that information, but I am not privy to it. You need to have a lot of information, as my immediate predecessor pointed out, before you can hammer out and come up with a good idea on housing.

With respect to the question of the White Paper on housing, the Ministry is fully geared, the machinery is in high gear, with respect to producing a final plan in this direction, but it is not something that you can come with overnight. It takes time and the Ministry is working on it.

The question that the Bill be read a second time was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

On the motion of Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE, seconded by Hon. L. S. CRAIG, Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER left the Chair and the House went into Committee on the Bill, Mr. J. G. ODLE in the Chair.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is in Committee.

Clauses 1 and 2 were called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE, seconded by Hon. L. S. CRAIG, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported the passing of one Bill in Committee, and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

5.10 p.m.

On separate motions of Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE, seconded by Hon. L. S. CRAIG, the Bill was read a third time and passed.

EDUCATION COMMENCEMENT ACT, 1983

Order No. 6 was called – To move the Second Reading of a Bill to remove any doubt respecting the commencement of the Education Act, 1981 (Act 1981–25) and for related matters.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: (City of Bridgetown): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, the Education Act, 1981, was partially proclaimed on the first day of January of this year, 1983, excepting Sections 15 – 26; through an error in the Ministry of Education, I may say, and not in the Attorney General's Chambers on this occasion.

When the Instrument of Proclamation was placed before the Governor-General, there was an error, and the exclusion of those sections were not properly provided for. We then had to take the advice of the Attorney General's Chambers, and the advice is that the best way to deal with these Sections, 15 – 26, which have to do almost exclusively with the management of the public secondary schools, is by way of further legislation. It is for that reason that this Bill now before this House will seek to remove any doubt respecting the commencement of the Act.

In the simplest possible language, it simply means that we were not ready at January 1 to implement Divisions 3 and 4 dealing with management of public secondary schools and the property, assets and rights in respect of these schools. At January 1, we were hoping to be able to proclaim those sections for April 1, but it is only at this date that we have managed to come before this Honourable House; so we are proposing May 3, 1983, as the date when these particular sections will be proclaimed.

Since I am on my feet, Mr. Deputy Speaker, dealing with this really quite incidental piece of legislation, I think that I might take this opportunity to make a few comments for the benefit of honourable Members in respect of those sections of the Act which were proclaimed on January this year.

I think it is generally known that the National Advisory Commission on Education has, in fact, been appointed, that it has held two meetings, and that it is now well organized in its work. It has put out a Press Release during the course of the last few days intimating to the public, among other things, that it was inviting memoranda from the public and school children in particular.

That is something which has special interest for me. I will take the opportunity once again to make it quite clear that the general public in this particular instance should include school children. After all, they are the ones who are currently in the system, and there are a lot of young people in the 4th, 5th and 6th forms, and I would be very happy if they saw fit, either individually or in groups, to submit memoranda or to make oral presentations before the National Advisory Commission on Education.

The commission itself is largely composed of persons who are representative of agencies or organizations which are.....

Mr. B. M. TAITT: (St. Michael West): Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, Sir. I do not want to interrupt the lady, but I draw to Your Honour's attention that this House is without a quorum, Sir.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let the bell be rung.

The bell was rung and a quorum formed.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Member for the City may now continue.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Yes, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am much obliged. The commission is composed, as I said, of persons largely from organizations and agencies either immediately engaged in education or allied in some way to it. Represented on that body are heads of Government primary schools, heads of secondary schools, Heads of the independent schools, the Barbados Secondary Teachers' Union, and the Barbados Union of Teachers which has been voluble in these last two days.

The Barbados Union of Teachers in particular, I must say, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is represented by its President on the National Advisory Commission on Education, and that is not the only educational council, or board or commission on which the Barbados Union of Teachers is represented.

It is all very well and good for the President of that union to beat his breast and make out a case for his own importance at that organisation's annual general meeting. It is time for the whole truth to be told. It is really basically quite dishonest for people – and I have said this before in this Chamber – who are in public life, people who hold posts which are open to the public view and who influence public opinion when they are making statements, not to fully inform themselves and, when they do speak not to speak the whole truth.
5.20 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the whole truth in this particular matter concerning the Barbados Union of Teachers is that it is represented on the National Advisory Commission on Education, as I have just said; it is also represented on the Barbados National Curriculum Development Committee; it is also represented on the National Examination Council; it also has a seat on the Advisory Board of Erdiston College; and it also sits on the Caribbean Examination Council and several other Boards. These are only some.

But I think it is important in this connection to point out the attendance record of the Barbados Union of Teachers, as this is a union, according to the President, which is not being consulted, and so on.

The Barbados Union of Teachers attended five of sixteen meetings of the National Curriculum Development Committee over the period 1978-82. The Barbados Union of Teachers representative on the National Examination Council attended four out of eleven meetings over the same period 1978-82; and of the meetings of the Advisory Board of Erdiston College over that same period, 1978–82, the BUT had attended five out of ten meetings.

Now I have great difficulty, Mr. Deputy Speaker, with the President of the Barbados Union of Teachers, who maintained at the top of his voice at Bethel Auditorium that his union is not consulted. Here we are, they have pride of place on these important boards where we feel that the teachers' voice and the teachers' influence are important and must be felt, and that is the kind of attendance that we have.

You see, if the real truth is known, Mr. Deputy Speaker, the fact is that not only the Barbados Union of Teachers but other unions are busy making a loud noise about representation on all sorts of committees, boards and councils in this country, but, indeed, they have not got the personnel to service these committees, councils and boards. So it is very hard for me to hear from the mouth of the President of the Barbados Union of Teachers that his union is not consulted.

I found it difficult to understand why it was that he could not have said there and then at the same meeting that he was a member of the highest board of all, the National Advisory Commission on Education, and why he did not have the honesty and decency to say that all the matters that he complained about – matters pertaining to the length of the school day and the school year, and the Common Entrance Examination – were matters which were properly now within the consideration of the National Advisory Commission. But I have to live with all of that in the Ministry of Education.

I think I should take the opportunity, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to point out that the 21 Boards of Management for the 21 government secondary schools have been appointed, and the implementation of these sections which were proclaimed at the 1st January is very much underway. There is various support staffing which has become necessary for the new Boards of Management under this new legislation, and post of Secretary/Treasurer and Executive Officer have been advertised and are currently before the new board for decision.

We have been holding a series of meetings, in some instances seminars, with Parent Teachers' Associations, with Heads and with staff generally. The most recent, I think, was held last weekend, or the weekend before that, to encourage an undertaking of this new legislation. It is really critical that people do understand.

What I can see, reading the Press reports, is that even though we have a Public Relations Officer in the Ministry of Education, and he does sit in from time to time on our local planning and priorities meetings, the Press has found itself in a certain confusion on some important points to do with the implementation of this Act. I am proposing to meet with them, too, in an effort to get it all clear.

Generally speaking, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that is the matter before this Honourable Chamber this afternoon. I am not proposing at this stage to make any more general statements on education, but I suppose that, depending on the contributions that might flow, a more general discussion on education could possibly follow.

I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

Hon. L. R. TULL (St. George South): I beg to second that and reserve my right to speak.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I represent a constituency that has within it about 95 percent of people who can be deemed to be from the lower socio-economic group in Barbados, and in the course of that representation, because I take my job seriously, I come into contact with a large number of parents, all Barbadian, who have been expressing, in increasingly strident tones, very serious concern about the direction education is taking in Barbados.

I propose, Mr. Deputy Speaker, on the occasion of a few remarks on this Bill, to draw to the attention of the Minister and this Honourable House the disquiet which is permeating not only my constituency, but the entire country, with regard to the direction in which education seems to be heading.

I will deal, first of all, with the reasons given for the reading of this Bill before this Honourable House. I do not propose to engage in a technical argument, but I would say that I find it passing strange that we are passing an Act to remove any doubt respecting the commencement of the Education Act, 1981 and for related matters. I find that passing strange, because the Education Act is not something which was put together in a week and produced and promulgated.

The Education Act is something which was repealing the Education Act of eighteen-ninety-something, and the total ramifications of this new Act, which has been brought into effect in Barbados, were such, and should have been such, that there should never be any doubt in anybody's mind about the commencement or any other aspect of an Education Act that has far-reaching consequences, not only for us – indeed, it may have no consequences for us except in the role of parent – but the people who will be affected most fundamentally will be those children who are going to be the objects of the implementation of the Education Act.

Let it be said at the outset, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that no one person in Barbados, least of all this person speaking, could be so arrogant as to suggest that he or she was the repository for all knowledge regarding the methods and systems for educating our people.

There are times, of course, when I hear utterances from the honourable Minister, when I wonder if that statement that I just made is indeed true for her; because there are times when, I must confess, I wonder if the honourable Minister is fully cognisant of some of the effects of her pronouncements, which she makes from time to time in her capacity as Minister responsible for Education.

I do not wish to be scurrilous in my examination of our education policy in regard to this particular Bill and the opportunity presented here this afternoon, because I do not believe that we ought to allow the matter of the education of our children to degenerate to the point of hurling accusations from one side to the other. But because I believe it is important, and for those same reasons, I consider it necessary to drive home with all the force at my command certain areas of concern in this whole question of education which the Minister and the Government must take into consideration.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the appointment of the NACE, the National Advisory Commission on Education, has been announced. It forms part of the new Education Act, and it is too early for anyone to make any sensible comment on it, other than to welcome the fact that there is such a commission and to wish them well as they pursue their respective tasks.

I would hope that no attempt would be made by that commission to demonstrate early that it is working by too frequent announcements in the newspaper about what it will and will not do. Because, again for the reason that people have children and they hang on every word which is announced by anybody in authority in education, too frequent announcements about a number of things, all at the same time, can lead to confusion.

I hope that this commission will take its work seriously. I, or somebody else, might have a reservation or two about the make-up of the commission, but I do not believe that that is important. I think what is important is that it gets down to its work.

But I find it difficult to accept that at the same time the Minister is telling us that the commission has been announced, and at the same time that she is ad-

monishing the BUT, the Barbados Union of Teachers, for certain comments they have made, she purports to indicate that a number of the issues which they have raised will be taken care of by the National Advisory Commission on Education.

If that is so, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why has the Minister made unilateral decisions? Why has she made pronouncements that are policy statements on matters which she, herself, now indicates will form part of the portfolio of the National Advisory Commission? What is the point of having a National Advisory Commission – you announce the appointment of that commission two weeks ago, and you say today that these matters are going to fall within their ambit, when already you have pronounced policy on a number of these areas – and you have pronounced policies which do not find favour with a large proportion of the population?

I would have thought that, using the scientific method, which is the one that has come to be acceptable to most people of intelligence, the Minister – even if personally or as part of the Government she had certain views, or she felt that certain things ought to happen – would have wanted to have the benefit of the thinking of the National Advisory Commission on Education, together with the memoranda which would have been submitted to that commission by all of the people across Barbados, as it is hoped will happen.

What have we instead? We have a number of pronouncements *ex cathedra* from the Minister. We have had the Minister making policy, so it seems to us who are out there, as she goes along.

I will give you an example. The people of Barbados who have children in any school, but particularly in secondary schools, were shocked when, at a Speech Day, the Minister pronounced that, forthwith – forthwith, Mr. Deputy Speaker – the children of Barbados who take secondary education will have to pay $40 for entrance fee.

For the Minister, perhaps, and for some honourable Members, $40 is not a large sum. But for the people of Barbados, it may be different, and I find it difficult to understand how she forms part of a constituency and has colleagues who have constituents, because those constituents must have talked to them about the forty dollars.

(Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Forty dollars is no big thing in Barbados today.)

Mr. B. M. TAITT: You see, part of the honourable Member's problem is that he does not understand, always, that his perception that the people of Barbados do not care about certain issues is right on all areas.

(Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: I am there like you, at the heart of the society.)

Mr. B. M. TAITT: This is the first time that the opportunity has been presented in this Honourable House to put it on Record, and it is going to be put on Record.

(Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: That is alright with me. I have always spoken my mind and I know. I deal with them.)

Mr. B. M. TAITT: The $40 is a burden, Sir, and it is not going to achieve the purpose for which it is imposed. The $40 will not make any child who is wont to stay away from an exam go to any exam.

I make bold to say this, in any household where the parent cannot now insist that a child goes to an examination, the $40 will not assist in making that child go to the examination. We must deal with symptoms, we must deal with the causes, we must get to the root of the matter.

My quarrel with the honourable Minister is not necessarily the imposition of the $40. My quarrel with the Minister is that she has not indicated to us, the people of Barbados, what studies she has done, what information she has brought to bear in her contemplation when she was making this policy. No. *Ex cathedra,* she said from Foundation School, I believe it was, forthwith, "they will pay $40."
5.40 p.m.

That is not the way for a democratic country, which has paid a lot of attention to social mobility through education, to have to absorb decisions at that time. That is not acceptable to most of the people of this country.

And her having made the statement, within days people have received letters. I speak with authority, Sir, because I have received one. All the people who have children at school have received letters from their headmistresses and headmasters.

(Dr. Hon. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Do not make it a document of the House.)

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I do not want to make it a document of the House, I do not think that it is important. I am not here grandstanding for any purpose. I am drawing to the attention of this House a number of

matters on which I, personally, feel very strongly, and on which I know a large number of my constituents feel strongly.

The letter, which is a public letter -- it has been sent to almost every child; this one comes from a particular school – says:

"Dear Parent/Guardian,

We have received instructions from the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Education dated March 31, 1983 in relation to the payment of a local entrance fee in respect of CXC examinations and other examinations conducted by overseas examining bodies.

Your daughter/ward/son has been entered for a selection of external examinations which are taking place between May and July this year.

Students in Government secondary schools should pay a local entrance fee as follows – $40 per student per examining body, to be paid into the school office by Monday, 25th April, 1983. This fee will assist in meeting the cost of supervision and invigilation of these examinations.

Please inform me in writing if the imposition of this fee creates genuine hardship, since I am to report such cases to the Ministry of Education for investigation by the Welfare Department.

Yours sincerely,"

It is signed by the headmistress, and at the bottom it gives the name of the student and the form he or she is in.

Now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, if for no other reason than the psychological aspects of this letter, you are saying to people out there, "if you cannot afford the $40, you then become a welfare case."

People who entered their children into school five years ago, did so with the understanding that when the children reached a certain level in that school they would be able to take examinations.

I go further. I would like to ask the Minister, and this is a very important matter, what do you intend to do with a child whose parents does not pay and does not respond by the 25th April? Will you stop all those children who have entered to take those examinations from taking them? Are you going to absent those children when you purport to be wishing to solve the problem of absenteeism? What manner of madness is this, Sir?

I do not understand how a Government can sit around at a table and agree to this, if indeed this was discussed around a table, because I do not believe that those honourable Members over there who sit in the Cabinet actually sat around a table in the Cabinet and agreed to this. I do not believe that, especially when that has followed impositions such as increased bus fares and a number of other impositions which are not vital. The same manner was used when the school books' price was added.

For a number of parents in Barbados the cost of sending children to school escalated in the last 18 months something fantastic. Apart from the normal economic problems, they find themselves having to purchase a large number of books, and not every headmistress or headmaster administering the various schemes of the Ministry of Education has the capacity and/or the ability to be humane in the application of these strictures.

What we have is a lot of psychological bludgeoning, a lot of psychological suffering, and you are going to see the results of this, not now – the Minister and her colleagues, those who are wont to accept these policies, can feel comfortable that they are not going to be touched this minute by the results of these policies, or lack of policies – but in five years, in ten years, in fifteen years, we are going to see the benefits or the terrors, of these particular policies which the Minister of Education seems able to inflict on the people of Barbados at whim and at fancy.

I feel very strongly about this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I feel strongly about it as a parent. I suppose that out of an abundance of caution I am not to suffer my own children. I may find myself having to pay the money, even if I do so under protest, but my personal inclination is to ignore the letter and not pay it. It is going to be a burden on me, I am going to write a letter. I am going to tell the Permanent Secretary if he is within hearing distance, through the Minister and through you, Sir, that I will have hardship, so I will write the letter as has been commanded. But what about that large number of people in my constituency who do not even understand how the matter is to be dealt with?

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: For the benefit of the Chamber, would the honourable Member like to make the document available for records?

Mr. B. M. TAITT: The only reason why I would not wish to make it a document of the House is because a person is mentioned in the document. However, Sir, I will make the document available not only to the Reporters, but to honourable Members on that side.

Asides.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Let it be understood that it is not to be a document of the House.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: You see, Sir, I am saying, I myself, would want to take certain steps as a parent, but I am not here making my case as a parent, I am making my case on behalf of all those parents in my constituency and surrounding areas who have come to me, who are on the telephone, who are in tears.

You see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not believe that the Minister fully understands how ordinary people react on these matters. I do not believe that she fully understands! It is not everybody, who is dealing with these kinds of things, who has the capacity of honourable Members in this House. I may be able to deal with it, but there are parents who are not going to submit the letters, who are not going to fall within the time limit. What are we going to do about them?

(Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: A structure is being set up to repay the fees of those who are successful).

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Now, the honourable Member is saying *sotto voce* that a structure is being set up, and I have no doubt that the honourable Minister will get up and say so.

I want to ask the honourable Prime Minister, do you think we would have any controversy if the honourable Minister had thought out this and come up with the same structure and just announced it? We would not have any controversy, I would not be here discussing it.

I do not understand why the Minister of Education cannot, in pronouncing education policy, do it in a manner that is designed to reduce the amount of heartache with she causes. Does she have some particular penchant for inflicting pain? I do not understand it! It is unnecessary! What foolishness is this?

You go to a Speech Day, and suddenly you hear on the radio while you are driving home that Miss Billie Miller said today you have to pay $40. You say, "Is she mad or what?" That is what the radio says, Sir, I am quoting, and that is what the person driving home says, because it hits you, you do not understand, you wonder what new mischief has happened. Then you hear that you have some children who do not go to examinations.

Every honourable Member over there can remember that when he took examinations, there were some people who did not turn up. And there are people who will never turn up, because some have psychological problems about writing examinations, some have become wayward during the year of the examination, some of them do not know the work and they decide that they would better not embarrass themselves – they can say truthfully to their parents, "I forgot, I missed the examination" – and some genuinely got confused about time tabling, because at examination time anybody who has ever taken examinations, or who has been with people who take examinations, know that people become disoriented.
5.50 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am aware of a certain institution where you can tell every year when examinations are coming up. The most eccentric behaviour emerges in that institution. I know of one person, who had great difficulty passing his examinations. But you could tell; every year he would put on a big straw hat and a bow tie. You knew that examinations were coming up.

There were fellows who wore one particular belt from the time examinations were coming up and another fellow would wear one shoe. All of us have seen these eccentricities. And all I am saying is that absenteeism has to be dealt with as a serious problem. We need to examine the cause and we need to find out the source of the problem and deal with it.

The first time the Minister ever said anything about absenteeism that I know of, was when she was imposing the $40. Why could the Minister not have had a programme on television? CBC runs a lot of foolishness from time to time. This Government could put on a programme. They send a lot of foolishness on T.V. occasionally – and CBC has to carry it, because the Government sends it; but they could have had a programme in which they could have drawn to the attention of people that the incidence of absenteeism from exams is too high.

I put it to you, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that most of the honourable Members in here did not know of the high incidence of absenteeism until we heard they were going to impose the $40.

I remember, Sir, sitting in a committee – I think Your Honour might recall – and hearing that among the difficulties the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education has, is a large number of the staff is at the Mental Hospital. I am not casting any aspersions, but one begins to understand. There is a lot of madness that comes out of the Ministry of Education, and it comes out of the mouth of the Minister, Sir.

Let me draw another example to your attention. Every single person in this Honourable Chamber and surrounding areas went to school somewhere, and every single person in here – the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Minister, the Attorney General and possibly the

Minister of Education – went to a school where they had a woman with a tray.....

(Hon. L. S. CRAIG: You did not call me).

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I beg your pardon, and the Minister of Parliamentary Affairs. I apologise, Sir. You know, the honourable Member for St. Michael Central (Mr. A. Truss) says you are a half Minister, so I was calling the whole Ministers first.

Sir, we all went to school. I believe the honourable Minister of Education went to school at a place where there had a woman outside with a tray selling comforts, nuts, ackees, dunks, black bitch – Mr. Deputy Speaker, you can remember the black bitch – and fat pork. That was cultural. This has nothing to do with diet.

Do you realize that the honourable Attorney General's children and my children, may in fact, have missed a number of the things we did not miss, which have helped to make us whatever we are? That is cultural, and yet she has allowed and pronounced a policy where, like the Gestapo, they are going around and rounding out the hawkers at the schools and saying, "Out! Go! We have a scientific approach to selling dunks." You have to get them out of a freezer in a box! Mr. Deputy Speaker, I cannot believe this.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it would be funny if it did not have economic implications. You know what the economic implications are? The economic implications are that the people who sell around those places are self-employed.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Is the honourable Member going to deal with another topic?

Mr. B. M. TAITT: No, Sir. I am dealing with education and its relationship to the community, and I will show Your Honour if you will bear with me. I am showing where the education policy is impinging on the surrounding community which feeds into the schools, Sir. I am going in that direction.

The people who sell around a school perform two functions. They get an economic livelihood from selling and they perform a cultural activity, or a social activity, in that the interaction between the children in the schools, and those people is important.

The right honourable Member for St. Thomas (Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. Adams) must remember. I have said that he had no "boy days", but that is not entirely true. He must remember somebody at the elementary school, some woman – either a very fat, fat, woman, or a very thin, thin woman, or a woman that always used to wear the same dress or something –

Asides

Mr. B. M. TAITT: No, that is not true. The honourable Member did not go to any girl's school. I am being heckled, Sir.

The point I am making is that the honourable Member, who is now Prime Minister, must remember someone who has some connection with him, other than his parents, who helped him to understand something connected to his education. It was part of the educational process.

Now, the honourable Member, perhaps with the best will in the world – let me give to the honourable Minister that her intentions are pure. I do not believe that the Minister is perversed. I do not believe she is stupid. I do not believe she is wicked. I do not believe any of those things that I hear people saying about her. I do not believe that! I believe she has the best will in the world.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I have been making a careful research of the words which have been deemed unparliamentary, and I am very versed in the methods of being sarcastic and using words which are not directly applicable to anyone but carry the same meaning.

I would very much like the honourable Member to withdraw that entire paragraph and use words which are parliamentary.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I unhesitatingly withdraw them, Sir, because I really do not wish to impute anything negative to the Minister other than at the policy level.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: But you ended it by saying what the people say.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I withdraw that, Sir. Let me put it more positively. I believe that the Minister intentions are pure. I believe that she is informed by a number of civil servants whose intentions are also pure. I believe, however, that, in the implementation of the policy, the Minister is not bringing to bear that quintessence of administrative understanding which is helped by your admixture within the society, which helps you to make the kinds of decisions that the society can live with.

If the honourable Member had in fact been making contact in the manner I believe she should, then she must know that the decision to remove the hawkers is not merely a question of sanitation, it is not merely a question of health – it takes in the whole ramifications of the running of a school and the traditions of a country.

I am not suggesting that the children of Barbados ought not to be protected from somebody who has a "life sore"; but all of us knew of people who had "life sores," who used to make the sweet sugar cakes.
6.00 p.m.

But there is more to it. When you are formulating an education policy, in my view, it has to be long living; it has to be something that when you make a decision, its effect will reverberate not only around the generation in which the decision is made, but for generations to come.

I do not think that the Minister takes all of the advice which is given to her; no one does. No one who is involved at the level of Minister can take all the advice, but in those areas where she does not have, perhaps, personal experience, the Minister ought to consult with some of the other people.

I do not know what methodology that Government uses, but it is clear to me that some of the decisions which come out of the Ministry of Education could not have been run past the Cabinet the first time. It is clear to me that the honourable Member for St. James North (Hon. L. S. Craig), the honourable Member for St. Michael South East (Hon. DeL. O. Bradshaw), the honourable Member for St. George North (Mr. J. G. Odle) and certainly the honourable Member for St. Michael East (Hon. Dr. D. G. Blackman) and the former Minister of Education (Hon. L. R. Tull) are persons who I believe, instinctively, would say to the Minister, "You had better not try that that way." I find it hard to believe that those honourable gentlemen could sit around a table and agree to the systematic removal of all the people who sell around the schools.

I speak on this with passion because I had a delegation of seven who came to see me concerning the situation at St. Leonards School.

Asides.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: The honourable Member asks what about the consignee at the school, who pays money every month.

When you were assigning the consignee, when you were considering the consignee, when you were charging the fee, all of these matters ought to have been taken into contemplation. You cannot make mistake "A" and then solve it by making mistake "B". I am saying to you that you are perfectly right to look after the economic interest of the people who have to pay you a licence, but it is how you do it that counts. You do not get up hot and sweaty and decide – and, again, pronounce.

I want to recommend to the Government that they have some community consultations. I want to recommend that when they are making certain policy, they have done it before, go in the areas and find out from the people, talk to them and ask them how they feel about this. Educate the children on what they should and should not eat.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, any one of the honourable Members who travelled through the United States, New York City, or London, knows that there are wayside hawkers who sell things that would be deemed to be unhealthy. All those honourable Members who have had education in Britain have eaten fish out of newspaper. They would never eat fish out of newspaper in Baxters Road, because we do not serve fish out of newspaper in Baxters Road. You get brown paper; it may be cement paper, but that is another story. The point I am making is that everybody who has sojourned in Britain for any time ate fish and chips out of newspaper, and you did not worry about the health part of it.

Asides.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: The honourable member seems to be suggesting that he did not have any; but he was privileged. It is well known you might not have tasted of the same kind of fare that certain other honourable Members did. I do not know; I was not there; but I am told that the honourable Member did not suffer any inconvenience during his long sojourn in Britain, so I am not going to deal with him in those terms. I am saying, generally speaking, you do things because that is a tradition. Fish and chips in Britain is a tradition.

Your mother used to say that you must wash dunks before you ate them. You know when we were growing up, in relation to this business of washing dunks, the pipe was so far in relation to the desire for the dunks who washed dunks when they were going to school? Wash what dunks! And look at me, healthy! Look at you, Sir, healthy!

We ate all manner of things. I stole golden apples; I never washed them; just picked them up off the ground, – the Attorney General knows of what I speak – we scraped off the top and we ate, but we survived. I am being told by my colleague that whether we scraped off the top depended on how many people had to get a bite.

Sir, I may say these things and bring some levity while saying them, but the essence of what I am saying is that there is a hardship, which is being imposed from the top downward, and that hardship is being imposed because it seems as if the Minister is hard-headed; it seems as if the Minister feels that she has to pronounce policy without reference to anything other than what she feels.

Let us look at the school meals policy. Suddenly, we get another announcement – that we are going to get a different kind of school meal. When we have investigated the different kind of school meal, we find that it is now a bun-oriented food.

Now, the whole basis of the school feeding programme was hot meals. It was agreed by a number of nutritionists, back down the road, that a child needs at least one hot meal a day. Furthermore, it was established that, contrary to the appearance of a number of people, there are many children, who, if they do not get that hot meal at the school, will not get a hot meal at least two days out of every week. That is a fact.

When a Minister, in her efforts to modernise, decides that she is going to bring hamburgers and buns, and she is going to serve fast food – because that is what it is, fast food – in place of a hot meal, and when it is alleged that that is based on advice from the nutritionists. I say that I want to hear from the nutritionists, I want to see it in writing; because the nutritionists would have to be mad.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, bread and fish is what we used to have. We used to have bread and fish for lunch because we had to have it. We have progressed beyond that. We believe that our children do not have to have bread and fish. We used to have bread and fish because that is what it had to be.

Asides

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the honourable Member for St. Michael West Central (Hon. V. L. Johnson) understands what I am talking about. We were forced to do that.

But we felt – and I heard it said – I read it in the policy – it was carried on for a while, and the honourable Member, who is now Attorney General (Hon. L. R. Tull) carried it on – that the idea of the hot meal was not only the food. You will recall that when you were quarrelling with the teachers, who said that they were not going to participate in the feeding programme, you said to them that this is part of teaching – this is not only feeding – you are not a maid – you are teaching them how to use a knife and fork and how to socially interact. That is what you said.

(Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: What did they say?)

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I am dealing with you; I will deal with them later. You said that.

Now, you are coming and handing them it in a bag; open the bag and push in your hand. I do not understand this flip-flop that is going on in education.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order: I am quite prepared to put up with the grandstanding which we have come to expect from the honourable Member for St. Michael West. There does not even have to be anybody in the Gallery. If there is a mouse in the Gallery, he is going to grandstand. But I cannot put up with what is a patent lie. It is not true that anybody gets any bag and has to take any hand to go into any bag to pull out anything. You just stick to the facts as you know them to be so. Do not embroider.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Minister will have ample time in her reply to deal with any allegations made by the honourable Member for St. Michael West which are not true and correct.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: The honourable Member says I am grandstanding. Well, maybe I am, Sir, but let me grandstand in peace.

You are going to serve these meals with hamburger chips, or this new-fashioned food you are going to give them, and they are going to have knife and fork. You are going to now teach them how to eat hamburgers with a knife and fork! It is all right.

I would apologise if I have misrepresented your Ministry, but that is the information that has come out in the Press. But, of course, you say that the Press is confused. The honourable Member says the Press is confused; so I will grant that the Press is confused. Why don't you clear up the confusion? Why doesn't the Minister of Education take some time and tell us exactly what is happening? Why do we have to find out in jips and jabs? Why do I have to wait for her to say that I am a liar to discover that it is not true that they are getting hamburgers in bags?
6.10 p.m.

Aside.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: That is what I read, that this would be faster. They would be able to take care of the feeding much faster because it will now be parcelled out. Are you going to parcel them out in burlap bags?

(Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Where did you read that?)

Mr. B. M. TAITT: In the newspaper.

(Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: You just made that up.)

Mr. B. M. TAITT: The newspapers are confused, too, according to the honourable Minister.

Let me put it to you this way. The community or social development aspect seems to have been eliminated

in this new approach to feeding. That seems to be the position. But I just wish, though, that the Minister, again, would have taken the parents into contemplation.

In the Education Act that you have passed, you have said that when you are going to implement education policies, parents have to be consulted. You have said so. That is law. We have said so.

What do you understand by consultation? Putting somebody on the National Advisory Commission on Education? You just made a point about the BUT quarrelling about consultation, and your answer is that they are on three committees.

Now, the honourable Member is a lawyer by profession, so I know that she knows better. Consultation cannot possibly mean appointing a representative on a board. Do you mean to tell me that the Union's representative on the Tourist Board can be said to be a consultant with the Minister of Tourism? The Minister consults with him because he is on the Board?

What does the Minister expect from us? We are presumed to be intelligent in here, and here is the Minister telling us that the President of the BUT has opened his mouth and words have dropped out, when he says that you have been implementing policies without consulting the teachers. And your reply is, if he had told the truth, he would have said that they are appointed to Board A, Board B and Board C. Is that how you consult?

What the teachers are saying is that you have been running them down. You have given the population the belief that the teachers in Barbados, generally speaking, are desultory – they do not do their jobs properly, they do not come to work on time, they do not teach the children, they have no interest in the children.

And if you are the Minister of Education, you have to know that is not true. Three per cent of the teachers might be like that, but the vast majority of teachers in this country are still committed. If they were not committed, we could not have the educational system we have.

But, again, there is a lack of sensitivity. She has allowed herself to reach a stage where she is desensitised to the problems and, more importantly, the emotions of the people involved. I do not understand how a Minister in an area of education can fail to take the feelings of the people into consideration.

You know, if the Minister of Tourism runs into a trap, or the Prime Minister does not bring this Budget, we can deal with those matters. Those are matters which you can punch out face to face, or behind his back. But when it comes to education.....

(Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: When you cannot deal with them, you deal with them behind your back.)

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Well, that is how you deal with the Prime Minister. You go up in Jamaica to quarrel with the Prime Minister instead of telling him what to do. Anyhow, I do not want to get into that.

Aside

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I cannot tell you, you would not speak to him again.

(Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Stop grandstanding. Richie has come in now, you know.)

Mr. B. M. TAITT: The point I am making is that the former Minister of Education, the honourable Member who is now the Attorney-General, and the framer of education policy in Barbados for seven crucial years, a distinguished Minister of Education, my colleague the Deputy Leader of the Opposition (Mr. L. E. Sandiford), have both been criticised at some point along the way. But no one can accuse them of being insensitive in their approach to the question of education. They were both good Ministers of Education. I can vouch for this one and I am told about the other one.

But, Sir, I am not even saying that she is not a good Minister of Education. That is not what I am saying.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Member must not refer to any honourable Member of this Chamber.....

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I beg your pardon, Sir.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: .....as he or she.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I am not saying that the honourable Member is not a good Minister of Education. That is not the gravamen of my statement. I am saying that she is an insensitive Minister of Education. I am saying that she is imposing an unnecessary emotional burden on the people of this country. I am further charging her with not paying attention to the pleas of people who, arising out of that burden, appeal to her to be less brutal in her pronouncements. But, Sir, that is how it is.

Let us look again, Sir, at the appointment of the regional boards. We have now decided, according to the new Education Act, and at the option of the Minister, that you would have one board representing, I think, four schools, a zone or some such thing. I think it is four schools.

Aside.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Not the same board? It is something like that, Sir. We have not been given information on it, but my understanding is that one board will represent two or three schools. I am not sure, Sir, but the system is a little different from what it was. That is not the main point I want to make.

They have now appointed new persons to the consolidated boards. Now, there is a man – and I am calling his name not in any pejorative way, Sir a man called Mr. Belgrave, who served as Chairman of the Board of Governors of Combermere for a very long time. I honestly do not know what is the complexion of his politics. I really do not know, Sir. What I do know is that that particular chairman of that particular board can be said to have served selflessly for the last, I believe, seventeen years, or whatever it is. As far as I know, his praises have been sung by both board members and staff members. Headmasters have come and gone, and they have all praised his indefatigable effort in the promotion of that school.

I understand that the Minister had fired him summarily. I want to ask the Minister if that is so. If that is so, Sir, I do not understand what could have informed the Minister that Mr. Belgrave should go.

This is a man, Sir, who, if the school needed some money to buy hockey gloves and the vote was low, would take his own money and buy some hockey gloves. This is the kind of man, as I understand it, and from my own observation, who has given genuine, clear, selfless service.

I would like to ask the Minister – if, in fact, she has removed him from the board – if she took the trouble to examine his contributions to the development of that school over the last two decades? He is a man who has served Combermere from the time he was eleven years old, because, as I understand it, he went through the school and has never lost contact. A person like that is valuable.

If you have a consolidated board, one of the chairmen, or all the chairmen, might have to go, but you do not dispense with his services completely. He is bound to be useful to the new board. The whole exercise is a bit of an experiment; we do not know exactly how it is going to work; so why do you not use, as best you can, those who have experience in the running of schools?

The Combermere School, as I understand it, is a school with over 800 pupils. It is a school which was used for experimentation, as the first school that went co-ed. It had a number of problems as a result of that. I am told that it has managed to overcome those problems. To a large extent, those problems have been overcome because the governing body of that school took an interest above and beyond that required of governing bodies. I am sure, Sir, that if we look to the Governing Body of Foundation School, or Coleridge & Parry, we will probably find a similar result.

6.20 p.m.

I come not to praise Chairman Belgrave, but I come to raise questions with the Minister. There must be some policy which informs you in your appointment of these kinds of people. If you have so removed that goodly gentleman, I will invite you to re-think your position, because I do not think that the question of appointment of school boards ought to be dealt with at the level of politics.

When the honourable Member for St. George South (Hon. L. R. Tull) was Minister, soon after they came into office he summarily removed the Chairman of the Governing Body of the St. Leonard's School, and I had occasion at that time to draw to his attention that he had made an error.

I myself believe, and I will strive to have it as a policy of the Democratic Labour Party, that the school board should largely reflect the neighbourhood within which the schools exist. If you wish to prevent the vandalism, and if you wish to see pride in the school building and that sort of development in the area, I have always believed that a goodly number of the school board ought to come from within the vicinity that the school serves.

You have to have some management people on it; you have to have somebody who can be the secretary, you have to have somebody who can be the chairman. The chairman may even be someone who is of the same political persuasion, because people of the same political persuasion have a tendency to carry out policy much more easily, I am told, than people of a different political persuasion. But you do not get rid of persons who have served you well – and by "you", here I mean the community.

I am not going to dwell on that any longer, Sir, because I do not think it would serve any purpose. I would merely look at the row between the teachers and the Minister.

The Barbados Union of Teachers, whatever else may be said of them, is still a representative body of the teaching profession. I would suggest, humbly, to the Minister that it cannot be in the interest of the community for her to take an attitude of hostility to the Barbados Union of Teachers. I think that even if the

President of the BUT can be said to have made a misguided statement, as she claims, or even if in his statement he appears to misrepresent the facts, as she claims, it is still not in her interest or the general interest of the community for the Minister to curse the President of the Barbados Union of Teachers, or any teachers' union. It cannot be to the benefit of the children.

The teachers in this community, like the nurses, are not always revered in the way they should. They are professionals and they must understand that from time to time people are going to knock against them, but at the same time, we as a Parliament have a responsibility, and the Minister of Education has a higher responsibility, to maintain the professional integrity of those teachers at all times, so far as it falls to her to assist in that maintenance.

Any attempt to denigrate the teaching profession by the Minister responsible for Education is bound to result in a negative attitude on the part of the teachers, and any negative attitude to the Ministry is bound to be reflected in their attitude to their profession.

There are some other areas of education which need ventilation, but I do not believe that now is the time to do so. I believe that I have made the points I wanted to make, and I will finish by suggesting to the Minister that if you have appointed a National Advisory Commission on Education, if you have given them a number of matters on which you wish their full advice so you can be guided in making policy, please desist from making policies which they have to work toward. If you make the policy first and then give them the portfolio, they are a waste of time and will serve no useful purpose.

That seems, from your pronouncements, to be the case. I want to recommend that you withdraw – I do not believe that it is too late for the Government to withdraw this pronouncement and this imposition of a $40 requirement. I believe that the Government could have served its purpose by merely indicating it was going to do this and drawing attention to the need to stop the absenteeism and other matters related to examinations.

Mark my words, Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is going to bring confusion among perhaps only 5 per cent in the final analysis, but that 5 per cent of the school population will be a significant number of children and families in this Barbadian community who will suffer because of that misguided policy. I believe it is not too late for the Minister to withdraw it, and I am calling on her and the Government to withdraw that onerous and totally unnecessary imposition. I state again categorically that I do not believe it will serve the purpose for which it is said to have been imposed.

I also believe that the people of Barbados, especially those from the lower socio-economic group, cannot feel comfortable with the high impositions brought about by the increased bus fares, the increased cost of books, and now an imposition for examinations, and the concept of welfarism which is being injected into the life of people who have been striving for the last two decades to remove themselves from that category of persons who need welfare.

It is a bad policy when you impose a higher cost for bus fares to look to the welfare system for those who have difficulty. Many people will not go as a matter of pride to any Welfare Department to discuss bus fares. They will keep the children home first.

It is a matter of serious philosophic difference between us that you would impose a policy and then say to a large number of people, "if you have a problem let the Welfare Department look at it." It is either cynicism, by which you know that large numbers will not go and therefore you get the policy implemented, or, Sir, it is a straight case of not understanding the psyche of the Barbadian and not understanding the society and the community in which we live.

The Minister has an obligation to us as a people. That particular Ministry is the most sensitive Ministry in Barbados, because it deals with the most precious commodity we have, and I object as a parent, I object as a representative, to any Minister of Education on any side of this House using the Ministry of Education as if it is a personal fiefdom. The policy of education in Barbados affects every single one of us, whether you are a B or a D, and it cannot be seen, except in broad terms, in political terms.

If I were sitting on that side, I would have hoped to say the things I have said here to the Minister before this Bill came down. I would have hoped to say all the things I have said to the Minister, because in my estimation, those things have to be said. And the people of Barbados have got to rise up from time to time when Ministers or Governments impose sanctions on them that are not in keeping with what is good for them, and let the Ministers or the Governments know that they are wrong, they are totally and completely wrong.

6.30 p.m.

This is wrong in principle, it is wrong in time, and it is wrong *per se*. It serves no useful purpose.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that what I have had to say, if it does nothing more, will induce in the Minister a tendency towards caution when she is about to implement measures of this kind which are bound to redound to the discredit of the people of this country.

When you put the people of this country in a position where they have to return to a state of welfare, you cannot become angry when people accuse you of elitism. Your policies smack of elitism! Your policies suggest that there is some attempt to keep some people in their place. It is for you to demonstrate that that is not so. But, so far, the records show that at all levels of this society, but in particular with regard to education, those persons who come from the lower socio-economic grouping are being told, "Stay in your place!"

I have seen this, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in the whole area of the availability of need. I have looked at the whole question, Sir, being able to use education as a means of social mobility. Where people in this country used to be able to feel that their children could go through school, they could get a meal, they could pass the Eleven-Plus Examination and get into one of the better schools, you have come up with a form of zoning which systematically restrict them.

Those people have felt that they could go on – even if they did not get a scholarship, even if they did not get "A" levels – they could get their "O" levels, and get a job in the Civil Service; get a job somewhere. They could get leave. They could subsequently become teachers, because after they were appointed as teachers, they could go to Erdiston College or they could get leave and go to the University and get a degree, and by that way, they could get some kind of social mobility.

All of that has been systematically dismantled, and what we have now is, for example, the Prime Minister saying that persons who want to become teachers must first go through secondary school, then go to Erdiston and then apply for a job – when it is well-known that a large number of people from the lower socio-economic groupings would not be able to do that. They have to pay for their own education now, when we have boasted, not only in Barbados, but throughout the region as well and throughout the world, about the best educational system in the world. Now, we are reduced to an elitism; and it is manifested most particularly in the pronouncements of the honourable Minister of Education and the Prime Minister. Those policies are being seen in the articulations which he makes, and I make no boast about it.

It is unacceptable to the vast majority of people in this country, and so long as I represent those people, or any part of them, I consider it as part of my duty, whether she considers it grandstanding or not, to stand up in here or anywhere and say my piece.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is my considered opinion that this particular Bill itself is not anything that anybody is going to bother about, although, Sir, I will finish as I began. I say that it is ineptitude when a Government has to bring a piece of legislation on something as fundamental as the Education Act to say that it wishes to remove doubt as to the date of commencement. I have to ask, where it is smoking gun? There is something which we have not been told! There is some mischief which has to be corrected by this piece of legislation!

The honourable Member said that they were not ready at the commencement date. What we wish to have, and what we wish from her, is an assurance that there is nobody whose rights will be curtailed or infringed, or have been curtailed or infringed, as a result of the uncertainty or doubt about the commencement of the Act.

I want to draw one point. The Minister might not be aware of this. I would like to believe that she is not aware of it. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I talk about insensitivity. I talk about inhumane action. I have a constituent who have been in the School Meals Programme for 20 years. They just transferred her from Westbury to St. Clements – and she has to get to work at 6 o'clock in the morning!

I say to you that it takes a very inhumane person to take up a woman who has served you for 20 years, no matter what her political colouration, transfer her from Westbury Road to St. Clements in St. Lucy/and tell her she has to get to work at 6 o'clock in the morning. All you are doing is getting ready to fire that woman. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am talking about facts concerning education policies.

Asides

Mr. B. M. TAITT: The honourable Member is not as inhumane as he wants us to sound. I know that he is concerned. I believe he would be concerned about that, because it could have been my mother.

Nobody working in the School Meals at Westbury Road should be transferred to St. Lucy. If you have to transfer her, transfer her to somewhere near, but not St. Clements.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, do you have any idea where St. Clements is? You cannot catch any bus going to St. Clements to get to work at 6 o'clock. You have to wake up at half past three in the morning.

(Hon. L. S. CRAIG: My father used to ride to work).

Mr. B. M. TAITT: But it was not in the modern Barbados that you built. Your father used to ride to wotk

in the old-time Barbados. We have built a modern Barbados – and you want to have the same conditions as when your father used to ride to work? You cannot be serious.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I hope that my words concerning that poor unfortunate lady will not fall on deaf ears.

Asides.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I am ending now. I am just getting the information.

I believe that the insensitivity of the Government, and more particularly the Minister, requires – if we are going to have a new Barbados, if as we continue to tell the people of Barbados they have a right to aspire to a new Barbados, if we are going to have the new horizons that we always talk about – both the honourable Members over there and the honourable Members over here to agree that there are certain minimum standards below which we cannot allow our people to fall.

Aside

Mr. B. M. TAITT: The point is that we cannot go on talking about dreams for a new Barbados if, when we look at the policies being implemented, in especially an area as sensitive as education, we come to feel that there is an uncaring attitude.

The honourable Minister has always struck me as a lady. I do not understand why, when it comes to implementing policies, she has to behave as though she is proving something. You do not have to prove anything to anybody on your side or my side. You are the Minister of Education and therefore we accept that you are, however temporary it might be. You are the Minister of Education. Why do you have to do these things?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have made my point and I hope that I have been useful to the Minister in bringing her to christian feeling so far as the young children and the people of Barbados are concerned.

Applause.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: (Christ Church West Central): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have been in Parliament for a very long time, and I do not think I have ever heard a speech in which the shadow had left out the substance, like the honourable Member (Mr. B. M. Taitt) on the other side has done.

6.40 p.m.

It is clear that the honourable Member has failed completely to understand the full purport of Government policy in education over the course of the last seven years. Had he done so, he would have recognised that in few seven year periods in the history of politics in Barbados has there been so much thought, so much energy, and so much money devoted to education.

If we look at the physical facilities that have been transformed over the course of the last seven years, we can only regard it as a remarkable achievement. If we take a little journey around the country, we will see that a large number of primary schools have been completely rebuilt.

We have had to contend with the fact that Barbados, like many other countries of the world, suffers from population shifts, and it is necessary, periodically, to have a look at your plant, rebuild it to meet the needs of the new population centres. We have had to face that, and we did it with courage and with conviction, and we have come to the point now where, as far as the physical buildings are concerned, over 70 per cent to 80 per cent of that programme has been completed – much to the annoyance of honourable Members on the other side, because the honourable Members on the other side want the public to understand that this Government is so broke, this Government has mismanaged the economy to such an extent, that it is not doing anything at all.

Now that the tangible evidence is coming to light, the honourable Members will forever in the future disregard the substance and go at the shadow, like what the honourable Member has just done. The substance is that the Barbados Labour Party has done a remarkable job in the last seven years in improving the physical facilities of education in this country, and, what is more, the little bit that is left to be done will for certain be done now.

I look forward to the secondary school at Wotton, Christ Church. I look forward to a new primary school in St. Patricks. I understand a tender has just been let and I look forward to the completion of West St. Joseph. I had the privilege of seeing the Coleridge-Parry extension, I know of the Polytechnic, I know of the buildings in St. George that have been completed. In short, I am familiar with the magnitude of all the works. I am also familiar too, Sir, with the complete reform in the educational system with the Act that has just been passed, and is now being implemented.

Let us put it this way. The honourable member, for St. Michael South (Mr. L. E. Sandiford) as Minister in all his period of time, wanted to do the reform. But he could not persuade his colleagues to give him the money or provide enough resources in their capital development programme to do the school building programme, neither could he persuade himself to have enough courage to face the governing bodies and the rest of the people in Barbados and bring in the Education Act to reform education.

He knows that is a fact. He will tell you so. If you look at the files, you will see that he started this long ago. But it is not the ability to start, it is not the ability to conceive – it is the ability to start, conceive and execute, that is important. I know the honourable Member would agree with that, and he admires us over here for our ability to do all these things.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, look at what he is talking about: a notice that goes out. I was very disturbed when I thought what the honourable Member said was what is in the notice in fact. But when I looked at it, the notice says clearly that the machinery has already been established that, in the event there is a scintilla of evidence of hardship, machinery is in place to relieve that hardship.

The honourable Member says it is five per cent. Well, granted that it is five per cent, the point is that for that five per cent, there is machinery in place to ensure that there is no hardship, so therefore there is no hardship at all. What is the honourable Member talking about five per cent? He said so in his speech! The honourable Member who spoke just now said in his speech that there would be five per cent hardship in Barbados. There is machinery to deal with that five per cent!

One of the things that the recession in the world has taught all Governments is that in a recession, time wastage must be eliminated. If you do not eliminate wastage, it means that you will have no money to be able to carry out what is worthwhile and what is productive. That is a lesson in recession. You cannot have wastage, because there is a very little money around.

When you are coming to something like education, I believe that if you look at the total budget in Barbados the amount devoted to Education is over $100 million. I did not do the Estimates this year in Education, otherwise I would remember the exact figure. The figure, I am told, is $108 million for 250 000 people. I defy anybody on the other side to point to many countries in the world – First World, Second World or Third World – and tell me the per capita expenditure on education is like that. And yet, we in Barbados, this Barbados Labour Party Government, is going to be accused of not wanting to educate the public of Barbados. What fundamental nonsense are you talking about? That only goes to show that the honourable Member is leaving out the substance and getting at the shadow.

I agree with the honourable Member, and all of us on this side agree – I am sure the honourable Minister agrees – that when you are trying to eliminate wastage, what you have to do is to have a proper public relations programme so as to ensure that your good intent is not misunderstood, or, better still, that your good intent cannot be twisted for ulterior motives as is the wont and habit of some politicians in Barbados today.

I heard this talk about hucksters. I was the one who raised the question of two canteens in Barbados because they were contrary to the Town and Country Planning Act, and I was the one, in conjunction with the Leader of the Opposition, who talked about it. The Leader of the Opposition mentioned it and I got up and said I agreed with him.

The newspapers have blown that out of all proportion, but I am one of those people who believes that if you have a good point, because there is little superficial criticism, you must not back off the point. I know that this Government has a fantastic record in elevating people and raising their standards. I only have to carry you to Oistins town and show you a market place developed for the people, for the hucksters in Barbados. And I tell you that there is nowhere else in the Caribbean area, or anywhere else in the world, in which so much care and attention have been placed on hucksters. A Government that can do that cannot be accused of having no consideration for people like that. So you can talk as much as you like.

In this game, the ability to attack is good, the ability to counter attack and knock out is also there. So all this talk about hucksters around the school building is nonsense. As I have said before, under the Barbados Labour Party our conception of Barbados means that our people must live in accordance with the highest standards of public health. That is our conception. You cannot blame us for that.

6.50 p.m.

You have a patronising attitude and you believe that Barbados cannot have that standard of living. That is your business. I tell you I believe it. I am not like the right honourable Leader of the Opposition, who said that fishermen only want an old cork hat from the Police Force or an old Fire Brigade belt, top, pants – and no shoes at all. I do not believe that. That is his conception and the Democratic Labour Party's conception, not mine; not the Barbados Labour Party's!

We believe that you must elevate the people. So, the position is that you must not look at the measure of the removal of the hucksters from schools as an indicator that we are against hucksters. As I have pointed out before, we have strong and tangible evidence that that is not so.

Let us deal with the substance. The substance is, do they sell goods which are injurious to the health of the children? Do they, or do they not? Now, that is a matter of fact. That is a matter that is capable of scientific

examination. Let us proceed along those lines. Let us do that examination.

They talk about the school meals. All over the world, there are changes in nutrition. Must Barbados be oblivious to these changes? What the honourable Member is saying is that the school diet has been fixed by the Democratic Labour Party, and all scientific knowledge which has taken place since they have fixed it must be ignored, because the Democratic Labour Party fixed it, the people like it, and, therefore, it cannot be changed. Well, well, well! What kind of community can we have when a Member of Parliament can give expression to such conservative and outdated concepts? Those days are over!

Now, if you are attacking the honourable Minister, you are attacking the honourable Minister, when the basis for the decision of the honourable Minister has been made public, that she has been advised that there is a certain degree of wastage in the School Meals Programme.

I want to challenge any honourable Member on the other side to deny that both the Democratic Labour Party and this party have been advised that there is a percentage of wastage in the School Meals Programme. Let him deny that! Nobody can deny that, because the figures are there, the evidence is there. So, in a recessionary period, you do not criticise a Government for trying to do something – I am not even saying the word "economist", because that has been disrespected for much of the day – that all sensible people understand: that in a period of recession, you must try to eliminate wastage.

Sir, that is the basic thing. This is only shadow boxing that is going on, an opportunity that the honourable Member on the other side sees to get himself in the public's eye. He is the spokesman on Education now!

I do not know what his real shadow ministry is, but he is like another Member on the other side. Whenever there is an issue, he must be in it, because the contention is so strong now that everybody must try and get newspaper publicity. The other fellow got a little bit last week, so the honourable Member must come in here today, and talk for two hours. He is hoping that the newspapers will give him some publicity over the course of this week, that his whole picture will be in them all week, because he knows that next week, or whenever the Budget is, that he is not going to get as much as the other fellow is going to get. That is the position. We are in the middle of this power struggle that is going on, this big-time tussle and struggle for pubucity.

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, when we get back down to the substance of the matter, this Government has a record over the last seven years of which it can be justly proud. I have not even touched on the other changes dealing with the curriculum, dealing with the motivation and all of that.

There is another area – the attempt to bring computers in the schools and make the children aware of the fact that we are now living in a technological age in which the satellite and the computer are very, very strong.

So do not leave out that matter of substance and catch after the shadow of some 5 percent when we have provision to deal with it.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Applause.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Sir, I beg to move that this sitting be now suspended until 8.00 o'clock tonight.

Hon. L. R. TULL: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER suspended the sitting accordingly.
6.59 p.m.

On Resumption:–

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: This sitting is now resumed. If the honourable Member for St. Michael South has a contribution to make, would he do it now, please?

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD (St. Michael South): Thank you very much, Mr. Deputy Speaker. I was waiting for your authoritative word to intervene in the debate. I merely want to make a few points, and I am not going to be too long on this issue, because I know the problems that are involved in educational administration and the formulation of educational policy.

This particular Act, as I see it, seeks to defer the implementation of certain sections of the Education Act, 1981, in order to give the Ministry of Education a longer period of time in which to get its act together. It appears that some particular problem, or series of probler s, have occurred which prevent the sections from being implemented. I believe that these things are understandable and I am not personally making any big issue of that at the moment.

But it would be impossible, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to talk about education and the amendment, or to deal with this particular Bill that is before us, without really looking at the overall policy for education within the

framework of the amendment that is before us. I would just like to make a few observations in the light of some of the problems that have been raised, and I hope that the Minister would throw some light on these problems.

My colleague, the Member for St. Michael West (Mr. B. M. Taitt), in a very wide ranging and penetrating speech, has made some very serious charges against the Minister of Education in terms of the formulation of policy, and I am certain that the Minister will wish to reply to the documented charges and assaults which have been made on her formulation of educational policy and administration.

Now, my own particular concerns relate to the way in which the decision for the imposition of fees on persons taking public examinations has been made, and, also the more general point about the actual imposition of the fees.

As I have said in another forum, this is all a question of educational philosophy. I just do not believe, recession or no recession, that this is necessary in a country which has, over all of these years had free examinations. Whatever administration has been in charge of educational policy and in charge of the finances of this country, we have been able to have the young people of this country take their examinations without the imposition of fees. I do not feel that it is necessary or desirable that at this particular juncture we should be talking about imposing these fees.

I believe that this country is capable of making that kind of provision for the young people of this country, and I believe it is misguided that the fees should be imposed at this particular time, or indeed at any other time. If we have been managing so well, I think that we can continue to manage without the imposition of these fees.

In terms of the problems that the fees are supposed to cure, I do not think, on broad grounds, that the charging of fees will deal with the problem of absenteeism, or the problem of a lackadaisical approach to the matter of taking examinations, or in any other area where a lack of diligence or lack of concern on the part of the students may be involved.

I believe that the solutions to those problems should be found in other areas of educational administration, and therefore, in principle, I am against the imposition of fees. When we come to the actual administration of this programme, I have to question the validity of the decisions that have been made, and I hope that this matter can be cleared up here and now.

The Education Act, 1981, makes provision for the Minister by Order to prescribe certain things, and it also makes provision for certain things to be done by Regulation, including the imposition of fees. There is a particular section in the Act, I believe it is 59(2), which makes provision for the imposition of these matters by Order or by Regulation, and I am asking the question whether the procedures in respect of the Education Act have been followed, because it will not be the Minister who will be involved when the problems arise. She will be accountable to the people, but the particular Education Officers who have to administer this Act may very well be laying themselves out on a line if they find themselves administering a matter that is contrary to the very Act under which we should be operating.

I do hope that the Minister has adverted to this particular problem and that she is quite satisfied that no legal improprieties have been committed in respect of the legal provisions of this Act for making Orders, for making Regulations, and for prescribing and for consultation with the appropriate bodies, which have to make an input or should make an input in this matter. That is the legal point.

In terms of procedural matters and the actual administration of the matter, I am certain that this will turn out to be some kind of incubus. It will be an imposition, because just to impose these fees without the schools, without the parents, without the children, the students who have to take the examinations, being given adequate notice, is a failing in educational administration.

I, myself, know the problems involved when students have to take examinations and the very timetables for the examinations, centre numbers and that kind of information go out late from the Ministry of Education itself. That is a problem. It happens!

(Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: In your term).

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: It happens from time to time. It is no point saying in my time or in any time. I am fully conscious that we are dealing with human beings and that there can be breakdowns in the system at any time.

There is this system now of the issuing of tickets. A student has to get a ticket as though he is going for meals. You now have to get a ticket to go into an examination, as I understand it. So you have to have your ID card, your photograph – I do not know if you have to have your baptismal certificate – and now, in addition to all of that, you have to have your ticket before you will be admitted to an examination room. No doubt all of these details have been gone through.

I wonder if the Minister can let us see a copy of those kinds of documents which the students are supposed to have when they go into these examinations,

and, if she can show us, let us have a copy of the particular certificate or ticket that the students must have before they will be admitted into the examination, and tell us what will be the procedures.

If a student loses a ticket, let us say, the day before or anything like that, what are the actual procedures? Will that student be prevented from taking the examination if he turns up, goes to the supervisor at the centre and says, "I do not have this ticket to show that I have paid my fees," my $40 or whatever it may be?

I think a lot of problems arise sometimes not only out of the policy itself, but the actual detailed implementation of the policy, and it is these kinds of problems which can foul up the best intention of systems. No doubt you will say that these things will be available at the centres and so on for people to see, but I think we had better get all of these things sorted out at the moment.

8.10 p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I indicated that I really do not intend to speak for any length of time on this subject. In principle, I am against the imposition of fees. I believe that the problems that are to be dealt with should be dealt with in another way, and I have some real doubts (a) about the time which the administrators will have in order to put this particular system into place and, (b), some doubt about the actual procedures themselves in respect of this particular matter.

Now, so far as the other matters relating to the Bill is concerned, I believe I will have other opportunities to speak about education, so I do not propose to detain this House any longer on this measure.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Minister will make her reply.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The honourable Member for St. Michael West (Mr. B. M. Taitt) first queried the wording of the Bill before this Honourable House. My understanding is that this wording is really partly technical jargon which is used, and I would like to dispel any doubts which any honourable Member might entertain that we need time in the Ministry of Education to put our act together or anything of the kind.

There was simply an error in the wording of the proclamation, and we had sought very hard to try to get this Bill to Parliament before April 1, so that we would still be in time by April 1, as was the original intention. It is just that the pressure of legislation made that quite impossible, so now the proclamation date for the outstanding sections of the Act will be May 1.

There is nothing to hide; there is nothing untoward; it is simply an error. I think that, on the face of it, it is all set out here, and I think that those who have eyes to see, can see it.

One of the first matters which the honourable Member for St. Michael West addressed was the National Advisory Commission on Education. He harangued and went on and on and talked about what he called the portfolio of the National Commission. The National Commission has no portfolio, but, in sum, what he was saying, as I understood him, was that I should virtually suspend the operation of the Ministry of Education while the National Advisory Commission sat.

I want to make this clear to everyone, as I made it clear to the National Advisory Commission on Education on the morning that I inaugurated it a few weeks ago. I interpret the Act to understand that the National Advisory Commission is a standing Commission, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and that even though the persons who comprise the commission have a definite period of service and have been appointed for a definite period of time, it is an Advisory Commission which will go on and on.

I made it quite clear to them that I am not prepared to wait until the end of three years to have them report to me and that I would hope to be having advice from them from time to time in the form of interim reports and that I would feel free from time to time to submit to them matters which might become urgent for their immediate consideration.

I also made it quite clear to them that they were an Advisory Commission, and that they must understand quite clearly that it is not every bit of advice that is offered to me that I might be disposed to accept. The last point that was made was that the work of the Ministry would not be suspended while they sat. The fact is that the Ministry and the commission would work concurrently. The Commission would be about its business and the Ministry would be about its business as well.

I made it my business to attend that meeting because I thought it was necessary to brief that commission on broad areas of policy. There is no point having the commission operating in one jurisdiction and the Ministry in another. It is important that they be seized of the direction or the policies of the Ministry of Education and that we in the Ministry be seized, from time to time, of the direction of the commission.

I set out to them areas which we in the Ministry considered to be priorities, and I am pleased about the way that the chairman of the commission has gone to work with great despatch. I am entirely satisfied with the

way in which he has broken down the work of the commission into four main areas of attention, and the way in which he plans to administer this commission.

I am also very pleased indeed that they have seen fit to hearken to my words, and that they have made the Common Entrance the number one priority to be the subject of its first interim report to us before this year is out.

In respect of examination fees, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think I need to start out by saying that this is a small country in which we live. It is all well and good for people to get up and rant and rave. I believe that there is no honourable Member in this Chamber tonight who does not know, either from his time at school or since he left school, that there is in every school in Barbados, both primary and secondary, a fund – sometimes it is not even referred to as a fund – for children who have difficulty.

Those children are helped and it is nobody's business – and it ought not to be anybody's business except form mistresses and headmistresses. Shoes are paid for, lunch money is made available; all sorts of special items are made available to children. Certain organizations play a role in this. Certain members of churches and the churches themselves play a role in this. Individuals play a role in this. We all know about this and it is very quietly and discreetly done.

The honourable Member for St. Michael South (Mr. L. E. Sandiford) has just said individual teachers, yes, sometimes; but we particularly depend on heads, and I am satisfied having heard from some heads.

Do not forget that this decision was taken after consultation with the heads of some secondary schools and the executive of the Parent-Teachers' Association. It is not my business to stand up now in public and divulge some of the dialogue that went on during the course of the discussion. But consultation was done with the heads of what were known as the newer secondary schools. The figure that I first put to them was laughed out of the room, and a suggestion was even made to me that a charge per subject would be more in order, because teachers are worried, heads are worried.
8.20 p.m.

When I talk about absenteeism, it is a very real thing, and the figures that I have are the figures of those children who failed to turn up at the examination centres. But there is another figure, which none of us is certain of, and that is the figure for those pupils who come to the examination room, sit down for the mandatory ten minutes, and then get up and go off about their business.

Now, the invigilators begin to tell us that there is a rising incidence of that sort of absentee. That person counts as being present, because once you have gone in the examination room and you have sat there for ten minutes – we all know, we have been through it – you are counted as 'present.'

I cannot give you accurate figures for those people who go in and sit for ten minutes and leave again, but I can give you figures for the ones who fail to turn up altogether.

Asides

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I can tell you for 1982. For the CXC Basic examination, we had 151 absentees; at the CXC General we had 154.

(A VOICE: Out of how many?)

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I cannot tell you offhand, but we have an idea of how many people sit the examinations. I will get it for you. It is not impossible to get it. I am telling you I do not have it in my hand now.

At the Cambridge "O" level, we had last year 159 absent, and at the Cambridge "A" level 38.

Asides

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: All right, stop ranting and raving. You will get the other figures.

I am saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that I am confident that the discretion which teachers now have, and particularly heads, with those children who do have a need, will be exercised in respect of examination fees. I have reason to believe that the pupils and their parents will not even have to take the initiative, for the teachers already know in each secondary school where the need lies, and they will take the initiative. Most of these cases will not go to the Ministry at all.

I heard talk about welfarism. I will tell you why there will be need to resort to the welfare and why I do not think that there will be many cases resorting to the welfare. There may be some people who are not really.....

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Will the honourable member for St. Michael South (Mr. L. E. Sandiford) allow the honourable Minister to speak in accordance with the Standing Orders? Honourable Members must be able to make their contribution without interruption. If the honourable Member for St. Michael South and the honourable Member for St. Michael West (Mr. B. M. Taitt) are in need of these statistics, there are ways and means of getting them – and they know the way, too.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: They will get the figures before I sit down. It is just that I do not have them in my hand.

This is the point I really want to make. We have reason to believe that there will be those who are not in genuine need, but who will still go forward and say they are in need. Now in the Ministry we have absolutely no mechanism to investigate that sort of case, and that is the sort of case which, once it comes to the Ministry, we would ask the Welfare Department to help us investigate, because they have the machinery to do that kind of work.

But for the most part, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have much reason to believe that many of these cases will be dealt with in a very discreet and humane manner at the level of school management. I am prepared to trust the judgment of school heads in this matter, as we have done in many other respects, and the fees will be waived accordingly.

I have made it perfectly clear already that I have absolutely no intention of depriving any child of the privilege of sitting examinations in this country. It is very important, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to understand the rationale behind what we are doing. The honourable Member for St. Michael West spoke at tremendous length, but not one word in English.....

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order; the honourable Member for the City (Hon. Miss B. A. Miller) says that the honourable Member for St. Michael West (Mr. B. M. Taitt) spoke not one word in English, and I am certain that that must be a breach of the Rules of this House, because all speeches are conducted in English, and I would think that that is a reflection on the Chair, the Presiding Officer, allowing speeches in a language other than English.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: If you would let me finish the sentence, you would know.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think I will allow the honourable Minister to finish the sentence and then find out.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They are supposed to make a laughing joke out of the whole issue. Not one word in English or otherwise was spoken by the honourable Member for St. Michael West about the problem at the core of this absenteeism. I listened with great care. He was not concerned about that. He was concerned about the.....

Mr. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order; the honourable Member is misleading this House. She says that when I spoke I did not allude to the problem. I remember specifically indicating that it is a problem that had to be dealt with at the core, that you could not solve the problem by proposing $40. I do not think that the honourable Member is right to mislead the House by suggesting that I did not identify the problem.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: You have really not made any point of order. I do not know why I have to put up with all these interruptions.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we have this problem. We have seen fit to deal with it in this way. As I said, there has been consultation with the Parent–Teachers Executive, who were very positive, and, in fact, I think might have been a little more – how did the honourable Member put it? – "insensitive" than I was on this matter. If they had had their way, the fee would have been a larger fee than this.

I want to get this very clear. It is an across-the-board fee. It does not matter how many subjects you take or how many examining boards you face. If people are sitting some subjects at the GCE, some at the CXC, some at Pitmans or LCC, it make no difference whether they are taking two, three or eight subjects, it is an across-the-board fee.

(Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: That is a second thought!)

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: It was not a second thought! That is the decision! It is a matter of interpretation of the subject. If you want to interpret it that way, that is a matter for you. I am saying that is the intention of the Ministry of Education, and that is now the clear understanding. It is possible to cloud every issue!

I want to move away from the matter of the examination fees to another matter which was raised by the honourable Member for St. Michael West, and it has to do with school canteens. In most of the secondary schools in Barbados, because at the primary schools you have the School Meals Programme, we have what is known as a school canteen. There are a few schools where there isn't a school canteen, properly speaking, but in the majority of secondary schools, we have a school canteen, and these school canteens go out to public tender. People pay their money and they go in and they have a concession for the school canteen.

In addition to the school canteen, we have what are known as authorised vendors. Again, here heads of schools have a discretion to let in so many snocone men, so many ladies with trays, so many people selling nuts and whatever, and so on and so forth. This is not new, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We all grew up with this, a school canteen and the authorised vendors on

the school premises. They came in at break and they came in at lunch time, and we knew them all by name. 8.30 p.m.

What we have at some schools – not at all – is a situation where what I would describe as "unauthorised vendors" come and set up their businesses outside of the school gate. I have had a situation this year, 1983, where the concessionaire at the Parkinson School wrote a letter to say that she could no longer honour her concession because her business was being taken away by the unauthorised vendors outside the school gate.

Now, I have heard a lot in the Press, in the public domain generally, about these people outside of the school gate. Yes, they must make a dollar, they have a living to make. But nobody said anything about people inside the school gate who have paid their money. They have a dollar to make, too, and a living to make as well.

I have another difficulty, Mr. Deputy Speaker. People do not understand, teachers themselves are not fully aware, that when children walk on to the school premises at 8.30 a.m., or 8.45 a.m., or whatever time in the morning, until they leave the school premises at the official closing hour for school, they are in the legal care and custody of the staff and the Ministry of Education.

We have a situation at some schools where children leave at lunch time, ostensibly going out of school premises for lunch, without any written permission of parents – and they do not come back after lunch. We get complaints that children from a particular school are seen here, there and everywhere; a mile, two miles away. I am not talking about one or two children, I am talking about droves of children.

When you are dealing with a school, say, like the Garrison School, where you have 1 200 children, it is not possible for the staff to be watching each and every one of those 1 200 children every minute of the day. And that is a problem!

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: Do they not have prefects?)

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Prefects cannot do the job! It is not possible! If a child really wants to do this, he will do it. We have simply had to remind the schools of an old rule, which we all grew up with, that you had to bring a letter from home to get permission to leave school during school hours. It is not anything new.

Aside.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Exactly! But it is now being abused. There is a great indiscipline abroad, and we have had to circularise the schools to remind them that this has got to stop.

(Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: Louis used to leave to go to pictures.)

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: You must not tell tales out of school like that.

But there is another problem as well. I have been saying something from time to time, and again it has been unpopular. You know, sometimes you have to take decisions, you have to make statements that are unpopular, but I have been appealing to parents to be careful of the amount of money they give their children. The children are not only buying what is now popularly known as a lot of junk food, which is no good for them, but there is another problem which has reared its head.

This is not a new problem either. It is a problem that we do not want to face in Barbados, and a problem that we are pretending is not nearly as bad as it is, but there is a problem of drug usage among school children. It does exist, to our knowledge in the Ministry of Education, Mr. Deputy Speaker, at every single school, although the problem is greater at some schools than it is at others. And this is another reason why it is important that when the children are on the school premises, in our legal care and custody, it is our duty to see that they do not stray, as far as we can help it, into areas where they may become the targets for people who deal in drugs.

It is not anything that we take lightly in the Ministry of Education. It is something that we are deeply concerned about. It has begun to surface now in the primary schools. So, you understand –

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: There are teachers who push them.)

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: You will say that sitting down, but you will not get up and say it. That is where the hypocrisy lies! You would not get up and say that here, but you will sit down and whisper it!

Mr. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order, Sir: I wish to say – so that the honourable Member will understand that I take this matter seriously – that the dope is pushed by some school children, by some teachers, by some responsible people in the community. Do not tell me I would not say that. This concerns my children, too.

I want you to understand that that has nothing to do with dunks and ackees coming on the premises. The dope is a systematic, organised thing. You have to deal with that differently.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: So you see, Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is yet another problem.

Now, the problem about the dunks and the ackees. I do not know what the problem is there. As I said, every school has authorised vendors who come in with trays, and they are not selling dunks and ackees. I have seen that with these two eyes. I visit the schools too, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I have seen that with my two eyes. I go and stand up over trays – I do not see sugar cakes. I do not see glassies. I do not see dunks. I do not see ackees or golden apples. I do not see bananas, which I used to see in my time. I do not see oranges, which you saw in my time.

I am seeing a lot of things that I do not intend to advertise in here, or outside or here either, which is nothing but junk, what Barbadian mothers would normally refer to as foolishness, and expensive junk at that! I am not talking about junk meaning drugs; I mean junk wrapped in cellophane bags and plastic bags.

I have had the Ministry circularise the secondary schools to impress upon heads that they should use their influence to persuade the vendors who are on the school premises to sell items which are perhaps more nutritious. I cannot tell them what to sell and what not to sell. I can only bring persuasive influence to bear upon it.

Again the National Nutrition Survey has shown us that there are certain deficiencies, not only among primary school children, but among secondary school children as well. One problem among secondary school children is obesity. I have one headteacher who has said to me, in the course of conversation at an Estimates discussion, that it seemed to her that her children are eating all day long, chewing all day long. Sometimes by 2.00 o'clock in the day they are tired, because they have eaten too much and are really not able to cope with work.

All of these are the problems that I have to deal with in the Ministry of Education. I should not have to be dealing with these things; I should be worrying about education per se; and I have to appeal to parents to co-operate with me on these matters.

I do not know why the home-made packed lunch has become unpopular. But it seems to me that if more children were encouraged by their parents to get up and prepare a home-made lunch, they would be far better off. They would not have the need to walk with as much money as they now do. I believe they might have a more balanced and nutritious lunch and it would teach them to be a little more self-reliant than many of them are today. That is another situation that we have to deal with within the Ministry of Education.

But I just want to make it quite clear. You have authorised people who have gone out to public tender and whose interests have to be protected.

It is not in the interest of school children, of teachers, parents, officials in the Ministry of Education, or anyone, to have children loitering off the school premises how and when they like during the course of the day. I will do everything in my power to discourage that. Last year we lost a child from the St. Leonard's Girls' School, as the honourable Member for St. Michael West well knows, who was outside of school premises during school hours. A very tragic accident!

And now, the school meals. Now, the school meals are served in the primary schools. When the Democratic Labour Party introduced the School Meals Programme in 1966 1967, they did not at that time institute any evaluation or monitoring process. It is just a fact of life.

(Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: 1963.)

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I beg your pardon, 1963. Yes, you are quite right, 1963.

No monitoring, no evaluation was built into the programme. And so, over the years, what has happened is that we are spending more and more money on school meals. In this year's Estimates, $9 million is allocated to school meals. But as.....

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: Mr. Deputy Speaker.....

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: What is this now?

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: .....on a point of order. But I know if it were a point of elucidation, you would give way, too, because.....

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: A point of order. Will the honourable Member make his point, please.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: I believe that the honourable Minister may be misleading this Honourable Chamber in saying that no survey was made of the children in school in respect of the.....

Asides.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: Oh, you did not say that? As far as nutrition was concerned?

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: She said that no evaluation was built into the programme.

8.40 p.m.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: That is what I said, do not try to misquote me. I did say that a survey was not done.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: I am drawing to the attention of the Minister and this Honourable House that surveys were carried out by professional officers of the Ministry of Education and elsewhere in the Government Service on the nutritional status of the school children.

(Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: How often? You tell me).

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: You are now asking how often? First of all it was that none was carried out, now you are asking me, "How often?"

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: A survey is not an evaluation. I am talking about an on-going evaluation process. If we had had that in the schools meals programme, we would not have arrived at where we are today.

When I was in the Ministry of Health, I asked for the National Nutritional Survey to be done. It is difficult for me to work without the basic tools, it is like asking to have a national literacy survey. I cannot work without these basic tools so I commissioned this survey. The survey has showed us that there is obesity among children of 11 and 12 who are obese after five years with school meals. It has shown us that there is a serious iron deficiency, especially, naturally, in girls.

It is a fact! It is there! We have to cope with it! We cannot continue to take the attitude that we are doing everything we are supposed to do, we are putting a balanced meal before the children, we are spending $X million, what more are we expected to do? I cannot take that attitude, and I felt that I had to address the problem.

If you understand anything about nutrition, you have to understand that a child does not eat a menu written down on a piece of paper. When you put a nutritious and balanced meal before a child, it is no good to the child unless the child eats the meal, and what we have had in the School Meals Programme is a high rejection rate. I have seen it myself on visits to the school. You do not have to go to the schools to see it for yourself. Only observe the number of primary school children walking along the road in the morning with a lunch box, and that will tell you, if you have powers of deduction, that they are taking the lunch box to school because they are not eating the school meal provided.

Now you are talking about young children between the ages of five and eleven, and they have their likes and dislikes. As grown-ups we have our likes and dislikes, but they do not like this and they do not like that, they do not like the third and they do not like the fourth.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I saw the TV, I saw all the children saying that they like all the things that the newspaper said they did not like. I even say the little girl saying, "I like pork stew". They have not had pork stew for over a year, but she likes it!

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Right. She gets it at home, but she does not like the way it was presented to her in the school meals.

We know what they like, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They like fried chicken, and they like hamburgers. In fact, that is the only way they will eat minced-meat at all. If you put it in a gravy and give it to them, they do not want it. You see, what we are seeking to do here is to try, as far as we can do within the rules of good nutrition, to give children what they like, what is acceptable to them, and what they will eat. It is no good if they do not eat it!

We have done a pilot project over a period of time in a few of the schools, and so we know what the reception of some items on the new menus will be like. We have taken the advice of the National Nutrition Centre which agrees with us entirely. They have made some recommendations; some of them are not easy for us to implement. For instance, they would like to see more green leafy vegetables like spinach. Now, there are a lot of grown-ups who would not even touch spinach, furthermore children. It is a universally disliked vegetable. I do not know why, because I like spinach. So we have to be clever, creative and innovative, and – I should not even be saying this now for them to put it in the paper for the children to suspect what we are doing – we have to find a way now to bind spinach into, say, hamburgers or meat loaf or something in such a way that they will get the nutritious value without putting a blob of green spinach in front of them.

Aside.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: That is another myth about nutrition, you see, that spinach has a lot of iron. That is not so!

So, Mr. Deputy Speaker, these are all of the day to day difficulties that the nutritionists in the Ministry and the officials at the Schools Meals Department have to cope with. Children are so clear in their likes and dislikes that when they know in advance what tomorrow's

meal is going to be, if it is something that they like, they go home and they say I do not want any lunch to take to school tomorrow because I know what I am getting.

We have had feedback from teachers, we have had feedback from parents, feedback from children themselves, feedback from the School Meals workers in particular, who are the ones first to see the slop that comes back.

The honourable Member made a big thing about the children saying they prefer bun lunches. It is not a matter of preferring the one to the other. There are some bun lunches that are attractive. They like ham cutters, they like hamburgers, they like fish cutters. When it is flying fish or steak fish, they will eat it. They do not want the deep sea fish because of the bone, so it is pointless trying to force them to eat deep sea fish. They like salt fish, but they like it boiled, they do not like it frizzed.

Aside.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Well, exactly, so boil it.

There are some days when they get hot lunches, some days when they get bun lunches; this has always been so. For instance, Monday is the day when they get macaroni pie, and they absolutely love macaroni pie, so we continue to give them that. This is all it is about, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

There is one other thing I would like to say. The honourable Member for St. Michael West referred to the fact that some years ago when there was a dispute with the teachers, the Ministry of Education made and laboured the point that it is part of the teachers' function to supervise, sit at the table while the children are having their lunch, and to teach them social manners, table manners, supervise how they use a knife and fork, and how they behave generally at the table.

It is true that that was part of the early rationale of the School Meals Programme. It is also true that the teachers, for the most part, no longer do that. They have made it perfectly clear that that is not part of their function, and so that aspect of the School Meals Programme is, largely speaking, lost.

I am not saying that there are not some dedicated and conscientious teachers who do supervise. These are, and I am grateful for them, and the difference can be seen in those schools, but for the most part they do not do it.

Children learn at home. The day has gone, I think, when you assume that children do not learn table manners at home, or cannot learn table manners at home. We have been emancipated past that point now. I firmly believe that. But I still think that it is important for children to sit together at lunch and communicate with each other. I suppose that there is no way that you can stop a lack of supervision from happening, and we have to be grateful that some still goes on.

I am grateful because I have seen them sitting at their desks and having their lunch, but I have been shocked, I tell you, in visiting some schools, to see some children throwing away good food. Take care. At this stage in life I am not going to throw away cake – I am more likely to ask you if you are sure you want yours and try to see if you will shovel it on to my plate, and I see children throw cake into the slops.

There are a lot of other problems that we want to resolve. We still give them milk. I do not know if honourable Members know this, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Primary school children all get their milk at break, but they will not drink it plain, you have got to flavour it.
8.50 p.m.

I think that we have a bit of a problem where we are serving children milk at break. If you are dealing with a large school, it takes about 40 to 45 minutes to serve them milk, and by 12.30 p.m. sometimes, we are asking them on some days to eat a hot lunch and I believe that that influences the rejection rate to some extent. We are trying to look at how we can achieve a better balance.

But we are told by the nutritionists that the reaction between milk and iron is not a helpful one, that milk tends to have a binding action on iron, and that if we want to do something about the health deficiency, we have to be careful not to serve milk at the same time we are serving a meal reinforced with iron.

Of course, that is another problem but these are not matters which I think should exercise the minds of all honourable Members. These are day-to-day matters that the School Meals Department fight with and the Nutrition Department of the Ministry of Education, and which the Nutrition Centre will fight with when we refer it to them for advice. But I see this blowing up in the public domain and a big thing being made of it.

All we are trying to do is to make sure that a child gets a nutritious meal, because, as I have said, it is no good having it written on a menu. It is no use putting a

a lamb chop on the plate of a child. If the child does not eat it, it is a loss of nutrition and it is a waste.

I am not saying that we are encouraging a situation where we are going to pamper children and try to cater to their little whims and fancies, how and whenever and wherever they may express them. But I do think that we cannot continue to ignore the high rejection rate that we find in the School Meals Programme, and this is what the revised menus are all about.

The honourable Member for St. Michael West last point had to do with the appointments to the Boards of Management. With this new Education Act, the life of all governing bodies came to an end, and boards of management, no longer governing bodies, have come into being. At every school, the old governing body has been changed. This is nothing peculiar to Combermere. New people have gone in as board chairmen.

I am sorry that the honourable Member for St. Michael South is not here. He was invited to sit on a certain board, and he declined it. But the point is that we have changed the old governing bodies at all schools. We have a new board of management at every school.

I suppose the reason why the honourable Member for St. Michael West would seek to single out Combermere School is because he is an old Combermerian. But as an old Combermerian, perhaps you will take a little more interest and look and see the pass rate of Combermere last year – 26 per cent of passes.

I am not saying that this has anything to do with the chairman of the Governing Body, but I am saying that there are other aspects of life at the Combermere School that, as an old scholar, you may take an interest in.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: You have missed my point).

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I have not missed the point. I am not giving way either.

The old governing bodies have been changed. There are new boards of management. New people in this community will get a chance to serve. We are grateful for the service given to us by old governing bodies members, and we have written them all to that effect, but new and younger people will have a chance to serve.

Now I just want to divert for a short moment to give the figures that honourable Members asked for. The total number registered to write examinations in 1982 at the CXC Basic, both private and Government, were 3 453. In that category we had 131 absentees.

At CXC General, again private and Government, 8 068 wrote the examination. In that category we had 154 absentees. At the Cambridge "O" Level, private and Government together, 3 868 sat the examination and we had 159 absent.

At the Cambridge "A"Level, 972 sat the examination and 38 failed to turn up for the exam.

I have a few figures in respect of those who went in and sat for the mandatory 10 minutes and left again. This is in addition, now, CXC Basic.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Do not say it is only 3 per cent. We have given these people an education from age 4 to age 15 and they are coming out of school with nothing and you are saying only 3 per cent?

Here are the other figures. CXC Basic, Grade 5, again private and secondary, 86. CXC General, Grade 6, private and secondary, 294. Cambridge "O" level, 1 217. But, as I have said, you have fitted in there a large number of people who go in, sit down for 10 minutes, and then come out.

I can only go by the word of the invigilators and the supervisors of examinations, that the number of children who do that is rising, but I do not yet have a figure. That is something that we will go out of our way to monitor this year, but I am not in a position to give any proper or reliable figures on that.

You say – and that is your own calculation, not mine – that it is only 3 per cent. You can afford to sit down out there and say that. You are not the Minister of Education, I am, and I have to be concerned that the figure grows bigger and bigger every year. What do we do? What are you suggesting, that we wait until it is something like 10 per cent before we seek to arrest the problem?

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: What was it like five years ago?)

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I do not know what it was like five years ago. I can find out for you but it is rising. Do you know how I can tell that it is rising? By the amount of money that goes down the drain. In 1981, $18 000 in fees were thrown away by children who failed to turn up for the examinations.

And it is not anything peculiar to Barbados. My counterpart from Trinidad told me, at university meetings in Jamaica last week, that Trinidadians threw away a quarter of a million dollars last year because of students

who failed to turn up to take examinations. So it is not a problem that is peculiar to Barbados, but it is a problem, in Barbados which I would want to arrest at the earliest possible opportunity.

There is something else that has to be said as well, Mr. Deputy Speaker. There is another reason, which people keep overlooking, for the imposition of these local entry examination fees. Invigilation and supervision costs are escalating every year, and this is something that I cannot overlook.

9.00 p.m.

It has been said in this Chamber already tonight that the Education budget for this financial year, in which we now are in, is something in the order of $108 million. It is easy to say you are only spending 20 percent of the national budget on Education, but there are not many countries where that is true any more.

An *Advocate* editorial said some days ago that if money could buy the best education, we would have the best education in Barbados. But do you know what the fact is? The fact is that we are spending the money, but we still, after all these years, do not have the best education. There is none of us who will get up and say that we have what we consider today to be the best education, and there are facts that we are going to have to face!

Are we, as a nation, going to continue to watch the cost of education escalate from year to year to the detriment of the productive sector, with a Ministry like Tourism crying out for money to pay for their promotional programme, and the Ministry of Agriculture crying out for money? How long do you think we are going to be able to continue with an Education budget escalating past 20 percent to 25 percent and the productive sectors suffering to the extent where we can now see it very significantly reflected in our economy?

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I foresee that it is not going to continue for much longer, and I have warned the officials in the Ministry of Education, I have advised the new chairman of the Boards of Management, the P.T.A., and all of the unions with whom I am consulting from time to time, that we are going to have to learn to contain ourselves within the present budget, and it is possible to do it at this time.

Over the years, successive Governments have put down tremendous infrastructure in the social sector. You cannot deny it – hospitals, clinics, schools and it is time that, perhaps, we learn to take stock, that we learn that we have come to a point where we should perhaps think now in terms of consolidating and cutting out wastage where it does exist, and the fact is, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that a great deal of wastage does exist in the education budget.

We know the Democratic Labour Party brought in what is known as "free education" in 1961. It was a tremendous thing, and it will redound forever to the credit of the Democratic Labour Party; but again, as with the School Meals Programme, when free education became a fact of life in this country, no management system, no plan was made in respect of the cost of it.

Let me compare it for just a moment, Mr. Deputy Speaker, to the plan for the National Health Service. The Barbados Labour Party has said that we wish to implement a National Health Service. We have spent considerable time planning it with great care. We have made it clear that the Health Service is going to be tied to a pre-paid insurance system. In other words, we will know what the National Health Service will cost ten years, twenty years of fifty years from now, because we have built that into the system, and we have also been careful to build an evaluation mechanism into the system.

This was not done when free education was introduced in this country, so what we have had over the years – it is just a fact of life – is just a continual escalation of costs, and it cannot go on forever. What we have to do now is to look and cut the fat out of the system.

There is something else that has to be said. There are certain aspects of the Education budget which are not, strictly speaking, education, and which really go to do nothing other than inflate the Education budget. Take school bus fares. School bus fares obviously have to do with the Ministry of Transport, not with the Ministry of Education, and I have succeeded in transferring that to the Ministry of Transport where it rightly belongs, so that subsidised bus fares do not any longer inflate the Education budget.

School meals, properly speaking, I do not think is necessarily a matter for the Education portfolio so to speak, but yet here we have $9 million in the School Meals Programme – and the Education budget is inflated to that extent. The Textbook Loan Scheme – $1 million is what it is costing us now. We have a Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Affairs. Have you asked yourselves these questions? You look at the budget; that is my concern; that should be your concern as a legislator. I have to look at these things.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: If the honourable Member would give way.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: No, I am not giving way.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order; the honourable Member is discussing the budget, and it appears that she is misleading the House. She said that they had lost $18 000 in 1981 from the absenteeism.

Now, according to her own statement on the $40 that is imposed, and according to the figures which she has given, she will collect $654 440. This can only be described as school fees. These have no relationship whatsoever to absenteeism. Some $654 440 because you lost $18 000?

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: That simplistic reasoning is for the Gallery, not for honourable Members. You do not have to have anybody in the Gallery to talk.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, we are spending almost $1 million on examinations. Remember you are spending money by way of your contribution to the CXC. One hundred and eight million is what education is costing us!

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I agree that we pay taxes for it, but we are not getting value for the money that we spend. When you are the Minister of Education, you will deal with this as you see fit.

But the point, if I can get back to it, Mr. Deputy Speaker, is that we are hearing about the amount of money that the $40 will raise, but it was not five minutes ago that I made the point that there is another aspect of this. I made it clear that invigilation and supervision fees and examination fees are rising, and that we have to try to find a way to cope with them as well.

I make this point again. Barbados is the only nation in the Caribbean which pays all of these costs, and it has come to the point where we have got to face the fact that we cannot continue to do it, and it is working a disservice amongst school children. We have an attitude, and we hear it from the mouths of children, "We do not have to pay, so it does not make any difference if we do not go to the exam. You can sit the exam the next year or the next year." And do you know what happens, Mr. Deputy Speaker? When those children fail to go to the examination and throw their parents' taxes down the drain, they leave and, in large numbers, go to the "O" Level Institute and they pay tuition fees and pay examination fees.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: It is not a matter of punishment; it is a matter of policy, and Mr. Deputy Speaker, they will write those examinations and they will do well in those examinations. You do not know the low grades that you will see. We have this post-Independence syndrome in this country where everything is looked upon as a freeness and you do not have to make an effort.

Certain remarks made at this stage by the honourable Member for St. Michael West (Mr. B. M. Taitt) were ordered expunged from the Record by Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I just went to great trouble to point out the difference between the planning of the free education in 1961 and the planning of the National Health Service in 1976. We know how much we will be spending on that 25 years from now.

9.10 p.m.

Certain remarks made by the Rt. Hon. Member for St. Thomas (Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. Adams) were ordered to be expunged from the Record by Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: The rising cost of education is a fact that, as a country, we are going to have to face.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: Say that, but do not put it under absenteeism.)

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Absenteeism is only one tiny aspect of it. I am talking about our entire national philosophy, basic philosophy; our attitude towards education; the priority we give education. And I believe that if we do not demand better of our young people, they are not going to give better to us.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: Fair enough.)

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I am amazed at the number of young people who are already telling me that they are motivated and ready now to prove a point to me in the examination room. I do not want them to prove a point to me in the examination room, Mr. Deputy Speaker. It is their future.

Parents have a right to be more concerned about this absenteeism. Imagine young people go to sit an examination and come back and nobody in the house says, "Was it hard? How do you think you got through?" Nothing! No comment! No encouragement! No care! They do not even know when the children fail to turn up to take the examination.

I could hear – and this is true for teachers as well – the head of a certain approved independent school, on a programme on Sunday morning, say that in the approved private schools, children cannot afford to be absent. Those children are not absent from the exams. She laboured the point. She said, "Sometimes, we, the staff, have to get together and raise the money to help to pay the examination fees. Because those children have always been discriminated against you know. In the

private approved schools, the approved independent schools, they have always paid fees, but in the Government schools, they have not." And she laboured this point. They cannot afford to be absent.

Far smaller numbers are entered from those schools, as you must know, I have the figures in my hand of the numbers who were absent from the approved independent schools. Percentage wise, there has to be a greater rate of absenteeism than is found in the Government schools.

Aside

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: It is a plague and a problem; it is an indicator of a national attitude in this country; and somebody has got to start to deal with it. And if this is a start, this is a start. You do not always like the medicine.

But I want to use this opportunity to appeal to them to go out there and try that much harder in the examination room. They can do it; they have the capability; and I want them to show us what they can do.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, with those words in reply, I beg to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

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

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

On the motion of Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, seconded by Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER left the Chair and the House went into Committee on the Bill, Mr. J. G. ODLE in the Chair.

COMMITTEE

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The House is in Committee.

Clauses 1 to 2 inclusive were called and passed.

Clause 3 was called.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I beg to move that Clause 3 do now stand part.

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

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The question is.....

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Clause 3, Sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The honourable Member for St. Michael West.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Thank you, Sir. I merely want to make the point today, Sir, that, finally, the honourable Minister has indicated to us that this is really a taxation measure, that this is a measure for getting school fees, and that absenteeism is only incidental.

(Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: What does this have to do with Clause3?)

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The honourable Member is not addressing his remarks to.....

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Yes, Sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN:..... Clause 3.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Yes, Sir. Clause 3, as you would see, Sir, is changing the Education Act, 1981 in Section 2. If you look at the original Section 2, you will see what I mean. And that is why I am able to say, Sir, that the Government should have the courage to tell the people, "We are going to be charging a school leaving fee....."

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Chairman, please!

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Order, order, please.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: He is grossly irrelevant.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The honourable Minister – please, please!

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: It has absolutely nothing to do with Section 3. I have the Act in my hand.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I cannot have two honourable Members on their feet.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: You are not in the Ministry of Education. Sit down. You can talk to them...

Mr. CHAIRMAN: The honourable Member for St. Michael West will please take your seat.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Why, Sir? I beg your pardon, Sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I cannot have two honourable Members on their feet, and when I ask honourable Members to sit, they must do so, please.

The honourable Member for St. Michael West may speak, but the Chair will not entertain Second Reading speeches. Please address your remarks to Clause 3.

(Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Let us go, Branny.)

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Sir, I do not understand why they have to change, but it says here:

'by adding the following new subsection as subsection (4):

> "(4) For the purposes of this Act, the Minister may by Order prescribe the institutions that shall not be educational institutions." '

Now, Sir, this is the point I want to make. As soon as the Minister is making anything by Order, in view of the fact that the Minister has been announcing policy left, right and centre, I am very concerned that the Minister may be able to make a pronouncement by Order.

It seems to me that the Minister wanted to have a policy, for example, in which they are charging the equivalent of school fees. In order to take the examination now, you have to pay. She should have said that. Let the people know that in the new, capitalist concept of the Minister, all of this freeness should go and that she is charging fees.

She should not tie it to absenteeism and give people the impression that a 3 per cent absenteeism is responsible for the imposition. And she cannot tell us if that is higher than five years ago, higher than last year or what she anticipates it would be next year. She comes and tells us absenteeism; and that is what she announced; but only just now, she managed to tell us that it is, in fact, because the cost of administering this, that and the other relating to exams has gone up.

We calculate that she is getting more than half million dollars from those people who come to the exam. That is the problem, Sir. The 151 who do not come....

Mr. CHAIRMAN: Please, please. The honourable Member is not addressing his remarks to tne Clause that is before this Committee.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Sir, I would have to wait for Clause 4 then, Sir.

Mr. CHAIRMAN: I believe you could do better there.

The question that Clause 3 do now stand part was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.
9.20 p.m.

Clause 4 was called and passed.

On the motion of Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, seconded by Hon. L. S. CRAIG, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported the passing of one Bill in Committee, and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On separate motions of Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, seconded by Hon. L. S. CRAIG, the Bill was read a third time and passed.

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Order No. 7, Sir.

THE CARIBBEAN EXAMINATIONS COUNCIL (INCORPORATION) BILL, 1983

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER (City of Bridgetown): Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is a Bill seeking to give what is known as a legal personality to the Caribbean Examinations Council.

When the Heads of Government of Commonwealth Caribbean countries met in 1964 in Jamaica, it was agreed then that a Caribbean Examinations Council would be established. At a subsequent meeting of the Heads of Government in St. Lucia in 1972, it was agreed *inter alia* that the Council should possess a full legal personality so that it would have the power to be competent to contract, to acquire and to dispose of property and to institute legal proceedings.

This is really what the Bill is about. It is part of an Agreement to which all of the Caribbean nations which comprise the Caribbean Examinations Council are party, and this Resolution is going to be required in all those countries.

It is late in coming to this Honourable Chamber because a draft Bill was first prepared some years ago, and then amendments were proposed at the last CARICOM Education Ministers' meeting. It was then decided that perhaps we did not want the amendments and that we could get ahead with the business of giving a legal personality to the Examinations Council.

I do not think I need to say very much more about the CXC. I think that most, if not all, honourable Members must know by now that the CXC offers examinations at what is known as a Basic Level, and then we have a General Proficiency Level, and that we are in the process of preparing what will be an alternative to the GCE "A" level. I do not think that it is proposed that the CXC will have "A" levels, I do not know what they are going to be called in the end, but they are meant to be an alternative to the GCE "A" levels.

I really hope that a lot of useless discussion, examination fees, will not necessarily follow on this Bill,

and there is really only one thing I need to say now on this. If we were in fact going to charge a school fee, or even an examination fee, it would be hundreds of dollars.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: May I remind the honourable Minister that no Member of the House is entitled to cast any aspersions or to comment on a vote which has been taken in this House during this session.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I am on the Caribbean Examinations Council.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Member is now referring to a matter which has just passed the Honourable House of Assembly.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: In respect of the Caribbean Examinations Council, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I must say that if the young people in Barbados who take the examinations had to pay the full examination fee, in the majority of cases it would be in the order of three to four hundred dollars per person, because you are paying an examination fee, you are paying a subject fee, you pay an entry fee, and now we have a local fee, which is a fraction of the cost of all the other fees.

We will not go into the matter of what a tuition or a school fee would be in this country, we would be getting into many many hundreds of dollars.

Aside.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Yes, at CXC. I forget what it is, but I think you are paying $22 per subject for the General as well as at the Basic, and that is the subject fee which has nothing to do with the other fees. The children who sit these examinations, outside of the Government schools, privately, can testify to the cost that they pay.

With those words of introduction, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I should like to move that this Bill be now read a second time.

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

Mr. B. M. TAITT (St. Michael West): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I do not think that this Bill is going to excite any major debate, because if one looks at the Schedule on page 18, one would see that, in fact, it was signed by the then Prime Minister on 21st April, 1972 at St. Lucia, a conference at which I believe I was present, so therefore no honourable Member on this side could have any objection to this becoming part of the law of the land. They might indeed wonder why it took so long.

The only point I want to deal with is a matter of substance concerning the CXC itself. First of all, I wonder if the Minister can tell us when it is anticipated we will have the full CXC examination, including the languages and the "A" levels. What is the projected date on which we are going to be taking completely local examinations in Barbados?

I think it is important for those parents who have children now going into school to be able to project down the road as to when we will indeed be having "A" levels. I believe they have been adding new subjects every year and I think that the "A" Levels are scheduled to come in next year. The first one is scheduled to come in in 1984. I am not sure, but I wonder if the Minister could enlighten us on that.

9.30 p.m.

I know that she had made a statement before on the question of the accreditation of the examination outside of Barbados, but I wonder if since that initial query that was raised, concerning the acceptability of the CXC Certificate specifically in Canada, whether any more definitive work has been done to guarantee that there is no more rejection of the CXC credentials in Canadian Universities.

When we had raised a question, we had raised that question on specific information given concerning a specific university in Canada. I do not know if we are accredited to the Middle States Association in the United States, but if we are not, I believe that the time has come where the CXC authorities should seek to make sure that persons who go to school in Barbados are put to no disadvantage when going to other parts of the world.

It is all very well and good to say that we are not to be concerned about that, but not every child who leaves Barbados to go to school somewhere else is going to avoid attending the local university. Sometimes the sheer necessity of having to move with your family to another part of the world requires that you go to North America, to Europe, or some other place.

I think that there is now not much difficulty in acceptance of the CXC in Barbados, generally speaking; although some people do have reservations about the new approach which allows children to get certificates which, in essence, are not worthwhile in the eyes of many of the people in the community.

In Bridgetown, for example, despite what the CXC says, only certain grades and levels are being accepted as certificates for purposes of work. And I think it is quite false and dangerous – and, again, the education philosophers say, or the new thinking says, that people who think like I do are wrong – to be giving certificates to indicate that the person took the examination, and in the area of Basic it seems that there is an element of that.

But I do not think now is the time to raise questions about the CXC. I think, generally, that they are trying and therefore we have an obligation to give them a chance, to see how it goes. The time for criticism, if any, will come in due course. But I wonder if the Minister will answer those two specific questions I asked.

Thank you, very much.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD (St. Michael South): Mr. Deputy Speaker, I will not be very long on this matter. My colleague, the Member for St. Michael West (Mr. B. M. Taitt), said that he was present at the creation of the CXC, in 1972, in St. Lucia; I presided over the inaugural meeting, but it goes even further back than this; because I recall a meeting, I believe it was a joint conference, way back.

The history of the CXC goes back into the late 1960s and early 1970s. I recall that one of the distinguished public servants of Barbados was at that time, I believe, on secondment to the Caribbean Examinations Council, and he did a considerable amount of work in connection with this matter at that conference in Montserrat, as I recall it. The particular public official, through the twist of fate, is now the Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education, an outstanding public officer who has rendered service, not only to Barbados, but to the Caribbean, and I am certain that it is a matter of pleasure for him to see that at least some of the work that he put in is coming to fruition in this particular regard.

Applause.

Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: I want to raise a slightly different question in relation to the CXC. It relates to what is called Stage 1 or Stage 2 of the Barbados Secondary School Certificate. The exact name of that particular examination slips me at the moment. But there is a local examination run under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and I am wondering what are the proposals for the development, or the thinking in terms of the development, of this particular examination: whether the thinking is that it should continue to be operated by the Ministry itself or whether the CXC can undertake the examination, or whether it will be merged into some level of the CXC or whatever in this particular matter.

I think a few words on this matter at this time may be of some interest.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, in relation to the first point in respect of the subject areas, in 1982, the CXC examined 8 new subject areas at Basic and the General Proficiency levels – Metal, Wood, Technical Drawing, General Electricity, Clothing & Textiles, Management, Food and Nutrition and Bookkeeping. Office Procedures and Typewriting, which were offered at General Proficiency levels, were offered at Basic Proficiency for the first time in 1982.

In 1982, private candidates were offered Bookkeeping at Basic; English Language, Basic and General; Geography, Basic and General; Office Procedures, Basic and General; Accounts – General; English Literature – General; Mathematics – Basic and General, and Spanish – Basic and General.

No official date, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has as yet been fixed for what will be the "A" Level equivalent of the CXC. It is a matter which is in progress even at this time. We are hoping that it will not be too far in the distant future. Generally, at the General Proficiency and Basic Proficiency Levels, we are hoping that the CXC will be offering a full range of some 25 subjects by 1985.

In respect of the query raised on accreditation, it is very important, I think, to say that the CXC issues a General Proficiency Certificate, like I said, and a Basic Proficiency Certificate. Generally speaking – and this is true for Barbados as well, even in the business sector – the General Proficiency Certificate, Grades 1 and 2 are accepted as equivalent to the GCE "O" Level and is recognized by many institutions – The University of the West Indies, the University of Guyana, Barbados Community College. In the United Kingdom, the Joint Matriculation Board, which serves the Universities of Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield and Birmingham, accepts both grades. The Scottish University Council on Entrance accepts CXC General Proficiency, Grade 1, and the London University Entrance Requirement Committee also accepts Grade 1 General Proficiency and is reviewing the General Proficiency, Grade 2.

9.40 p.m.

In Canada, the equivalent for admission purposes is usually decided by individual universities, and most Canadian universities require a combination of "O" and "A" levels for entry. Acadia University accepts students with five CXC General Proficiency certificates, Grades 1 and 2, including English and Mathematics, into their degree programme at the Junior Matriculation level. Most of the other Canadian Universities accept CXC certificates as equivalent to GCE "O" level certificates.

In the United States of America, the National Council for the Evaluation of Foreign Students' Credentials has advised universities that each subject pass of the CXC General Proficiency, Grades 1 and 2, should be counted towards admission eligibility. The universities have also been advised that each two subjects passed at Basic Proficiency level, Grades 1 or 2, should count as one subject for admission purposes.

Two subjects at Basic will count as one subject at some universities in the United Sates for admission purposes. I hope that that will satisfy the queries raised by honourable Members.

The question that the Bill be now read a second time was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

On motion of Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, seconded by Hon. L. R. TULL, Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER left the Chair and the House went into Committee on the Bill, Mr. J. G. ODLE in the Chair.

Clauses 1 to 7 inclusvie were called and passed.

The Schedule was called and passed.

On motion of Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, seconded by Hon. L. S. CRAIG, Mr. CHAIRMAN reported the passing of one Bill in Committee without amendment and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER resumed the Chair and reported accordingly.

On separate motions of Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER seconded by Hon. L. S. CRAIG, the Bill was read a third time and passed.

RESOLUTION RE ORDER OF SPEECHES FOR DEBATE ON ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENT AND BUDGETARY PROPOSALS, 1983

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Mr. Deputy Speaker, Order No. 2.

Order No. 2 was called – To resume debate on the passing of a Resolution that this Honourable House should further order speeches for the better organisation and administration of debate on the Annual Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals, 1983.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN (Christ Church West Central): Mr. Deputy Speaker, consequent upon the representations that have been made in the course of speeches, the Government has considered the views that have been contained in those representations and we seek to amend the Resolution in the following manner: the existing paragraph 9 of the Resolution to be deleted and there be substituted therefor a new paragraph 9 as follows:

"Subject always to the discretion of the presiding officer, the sequence of speeches for the remainder of the debate, excluding the Replies, shall, as far as possible, follow on the basis of an alternation of Members from either side; and the time limit for each such speech shall be 30 minutes."

In short, the object of this amendment is to ensure that, beyond any shadow of doubt, the presiding officer is the boss of the debate, but to indicate quite clearly that it is the general desire of the Government that there shall be an alternation of speeches so as to give the public the benefit of hearing each side, and, of course, to prescribe a time limit so as to ensure that the debate concludes within a reasonable period of time.

I beg to move that this amendment as proposed be part of the Resolution in substitution for the existing paragraph 9 of the Resolution.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: I beg to second that and reserve my right to speak.
9.50 p.m.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES (St. Michael North): Mr. Deputy Speaker, this amendment to the Resolution has just been circulated to honourable Members on this side for the first time, and I am trying to understand, the document that has been circulated in the light of the motion just made by the honourable Member, the honourable Deputy Prime Minister.

For instance, Sir, in the document I have before me, in paragraph 2 of that document, it says:

> ' "on page 2, paragraph 9 after" '

and the word "Government" is in inverted commas, and then the words,

> ' "listed as the third and nineteenth in the sequence of speeches, add "Government" . '

again in inverted commas

> ' "as the fourth and twentieth speakers in that sequence." '

Then, it goes on in paragraph 3:

> 'In the ADDENDUM, delete "22:45" and substitute "23.15" and delete "22.15" and substitute "22.45".

And then it reads:

> ' Delete paragraph 9 and substitute therefor:
>
> "9. Subject always '

et cetera, et cetera as read by the honourable Deputy Prime Minister.

Sir I do not know how to understand what I have before me because paragraph 2 and paragraph 3 seems to be contradictory. I really cannot understand this, Sir. Here is paragraph 2 telling me to follow the list of speeches. Paragraph 2 of what has been circulated is saying to add the word, " Government" to.....

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: If I may remind the honourable Member, on Tuesday, April 12, 1983 the amendments which now appear on this sheet as paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 were moved by the honourable Member for St. Michael Central (Mr. A. Truss).

All that has happened is that the document now circulated is incorporating the amendments of Tuesday, April 12, 1983 with the amendment to paragraph 9 to give you a full document of all the amendments which are sought to be made to the original Resolution.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I think it must be taken for granted that we should have some intelligence on both sides of the House.

It is my submission, Sir – if what you say is correct and I accept what you are saying, Sir – that it is not explicit.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: If I may seek to clarify the issue, last Tuesday, when the honourable Member for St. Michael Central proposed the amendment, the other honourable Member for St. Michael South (Mr. L. E. Sandiford) said that he could not deal with it because it was not circulated. At that time, the House took a suspension and the document was circulated.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: Well, we should have two documents now before us, Sir.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: That was circulated last week.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: We should have the document that was circulated last week.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: It was in your possession last week.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: But, look what I have before me now! This is what I am talking about!

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I do not want to raise an argument. I am trying to explain to the honourable Member that you already have in your possession amendments 1, 2 and 3 on a document circulated last Tuesday between 6.50 p.m. and 7.00 p.m.

What you now have is a new amendment to paragraph 9. But this document assists you by putting last week's amendment with this week's amendment on one document.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: I see what has happened, Sir, and I will accept what you have said.

Anyhow, Sir, if I may speak, Sir, on this matter.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I think there is some confusion. If we look at the Minutes of last Tuesday, the Minutes reflect the amendment made by the honourable Member for St. Michael Central, the suspension of the sitting and the resumption of the speech by the honourable Member for St. Michael South. Then the right honourable Prime Minister spoke, the honurable Member for St. Michael South Central spoke, and the last person to speak on that day was the honourable Member for St. Michael West – on the amendment to the original Resolution. The Minutes reflect that. What we are dealing with now is the amendment to paragraph 9.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS (St. Thomas): Am I mistaken in thinking that the honourable Member for St. Michael Central (Mr. A. Truss) also moved amendments which would be overtaken by these amendments if they are carried?

I am of the impression that the honourable Member for St. Michael Central's amendment are to add names or add slots perhaps to paragraph 9 and that we are now seeking to overtake the whole procedure of paragraph 9.

For the Record, Sir – I do not know if honourable Members have seen the document, which has analysed budget debate since 1972, but it does appear to be a fact that honourable Members do not speak twice in the Budget debate. We can find no record of honourable Members speaking twice, whether or not amendments are moved.

The librarian, I believe, has prepared a document. This is perhaps irrelevant. We cannot find any evidence that anybody spoke twice last year.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: Last year.)

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: We cannot find such evidence. According to us, the final order of speeches last year was the honourable Member for St. Michael South East (Hon. DeL. O. Bradshaw) the honourable Member for Christ Church East (Hon. Dr. R. L. Cheltenham), the honourable Member for Christ Church West (Hon. H. deB. Forde) and the Prime Minister.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: (St. Michael West): Mr. Deputy Speaker, further to that point of order, you will recall

specifically and I myself wondered at the arrangement – that the honourable Member for St. Michael South Central (Dr. R. C. Haynes) was given a specific spot and he wound up, because indeed, when winding up, he said something about every speech that had been made and he had left out the honourable Member for St. Philip South (Mr. H. A. Blackman), and we indicated to him that he had left out the honourable Member for St. Philip South when he was winding up.

I would argue with the honourable Member that that was the first time that anyone had spoken twice other than the Minister of Finance in a debate. But, it happened last year and, in fact, it was carried on television. Last year. It was an abhorrention but it happened.

I am just drawing that fact to your attention.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: On a point of order, Sir: Perhaps honourable Members would be clearer if they realised that the Budget Debate is opened by the Opposition spokesman. The Budget is not part of the Budget Debate. The Opposition spokesman in Finance has the longest speech, the only unlimited speech in the Budget Debate. The Prime Minister, theoretically, has an unlimited speech in the end, but I have never exercised it. I am quite willing to limit it.

But the Budget Debate is not the Budget. The Budget does not form part of the debate. The debate is on the Budgetary Proposals. I am moving the Resolution because it is a financial matter.

If you want to talk in terms of two speeches, you would have to give me a speech on the second day to move the House to accept the Budgetary Proposals. And indeed, in the House of Commons, a set of proposals is presented and a motion is moved to support those proposals. And in many other jurisdictions, such as in Jamaica, after the Minister of Finance has spoken, if he is not the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister then goes on to move the acceptance of the Budgetary Proposals.

(Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD: It is a Bill.)
10.00 p.m.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: I can bring some Bills, but I do not intend to come the second day and then formally begin to move Bills. My predecessor never did so in the days when the Budget proceeded on Private Members' Business. My predecessor never sought two speeches. He did not reply to me and then seek to wind up the debate, because the debate was critical of the Government, so I really do not know why there is all this fuss about the change.

I really do think that if honourable Members study the record of proceedings, they will see that we have made virtually no change, only change for the fairer, because we have given a Minister a long speech, an Opposition member a long speech, and limited the Minister of Finance.

I really wish that honourable Members could accept, now that passions have subsided, since the principle has been accepted anyhow on this side, that you must have rules for a television debate, and it is most unlikely that the public wants to see anybody during the debate speaking more than once.

The public really does not want, for 27 Members, to have men moving amendments, and to hear everybody speaking all over again on the amendments. You move an amendment at the very end of the debate, and theoretically entitle everybody who has spoken before to speak again? I do not think the public wants that. We just have to accept that it is a television debate.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I do not believe the Rules permit that, because the Rules only limit the debate to two days. I would like to draw the Prime Minister's attention to the specific rules. Unless those rules are going to be suspended for the sitting, by this Resolution, it then means that we may have to go more than two days if that should arise. Otherwise, obviously we will have to limit the debate to the required number of days so that the 27 Members would have their fair share of making their presentation at the relevant time.

If it is proposed that Members must speak on every amendment, there certainly would have to be some limitation as to how long the House would continue on this exercise.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, during last week's sitting, I got the impression that the right honourable Prime Minister had intended moving an amendment to the Resolution to provide that the speech of the person speaking first on behalf of the Opposition should, in any event, be not less than a certain time.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: On a point of elucidation: Perhaps the best way of dealing with that is to say that it is most unlikely that the Budget will be less than two hours. Indeed, Sir, as a result of decisions taken today, it is virtually impossible for it to be less, but I will consider this as a part of permanent procedure.

I really do not think that any Opposition spokesman of Finance should be put in the same position as I was put in 1976 by having to face a 30-minute Budget in which more than half of the material was not read by the then Minister of Finance. I would fully accept that, but on this occasion, honourable Members perhaps could take an assurance from me that the Budget will be of

normal Government recent lengths. I will just have to give that as an assurance.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: Mr. Deputy Speaker, speaking on this amendment, what I can say here is that this proposed amendment to paragraph 9 of the Resolution to my mind removes some of the objectionable features of the Resolution. It does not remove, as far as we on this side are concerned, all of the objectionable features of that Resolution.

For example, Sir, this will be the first time that an honourable Member other than the right honourable Minister of Finance, or the person speaking first on behalf of the Opposition, will be allowed to speak for more than half an hour. But I must say that that extra half an hour is also allowed to the person on this side speaking last on behalf of the Opposition.

Already, Sir, there will be 15 contributions from the other side and 10 contributions from this side, and, quite honestly, Sir, we can see no good reason why, in addition to that, an honourable Minister on that side should be given an extra half an hour again. Already they are given 14 half hours, and the right honourable Prime Minister's contribution is unlimited.

What I am saying is that under the Standing Orders, only the right honourable Minister of Finance's speech is unlimited. That is what has been a bit objectionable to us. That is one of the objectionable features, it is not the only objectionable feature. We do have Standing Orders to go by.

The right honourable Prime Minister was a member of the Standing Orders Committee in 1972, and not only that, the right honourable Prime Minister said in the last session that it was he who wrote this provision relating to the debate on the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals. He said this in here last Tuesday, and he was right, because I was a member of that committee as well, and I recall distinctly what took place.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, let us take this thing in sequence. There has been confusion about broadcasting and televising these debates now for some little time, and this confusion was only introduced in this Chamber, really and truly, with the advent of television. Up until 1976, only the speech of the right honourable Minister of Finance and the reply by the person who spoke on behalf of the Opposition were televised. Then came 1976 and there was a slight change, and in that year, the final reply of the right honourable Minister of Finance at that time was televised.
10.10 p.m.

As a matter of fact – I see the Prime Minister shaking his head in agreement – there was some problem about that, and not every Member of this Chamber accepted that the right honourable Prime Minister should have another go on television. I do recall very well that some of CBC's equipment in that room over there was damaged. I recall that very well.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Member must withdraw that statement.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: What did I say?

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: That some of the equipment was damaged by that group over there.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: I did not say that! I said "in that room." No, Sir! I did not say that, Sir!

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: That room is reserved for parliamentarians and I would not have the honourable Member insinuating that Parliamentarians were responsible for damaging the equipment.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: I am not insinuating that, Sir. I am merely stating a fact, that the equipment was in that room and that the equipment was damaged. That is all I am saying, Sir. I am not insinuating anything. I am merely stating facts.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: But not by Members of the Chamber.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: I did not say that, Sir. I did not say that just now, and I am not saying it now. I am not saying that, Sir. As a matter of fact, it was a good thing that CBC had stand-by equipment on that occasion, otherwise the final reply by the right honourable Minister of Finance would not have been televised.

Of course, Sir, even prior to that we had problems. I remember well – I cannot say the then Member for St. Joseph – because Your Honour is the representative for St. Joseph – a Mr. Lloyd Smith, Sir, who was at one time a Member of this Chamber, vehemently protesting that we should be given equal time, and he brandished his pliers and he said, "I have my tools, Mr. Speaker, and I will set to work." I do not know if he set to work or not. I can only say that some wires in the area where he was sitting were supposed to be cut through. I do not know if he had set to work, but I will say this for him, Sir, he did get his wish.

However, Sir, this is not our way of doing things. We have Standing Orders of this Chamber and we believe that these Standing Orders should be respected and that things should be done under the Standing Orders, or under the laws of this country as it is set out that they should be done.

The Standing Orders of this Honourable Chamber have constitutional authority. Section 50 of the Constitution states that each House may regulate its own procedures and for that purpose each House may make Standing Orders.

Sir, I was a member of the Standing Orders Committee that sat in 1972 along with the right honourable Prime Minister, and the honourable Member for St. Michael South (Mr. L. E. Sandiford). As a matter of fact, I believe that the honourable Leader of this Chamber read the list at the last occasion. We sat, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and we worked out certain proposals and we brought those proposals here to this Honourable Chamber. Those proposals were accepted, and in 1972 we made those Standing Orders which we now have here.

On 21 July, 1981, I was again appointed a member of the Standing Orders Committee along with other Members. At no time – I want to make this point, Sir – at no time was any of the proposals now before this Chamber brought to the attention of the Standing Orders Committee. The Standing Orders Committee had one meeting at which we reviewed some Standing Orders and we had a look and we decided that we would meet subsequently. I do not recall that there were any meetings subsequent to that very first meeting. I do not recall any!

To the best of my recollection, no meeting of the Standing Orders Committee has been summoned for the past 18 months or so, not a single meeting has been summoned over that period. Now, the Standing Orders Committee is not an ad hoc committee of this Chamber. It is not a committee that has been set up to deal with any particular business and when that business has been done then the committee is *functus officio*.

The Standing Orders Committee is one of the standing committees of this Chamber. Standing Order 59 on Page 73 No. 2 states:–

> "There shall be a Standing Orders Committee which shall consist of the Speaker as Chairman, and nine Members who shall be nominated by the House at the commencement of every Session. It shall be the duty of the Committee to consider from time to time and report on all matters relating to the Standing Orders of the House."

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Standing Orders Committee to which I belong cannot report on this matter before this Chamber, because it was never brought before that committee. And that Standing Order is fairly clear to me. It says that it shall report on all matters relating to the Standing Orders. But this has never been reported to that committee.

Sir, every honourable Member of this Chamber who sees the need for amending a Standing Order, if he is so persuaded, can report that particular matter to the Standing Orders Committee and let them decide on it. But, Sir, that has never been the case. So what do we have here on this occasion? We have a set of proposals relating to the Standing Order that deals with debate on the Financial Statement and Budgetary Proposals. We have these set of proposals brought down to this Chamber, not coming from the Standing Orders Committee or coming via the Standing Orders Committee – but a set of proposals that have come down from the Cabinet.

I feel insulted, Sir. I do! And I feel that it is an insult to this Chamber that proposals relating to the Standing Orders should be brought in this manner. The Constitution is quite clear. It says that the House should regulate its own procedure. But we have now the Cabinet sending proposals down to this Chamber for us to consider! What is worse?

Sir, we have to be careful that we do not find ourselves swallowed up by the Cabinet. We have to be very careful about this. The Cabinet does not consist of all members who are Members of this Honourable Chamber. There are members of the Cabinet who are not Members of this House. Why should they have a say on how we should regulate and conduct our own affairs in this Chamber. Why should they have that say?
10.20 p.m.

Asides.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: You are not laughing though. You are taking me seriously. I bet you are. He will be laughing because he does not understand it. He would never understand it; I mean the part-time Minister over there. He cannot understand it, but I know the right honourable Prime Minister understands what I am saying, because we are having an interference – that is what is happening – in the procedural regulations of this House by the Cabinet.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I appeal to honourable Members to carefully observe what is happening and think carefully about these proposals. It may be just the thin edge of the wedge. I understand why the Government wants to do it.

Sir, matters like this, in my opinion, should come from the Standing Orders Committee that has been duly constituted for this very purpose, not from the Cabinet, and I do not see why it should be dictated to us how we should regulate this procedure. It is very important. Quite honestly, I do not understand it, and I would like to know what is the expediency of all this.

Sir, what is the expediency, for example, of suspending Standing Order No. 21? The Resolution calls for

the suspension of Standing Order No. 21. What is the expediency of the House being deprived of that, because during that session I cannot bring a motion to suspend the honourable Member for St. James North (Hon. L. S. Craig), because Standing Order No. 21 would be suspended, but I might want to do that.

There are several provisions under Order 21, matters relating to leave of absence and so on. This cannot be done when this Standing Order is suspended. There is also the withdrawal of strangers. I think that is very important.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: On a point of order, is the honourable Member asking me to make it possible for honourable Members to interrupt the Budget Debate to ask for leave of absence.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: We may have to interrupt the Budget Debate to ask strangers to leave the Gallery, but that could still be done under Standing Order 77.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Would the honourable Member help me with the Standing Order of which he is speaking.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: Standing Order No. 21. That is what the Resolution states. This Resolution states that notice of motion is required for certain purposes except certain matters. Now would you require notice then to ask strangers to withdraw?

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: I would like the honourable Member to help me. What is the heading of your Standing Order No. 21?

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: Exemption from Notice.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: And you said Rule No. 3?

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: I said 20. But the point I am making is that you do not require notice to ask strangers to withdraw.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Which Standing Order is that?

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: Standing Order No. 21.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Standing Order No. 21 with what?

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: Rule 20, I said, Sir, on page 28.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The honourable Member is really confusing the issue, because there is certainly room and scope for any Government member to ask to suspend any portion of a Standing Order the Government so desires, and if the Government wishes to suspend any section of Standing Order No. 21, they can suspend that leaving the other sections intact.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: But what do I read here, Sir? "Be it resolved that Standing Orders Nos. 21, 30(1) and (2) and 31 be suspended." That is the whole of Standing Order No. 21.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Will the honourable Member continue.

Mr. P. M. GREAVES: Thank you. I am merely pointing out certain difficulties that could possibly arise from proceeding with the Resolution as it stands. Now there may never be any difficulties, but in case there might be -- suppose we want to ask strangers to withdraw -- what do we do? Give notice of a motion at that time if that Standing Order is suspended?

These are things that do arise. These are some of the points that I thought I should draw to the attention of this Honourable Chamber. These are some of the features that I said at the very outset we on this side find objectionable, and I thought I would bring them to the attention of this Honourable Chamber.

Sir, people have been wondering why is it that we now have to make a change in the provisions relating to the debate on the Budget. We have been debating the Budget over the past ten years under these very Standing Orders. We debated the Budget last year under these very Standing Orders. Why do we now need a change in order to debate the same Budgetary Proposals? These are things that people have been asking.

People are going even further than that and are wondering if it is that Government does not want certain Members to be seen on television at certain times. And you cannot stop people from asking these things, because as soon as one makes a change in this country, people ask the reason why you make this change.

Sir, in my years of growing up, it had been said that children should be seen and not heard. It seems to me that the Government is saying here to some Member or Members in this Chamber that they should not be seen and probably hardly heard.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I believe that the debate under the Standing Orders, as have obtained over the last nine to ten years, has gone on reasonably well. That is not to say that there is no room for improvement, but I believe that there is a certain procedure built into the Standing Orders, which derive their authority from the

Constitution, for dealing with this matter. Maybe we need an extra day – maybe we need three days now that we have a larger House of Assembly than we had previously – in order to debate the Budgetary Proposals. 10.30 p.m.

But these, Sir, I will contend are matters that should come before the Standing Orders Committee because what we are having here is temporary – and I can only say it is temporary – an *ad hoc* amendment to the Standing Orders. This is not an amendment, as I would put it, say, for all times. After this debate has taken place, we revert next day to the same Standing Orders perhaps until the following year, when, perhaps, it might be put into action once more. This is a clumsy way of dealing with this matter.

Probably it is a bit too late now to ask Government to have second thoughts about this matter. But certainly, Sir, if it is Government's intention that they need a change in the Standing Orders relating to this particular debate – they have the numbers, Sir, and maybe we may be persuaded – we are only asking them to do it in the right way. Bring it before the Standing Orders Committee! Do not bring it straight to the House of Assembly.

Bring it before the Standing Orders Committee, which is a standing committee which is competent to deal with all matters relating to the Standing Orders. Bring it before the Standing Orders Committee! Let us debate it there and we may even have alternative proposals to make which might be acceptable to them. We can have everything dealt with that way, and in the constitutional way, and then there will be no problems relating to that as obtains here now.

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN (St. Philip North): Mr. Deputy Speaker, Sir, unlike my comrade who has just taken his seat, it is my opinion that this proposed amendment makes it even more difficult for us to concede and accede to this request. I will tell you why, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

If you read the proposed amendment, the proposed amendment reads as follows:

> "Subject always to the discretion of the presiding officer,"

So it starts to set out that the presiding officer might have the right to regularise the proceedings of this Chamber, which is a fact, and which is as it should be under the Standing Orders and which is as it should be in any debate including the Budget Debate.

It goes on to say:

> "the sequence of the speeches for the remainder of the debate, excluding the Replies, shall....."

and this is the difficult part, Mr. Deputy Speaker:

> ".....as far as possible, follow on the basis of an alteration of Members from either side;"

Alteration from either side!

It appears to me that this amendment is making it even more difficult for the presiding officer than the original document. The original document, Mr. Deputy Speaker, was a very specific recommendation which, if voted on by this House, would issue specific instructions to the presiding officer in the way that he should conduct the debate on that occasion.

But what happens in the amendment? The amendment does not issue any specific instructions by way of a Resolution. It proposes to give the presiding officer the authority that is rightly his in one hand, and with the other hand, it tries to take it away again by saying that, as far as possible, speeches should be alternated.

Let us take an illustration, Mr. Deputy Speaker. Suppose the debate starts and a member from the Government had just spoken and no member from this side gets up to speak, what is going to happen? You have no authority to call on us to speak as you would have had in the prior Resolution. You could only catch the eye of whoever gets up to speak.

As far as I am concerned, this breaks down the whole procedure. So you could as well go right back to the Standing Orders and give the Deputy Speaker the full authority to regularise the debate and allow whoever catches the Deputy Speaker's eye to speak on the debate, and allow the whips on both sides to regularise the order of speeches as far as they want for their strategic purposes or otherwise.

I am saying in this very short contribution, Mr. Deputy Speaker, because I do not intend to very long, that it is my opinion that the proposed amendment is worse than the original section, it makes it even more difficult for the Deputy Speaker to conduct the proceedings of this Chamber in the way they should be conducted, and it makes it even more difficult for this side to agree with the amendment as it is now before us.

(Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: It is time to terminate this now.)

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: What is the difference, Mr. Deputy Speaker, between this debate and any other debate? Just the presence of the TV camera The presence

of the TV camera causes this Chamber to disrupt the whole procedure according to the Standing Orders. Why?

(Hon. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: Because you do not want to face the camera.)

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would not even take the honourable Member seriously, because if I have something to contribute, camera or no camera, I will say it. And I figure that I do have something to contribute. So, that is not taken at all.

But I see difficulties for the presiding officer in this amendment. I think it is putting him in a very awkward position, a much more difficult one. You are either going to do one or two things. Either by the strength of your numbers you vote the original one, issue directives saying that you must obey, or you allow the debate to continue according to the Standing Orders because, as I said, you are purporting to give him the authority in one hand by the amendment, and, in the left hand, you are taking away that authority by saying that, as far as possible, the speeches must be alternated.

I see no reason, Mr. Deputy Speaker, why this Chamber that should be, if it is not a responsible body, the most senior and authoritative body in the island of Barbados should not be able to conduct its business with decorum before the eyes of the camera so that the people out there would be able to see what their representatives have to offer.

Certain remarks made by the honourable Member for St. Philip North were ordered to be expunged from the Record by Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER.

Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I would hope that the quality of the speeches would be better on the occasion that the cameras are upon us.

It is my contention that the amendment does absolutely nothing to bring the order that it is purported to bring to the debate, and I would seriously recommend to the Government that this body, a responsible body, should be allowed to continue the Budget Debate under the existing Standing Orders, and that it should not be restructured by any Resolution for this occasion.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: If nobody else wishes to speak, I will reply in just a few minutes. Very, very briefly.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: I cannot remember if I spoke. Did I speak?)

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: The question of time which was raised is that 3.30 p.m. is some kind of sabotage of the honourable Member for St. Michael South Central (Dr. R. C. Haynes). Perhaps! I really should not reply to his self-centred egoism. But I would point out that the Budget in 1973 was delivered at 2.30 p.m., 2.30 p.m. The Budget of 1980 was at 4.30 p.m., the Budget of 1974 was at 7.00 o'clock p.m. and, technically, I think the Budget of 1971, the mini in September was at 12.40 p.m. I think that was on television, too. So the times of budgets vary.
10.40 p.m.

Nearly all persons, when they understand that the rhetoric of the honourable Member for St. Michael South Central has a basis in his personality rather than in fact, will realise upon looking at this Resolution that Members' rights are being extended rather than restricted. It is most unusual for anybody to speak twice. If it has happened, it could only have happened in one year. Normally, Budget Debates start on a Resolution by the Leader of the Opposition. That has been the pattern for many years, we have been changing it.....

Aside.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: Many years, not under us, but that used to be the pattern. I have a memory of these things, you know, Sir, I have been dealing with these things for many many years.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order, Sir: I am suggesting that the honourable Member is mistaken in his view. I think that although he is correct in his earlier statement that no one spoke twice, if he will remember, the Minister of Finance in this Chamber always had attached to the Budget toward the end a number of Bills which were, in fact, proposed.

He said earlier that in Britain, which is correct, in the House of Commons the Budget begins on a Bill and the debate remains with the first person speaking on the Opposition side. But in the House of Commons, what actually happens is that the Chancellor presents the Budget and the Leader of the Opposition makes a statement in reply, and then the following day the Finance Bill is debated, so I think the honourable Member may have got the two Chambers confused.

What has happened in Barbados is that those Bills, which have necessarily to be read a second time to implement matters arising out of the Budgetary Statement, have always been attached by the Minister in our time. The Leader of the Opposition in those times

actually responded to the Budget and did not speak again, whereas, if he had initiated the debate, he would be entitled to wind up the debate. That only happened in the history of Barbados last year when he did not initiate the debate, but provision was made for the principal spokesman on this side, which they say they cannot find, to have what they call a wind-up speech.

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: Well, Sir, the records prepared by the Librarian and the Clerk do not really show this. Honourable Members must forgive me if I am a little confused, but I recollect a second speech in a Budget Debate, and I have actually either delivered or replied to 16 Budgets. Nobody else in Barbados' history has quite the experience with Budgets as I have had. I have only missed one, that is 1973. The honourable Member for St. John missed a few. He stayed out of the House for a few, and he did not reply to a number of them. I think he has only ever replied to two, possibly three. They started in 1964, so that would be 18 in his case.

But I have a memory of a second speech during Budget debates. It is either the Budget or the Constitution – it must have been the Budget, because the honourable Member for St. Michael North (Mr. P. M. Greaves), rising on a point of order during my Reply and moving the question be now put, terminated my speech (and the debate) during my reply. I have a memory of it, and he will remember that, too! On an occasion when I was in the process of making a second speech, the honourable Member rose on a point of order, and instead of making a fuss, like a fool I sat down and his point of order was, "I beg to move that the question be now put."

We are really not abridging free speech in this matter, we are letting a free run of speeches. I am sure that the point made by the honourable Member for St. Philip North, (Mr. W. O Franklin) is a sincere point, but I do not think it is a good point. We have had difficulties in the past with the calling of speeches. You can lead a horse to the water, but you cannot make it drink. If you put down Government, Opposition, Government, Opposition, what happens when the Presiding Officer looks at the Opposition and says "Opposition" or "An honourable Member from this side"? He cannot make you get up and speak.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: He can do like the Speaker and say nobody else from this side will be called again).

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: That has been done already, that has already been done in here. A *sotto voce* remark says that on one occasion the Speaker resolved not to call anybody else, because nobody would rise from one side or the other, and there was an abbreviated debate. That debate was in 1980, and the sitting was suspended until the television cameras came back and I got down there. The sitting was suspended for a few hours and I just came back and wound up the debate because nobody would rise from that side.

I say this not to be critical, but to ask two honourable Members in particular, the honourable Members for St. James North (Hon. L. S. Craig) and St. Michael South (Mr. L. E. Sandiford), before next Wednesday, the 27th, which is Budget Day, to get together and agree on a timetable from which they could write down the slots. I think the honourable Member, the Deputy Prime Minister, did it once when he was Leader of the House. Write down the slots, write down who wants to speak, and I am really appealing to both sides, I really am, find out who wants to speak, get a list and give to His Honour the Speaker.

(Mr. B. M. TAITT: Withdraw the Resolution and let us go home).

Rt. Hon. J. M. G. M. ADAMS: Today's amendment now makes that possible. That is the real point of today's amendment. It will now be possible to do that, write down all who want to speak, give the Speaker a list and we will go ahead on that.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative, the House dividing as follows:

Ayes: Rt. Hon J. M. G. M. ADAMS, Hon. L. S. CRAIG, Hon. L. B. BRATHWAITE, Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER, Hon. Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM, Hon. H. B. St. JOHN, Hon. Dr. D. G. BLACKMAN, Hon. V. L. JOHNSON, Mr. R. E. BRATHWAITE, Hon. DeL. O. BRADSHAW and Mr. J. G. ODLE – 11.

Noes: Mr. L. E. SANDIFORD, Mr. B. M. TAITT, Mr. W. O. FRANKLIN, Mr. P. M. GREAVES, Mr. M. A. KING and Mr. L. A. WEEKES – 6.

10.50 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. L. S. CRAIG: Sir, I beg to move that this House do now stand adjourn until Tuesday, April 26, 1982 at 12 o'clock noon.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I beg to second that.

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

10.53 p.m.

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