
THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1991 - 96

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, February 15, 1994

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

PRESENT

His Honour L. A. WEEKES, G.C.M., J.P., (Speaker)
His Honour T. C. ESTWICK, B.Sc., LL.B., (Deputy Speaker)

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD, B.A., M.A., (Econ.), J.P., (Prime Minister, Minister of Economic Affairs, Tourism and Minister for the Civil Service)

Hon. B. M. TAITT, B.A. (Hons.), M.P.A., LL.B. (Hons.), (Minister of Foreign Affairs & Deputy Leader of the House)

Hon. P. M. GREAVES, Q.C., B.A., (Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Home Affairs and Leader of the House)

Hon. M. A. KING, Q.C., LL.B., (Attorney General, Minister of Justice and Minister for CARICOM Affairs)

Hon. W. O. FRANKLIN, A.I.C., M.I.A.S., J.P., (Minister of Trade, Industry and Commerce)

Hon. N. K. SIMMONS, (Minister of Education)

Mr. H. A. BLACKMAN, B.Sc. (Econ.)

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR, M.Sc. (Econ.), (Leader of the Opposition)

Mr. D. A. C. SIMMONS, Q.C., LL.M.

Hon. C. V. WALKER, J.P., (Minister of Health) Mr.

L. L. BRATHWAITE, J.P., (Chairman of Committees)

Hon. E. E. GREAVES, G.C.M., B.A., Ed.M., (Minister of Culture & International Transport)

Hon. W. W. HALL, G.C.M., H.B.M., J.P., (Minister of Labour, Public Works, Community Development & Sports)

Mr. C. LeR. TROTMAN, M.A.

Mr. R. L. MORRIS, B.A., Cert. Ed.

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Hons.) (Minister of Finance)

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN, Q.C., LL.B.

Mr. L. R. TULL, Q.C., M.A.

Miss B. A. MILLER

Mr. DeL. O. BRADSHAW, B.Sc. (Hons.), J.P. Dr.

R. L. CHELTENHAM, Q.C., M.A., M.Sc. (Econ.)

Hon. D. W. BOWEN, (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Fisheries)

Mr. G. W. PAYNE

Prayers were led by Rev. Father Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, February 8, 1994.

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, the Minutes of the meeting of this Honourable Chamber held on February 8, 1994, have been, I am advised, circulated. I therefore move that they be confirmed.

Hon. M. A. KING: I beg to second that.

Mr. SPEAKER: If there are no observations or corrections, let these Minutes stand confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY YOUR HONOUR

Mr. SPEAKER: I am to announce that I am in receipt of the Accounts-and Statements for the month of November, 1993, as prepared by the Accountant General.

FIRST READING OF BILLS

On the motion of Hon. P. M. GREAVES, seconded by Hon. M. A. KING, a bill to amend the Road Traffic Act, Cap. 295 was read a first time.

CONGRATULATORY SPEECHES

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: I rise, Mr. Speaker, under this particular item, Congratulatory and/or Obituary Speeches, to extend congratulations to the Member for St. Michael South East. Information has come to me recently that the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East has advanced in the academic community, and that the Bachelor's Degree in Political Science has been conferred on him.

Sir, for many years now he has been a practical exponent of the issues and content of practical politics and he has now added the academic component to his practical knowledge. I think it is right that we take note of the progress of the Honourable Member. We certainly know that he will use not only the status of attaining that degree but also the new knowledge that he would have gained to better understand the politics of Barbados and also to make an even more important contribution towards life in Barbados and beyond.

I just, Sir, wanted to draw this to the attention of the House and to make those few congratulatory comments.

Thank you.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, it was very generous of the Prime Minister to raise this matter and to salute the accomplishment of the Honourable Member for St. Michael South East, who now is qualified to call himself a true political scientist, unlike the Prime Minister, Sir.

We are all very pleased on this side for the manner in which the member has proceeded in this matter to develop himself. I am personally pleased, as Leader of the Barbados Labour Party, to have someone who has now grounded himself in the theory of political science to have his skills to be put to the wider use of the party, Parliament, and this country. I would just want to join in the acclaim that has been made on this occasion.

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not think I would allow this opportunity to slip me as well because one of the concerns about the functioning of Parliament is that one should seek to improve one's knowledge and acquire skills so necessary for debate and also for representation. To my mind, the most important aspect of the member's achievement is that as a grassroots person, a person who can claim not to have been to the university as such as a full-time student, he has shown what grassroots people can achieve and bring to such a Chamber like this. I hope that we will start to pay more attention to those who may not have been able to acquire that kind of advancement in the early stages. It

only shows you that these kinds of people have a lot to offer if only they can have the opportunity so to develop.

I want to pay my own contribution by congratulating the Honourable Member for so doing. I think he speaks well for the grassroots in politics.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that Standing Orders Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 42(5), 43 and 44 be suspended for the remainder of the day's sitting.

Hon. M. A. KING: I beg to second that.

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

Mr. SPEAKER: Government Business is the order of the day. Order No. 4.

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Finance wants to make a Ministerial Statement. I believe we will pass that particular order. I am seeking your permission for the Statement to be made at this time.

Mr. SPEAKER: If there is no objection then that item will be dealt with later on during the day. There being no objection then leave would be granted.
12.25 p.m.

STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER OF FINANCE ON
THE HEADS OF AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE
GOVERNMENTS OF BARBADOS AND TRINI-
DAD AND TOBAGO FOR SETTLING THE
INDEBTEDNESS OF THE CARIBBEAN
AIR CARGO CO. LTD. TO THE
BARBADOS NATIONAL BANK

Hon. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, the House will recall that on November 21, 1989 my colleague the Honourable Member for St. Michael North, then Minister of International Transport made a statement to this Honourable Chamber regarding the operation of CARICARGO and stated then some of the difficulties being faced by the company.

At that time he indicated that a Task Force was being appointed to examine the various options in Aircargo as they affect Barbados. The Task Force was also mandated to make proposals for the restructuring of CARICARGO with the objective of determining the viability of a restructured company in the shortest possible time.

The Task Force recommended the restructuring of CARICARGO at three levels:

(a) Disposition or rescheduling of the debts; ^(b)

Refocusing of operations; (c) The involvement of BWIA.

One of the principle factors on which the whole restructuring process hinged was the acknowledgement by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago that it will undertake responsibility for its half of the debt of the company.

Since the report of the Task Force, a number of meetings have been held between the two shareholder governments.

At one of these meetings which was held in Trinidad and Tobago on March 13, 1992 it was agreed that:

"the company would discontinue its operation in its present form with effect from April 1, 1992 with a view to winding up the company by June, 1992."

Subsequent to this the representatives of both governments again met in Trinidad and Tobago on June 23, 1993, and decided *inter alia*, that subject to ratification by the respective governments:

- (1) the company should immediately proceed to dissolution by filing a Notice of Bankruptcy; and
- (2) an Attorney-at-Law would be consulted with a view to determining the appropriate course of action and cost of the proceedings.

It was further agreed that the governments of Trinidad and Tobago and of Barbados will be responsible for the settlement of debts outstanding to the Barbados National Bank.

The Government of Trinidad and Tobago proposed that the settlement of its obligation in respect of the BNB debt be met by a set-off against any debt owed by Barbados to Trinidad and Tobago.

It was against this background that on December 22, 1993 a Trinidad and Tobago delegation consisting of the Hon. Kenneth Valley, Minister in the Ministry of Finance and a Senior Business Analyst from their Ministry of Finance met here in Barbados with a delegation from Barbados led by the Hon. Deputy Prime Minister and including the Minister responsible for International Transport and myself along with other Senior officials, to conclude an agreement for settling the indebtedness of CARICARGO to the Barbados National Bank.

It was agreed that the settlement would be on the basis of the debt outstanding at April 30, 1993, when CARICARGO ceased operations and that the amount of the CARICARGO debt which the Government of Trinidad and Tobago would pay would be offset against any loan due by the Central Bank of Barbados to the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago.

The debt outstanding at April 30, 1992, including interest which was capitalised was \$65.6m. However, after considering the good relations which have always existed between the Governments of Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago, and in view of the low interest to be charged by the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago on the outstanding portion of the loan to the Central Bank of Barbados after the off setting arrangement was put in place, it was agreed that the Government of Trinidad and Tobago would pay 50% of \$59.0m or \$29.5m which would be set off against the amount which the Central Bank of Barbados . owed to the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago.

After the off-setting arrangement, the Central Bank of Barbados owes the Central Bank of Trinidad and Tobago \$9.7m to be repaid at 4% by June 30, 1994.

Thank you.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. SPEAKER: Government Business. Order No. 4.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE COMPULSORY ACQUISITION OF LAND AT 3RD AVENUE, LONG GAP, SAINT MICHAEL FOR THE PUBLIC PURPOSE OF ROAD IMPROVEMENT

Order No. 4 was called — To move the passing of a Resolution to approve the compulsory acquisition of land at 3rd Avenue, Long Gap, St. Michael for the public purpose of road improvement.

Hon. E. E. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, this Resolution is in connection with the acquisition of an area of land at Long Gap, St. Michael for the purposes of road construction. Indeed, Sir, I think a check would reveal that the work on this particular area in respect of the land started somewhere around 1985.

It was around that time that the then Ministry responsible for Public Works and Communications executed the project for improvement of land on lands allegedly owned by one Mr. T. Alleyne. He requested compensation and the Surveying Section of the Ministry had to verify the portion of land which was affected during the construction of the road. This has been confirmed as

480.1 square meters. As a result the Government is seeking to tidy up this acquisition because it is for work which has already been completed. There is not much to the resolution. Honourable Members may wish to see the area of land in question and a copy of the plot is available to Honourable Members. But, as I said, we are seeking to tidy up this arrangement for work which was completed as far back as 1985.

With those remarks I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. M. A. KING: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

Mr. SPEAKER: Order No. 5.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE PUBLICATION
IN THE OFFICIAL GAZETTE OF NOTIFICATION
OF THE ABANDONMENT OF THE
COMPULSORY ACQUISITION OF LAND
AT SCARBOROUGH, CHRIST CHURCH,
BY RESOLUTION NO. 56/1990,
FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE NATIONAL LOW
INCOME HOUSING
PROJECT

Order No. 5 was called — To move the passing of a Resolution to approve publication in the Official Gazette of notification of the abandonment of the compulsory acquisition of land at Scarborough, Christ Church, by Resolution No. 56/1990, for the implementation of the National Low Income Housing Project.

Hon. E. E. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, this land was acquired some time ago but the processes had not been completed. It was a part of the Scarborough Tenantry in Christ Church and the idea was that this acquisition would be used and the site used under the National Low Income Project. Under the original scheme Government had proposed to acquire a total area of 19 034 square meters. It was broken down as follows:

Land — 18 205.2 square meters

Road — 745 square meters

Drainage Reserve — 83.8 square meters

Part of the Amendment of the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act at least 7 tenancies existed. However the Amendment to the Act eroded that number to 1. More than 50% of the tenants now reside on areas of land with 5

tenants or less and they have made substantial improvements to their places of residence thereby enabling them to purchase the freehold of their lots. This site falls in the path of the noise effective forecast zone 40 which restricts erection of new houses and the subdivision of land. However, if two houses exist on one lot, permission will be granted for subdivision to allow each house to occupy a lot. 12.35 p.m.

In light of the fact that this area of land falls within the noise effective forecast zone 40 it was considered wise not to proceed with this particular development because, basically as I understand it, that area restricts the construction of houses because it interferes with the arrival and departure of aircraft out of Grantley Adams International Airport. So was therefore considered necessary to abandon this acquisition and that basically is the purpose for this Resolution before Parliament today. I therefore move, Sir, that this Resolution do now pass. Again I would like Honourable Members to be aware of the major rationale behind the abandonment of this particular area.

Hon. M. A. KING: I beg to second that and reserve my right to speak.

Mr. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker,...

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Philip South caught my eye.

Mr. H. A. BLACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on this Resolution very briefly. Mr. Speaker, this Resolution deals with the abandonment of the acquisition of property at Scarborough, Christ Church. This acquisition forms part of the National Low Income Urban Project which originally was a World Bank Project. When I became Minister of Housing and Lands, Mr. Speaker, in 1986 this acquisition, among others, had already begun and certain changes were made. The others that were brought in were Thomas Gap, Westbury Road, Rices, St. Philip, Valerie in Brittons Hill. Mr. Speaker, because of certain conditions being imposed on the Government of Barbados at the time by the World Bank a decision was made to stop the World Bank project but to continue the project on a lower scale and that was proceeded with.

Mr. Speaker, many meetings were held and I am going to speak on this matter because I think what is happening at Rices bears some connection to what has happened at Scarborough because the entire thing, as I said, was part of the National Low Income Urban Project. Many meetings were held in Thomas Gap, Westbury Road, in Scarborough and in Rices with the folks from those areas and certain promises were made to them and they were made to believe certain things.

Mr. Speaker, I am here speaking about what has transpired at Rices which forms part of this low income project. Rices in St. Philip was developed like Valerie in Brittons Hill. Roads and lights and things like that were put in. House spots became available for persons nearby and some who are not so nearby.

As I said, Mr. Speaker, promises were made. The folks who were living on these lands for 20, 30 or 40 years were promised that they would get the land at a cheaper price than those people who were newly coming on to the land.

There are people, Mr. Speaker, in Rices who have never, in their lives, paid a cent rent. The point I am trying to make, Mr. Speaker, is that these people in Rices were quite happy to purchase the land because the whole idea was that the land should be purchased. The people were happy with that, never mind they never paid a cent anywhere. They were happy to purchase the land because they were told that the land had to be purchased.

The people in Rices were also told, and I have no doubt that the people in Valerie and probably in Thomas Gap were told exactly the same thing — I cannot confirm this for Valerie or Thomas Gap but I know this for Rices. They were also told that their houses would have been improved. Those people who were living there before would have got their houses improved and it was a grand thing.

Mr. Speaker, I am not here trying to minimise the effect of what has taken place in the Barbadian economy over the past 3 years. My problems about what is happening at Rices are as follows:

Obviously with the economic situation that has developed over the past 2 or 3 years the project, I believe, had to be scaled down even further. That is understandable. But, Mr. Speaker, now I get to the problems. I do not expect and I did not imagine that after the economic problems that the people of Rices would have got their houses repaired or brought up to a better standard as was promised before the change in the economic condition. But what has happened is this. The people in Rices have been told in some instances that they have to pay rent between \$300 and \$400 a quarter and what is worse, Mr. Speaker, is that those persons in Rices who were willing to pay for the land and able, a few of them not many, that the National Housing Corporation was in no position to sell the land. So those persons would have to continue renting the land at \$350 a quarter. They were also told that that money would not go towards the purchase price of the land after being given the purchase price of the land.

12.45 p.m.

Now if this is not confusion, Mr. Speaker, explain it to me. You tell the person that the land he is on cost \$8 000 let us say. The person goes in and say, "Okay, I am going to buy this land". National Housing then tells the person that we are in no position to sell but you have to pay me \$350 a quarter. When the persons asked now if this money would go towards the \$8 000 purchase price of the land, they say no. Mr. Speaker, just as you are surprised, I was surprised. It was total madness when I heard it. I am not blaming the Minister, because he knows that I wrote him concerning these problems. It was so confusing to me that I had to write the Minister in my own fine handwriting. I did not type it but I wrote it.

Aside.

Mr. H. A. BLACKMAN: But the point I am making, Mr. Speaker, is this. Now these are people who have never paid a cent in their lives. But now they are being told to pay \$350 a quarter and that money will not go towards reducing the cost price of the land. Right from the beginning of this project everybody knew including the National Housing Corporation that the land at Rices was for sale. The land was compulsorily acquired which means that the Government could have got a title or whatever was needed. The point, Mr. Speaker, is when the land is compulsorily acquired certain things can happen that could not happen if it was not done that way. But NHC is going to tell the person long after the land was acquired and when people were willing to buy that it was not in a position to sell and they will have to continue renting.

Mr. Speaker, the persons I am speaking about are not against paying the rent. Those persons who are able to pay the rent will pay the rent providing that the rent would go towards the cost price of the land. I told them that in my view when they go to NHC to pay the rent for the land, that NHC should give them a book that whenever they pay it will be noted. So that when NHC is in a position to sell, the money that they have already contributed must be subtracted from the cost price of the land. That was the advice that I gave them. I do not know what has happened since then. I am still confused. The people in Rices are still confused. I am saying this, Mr. Speaker, that the abandonment of Scarborough would have left those people pretty happy because I do not think they would be able to take the confusion that the people in Rices are taking.

Mr. Speaker, I wish to say this. The situation at Rices has to be cleared up once and for all. In the same way that numerous meetings could have been held in Rices 2 or 2 1/2 years ago when the residents of that area were being told what was going to happen, I believe those meetings can be held now with the same people from Rices to explain the situation to them and to straighten out this matter of the exorbitant rents with NHC not going towards the purchase price.

Mr. Speaker, I wish also to say this. Valerie was brought up to date just like Rices. I am asking a question in here today. I would like to know if the price charged in Valerie is similar to the price being asked of the persons who live in Rices. I want to know if those people who are living in Valerie are being asked to pay the same \$340 or \$350 a quarter for rent. I want to know. When I heard that figure, Mr. Speaker, I could not believe it. I was a Minister for about 6 years. Before that I was a member of Parliament and the price that low income people were paying for rent was like 12 cents a quarter or 24 cents a quarter and things like that. In an endeavour to get the price a little more sensible, the idea was that you do not interfere with things like that. But all of a sudden persons in my constituency are being asked to pay \$350 a quarter for a house spot. As said before, those people who are able to pay, do not mind paying it as long as it is going towards the reduction of the cost price. There are many people in Rices who cannot pay \$350 a quarter. How are they going to pay it? It would give me trouble furthermore those low income people. How are they going to pay \$350 a quarter?

Mr. Speaker, I believe that I have said most of what I wanted to say. There is a bit more that I need to say at a later date. I am waiting and I am asking, Mr. Speaker, the Minister but he is not in this place.

Aside.

Mr. H. A. BLACKMAN: I am asking the Minister of Housing to get his officers, just as they convened meetings with the residents of Rices 2 or 3 years ago, to explain the situation to them about the paying of this rent and defraying the cost price of the land.
12.55 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I will have more to say at another time. I realise that the Rices project, to all intents and purposes, was a cost recovery programme, but in a situation where people are being laid off, are not working and things like that, if you ask people in those situations to pay rent at \$350 and \$400 a quarter, you are putting people under serious stress and strain. They cannot do it.

I am asking the Minister of Housing to have a look at this matter, to get his officers to speak to those persons in Rices. I am persuaded and I know that there are a few people up there who can pay and who are willing to pay that rent, provided that it will go towards the purchase price. There are others up there that I know cannot pay \$350 a quarter. I would like that matter to be looked into.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr. DeL. 0. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt in anybody's mind that the Government lacks a

housing policy. Housing has been approached in a piecemeal fashion and as a result of this approach there has been utter confusion. Confusion is a light word. I am going to venture to say that housing is in absolute chaos.

I recall some time in January of this year, last month, the present Minister of Housing stating that Government has a housing policy, but this housing policy is yet to be understood or known by persons living in Barbados. Any housing policy should be known, should be well articulated, well spelt out so that when you use the term, for instance, "low income housing" people will understand what that means. I doubt very much the average person listening to the debate, or hearing the term "low income housing" understands what that means. Nobody has set about to give a clear definition as to what this means and that is why there has been this confusion as far as housing is concerned.

Any Government has a responsibility to its citizens and one of its obligations and responsibilities is that of housing. It is very vital. If you are going to regard education, then you must rate alongside that housing, and both of them must work together. If a Government does not understand how important housing is, then it will fail to realise its objective, that is, improving the total quality of life in the country.

As far as the Resolution is concerned, I find it rather surprising that the Minister when he got up gave at least three explanations as to why this land was being abandoned. I cannot understand, I do not think that either one of them can justify the reason. If you are saying that it is because the present Government amended the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act — it is the present Government which changed the interpretation of what constituted a tenancy — because under the 1980 Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act two houses or two lots constituted a tenancy. It was this Government that amended that because of some pressures brought upon it by certain sections of the community. That was clear. And as a result they sent housing into a tailspin and affected a project that should have been accomplished by the Government. It was the Government that amended the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act to make a tenancy more than five, and this was one of the tenancies. This piece of land was affected as a result, so therefore nobody can blame the residents. The Government should have known that that amendment would have affected their project and, as I said, the Government has to be clear in its mind when it is pursuing policies which affect the public or the masses in this country.

I am also hearing about the noise level. Let me say this. I do not care who recommended this, you have your own heads and your common sense. Think for yourselves.

It is sheer madness for anyone to talk about the noise level in that area when houses on top of the hill are allowed to be built. I want to know why it is you are allowing houses around you to develop and to be built and at the same time you are using some flimsy excuse to deprive these people from having improved housing in this area and to benefit from a scheme called the low income project. The Government has to be blamed for this.

There is confusion throughout the National Housing Corporation and how it approaches the rent level as well as the sale, the price of lots. There is utter confusion. They are confused over there. They do not know what they are doing. I am saying that. They do not know the premise, how to arrive at what is called an economic rent and they need to be told. They need properly trained staff and staff who are able and capable of implementing policies that will redound to the benefit of all Barbadians.

Mr. Speaker, as I said, when it is understood that Government acquires land, Government comes to this Chamber and vests the land in National Housing Corporation, lo and behold National Housing Corporation is not aware most of the time that a Resolution was passed in here vesting the very land in their hands. Therefore the confusion will start. In other words, the left hand does not know what the right hand is doing and the Ministry of Housing does not communicate with the National Housing Corporation. That is something you must look at. That is why I am not surprised when I hear the Honourable Member for St. Philip South relating the prices with Rices. This is nothing new, because I came in here and I spoke about the Cutting Road. The land was vested by Resolution in here in the National Housing Corporation and National Housing Corporation did not even know whether they were entitled to collect the land rents, and the Ministry continued to collect the land rents even though the Resolution had passed, vesting the land to the National Housing Corporation. So there is confusion. Even when persons applied as low income earners for planning permission National Housing Corporation does not know whether it is authorised to give permission or whether it is the Ministry of Housing and Lands to do that job.

1.05 p.m.

Where are we going as far as housing is concerned? Take for instance, the former Minister of Housing went on record and said on the Floor of this House that rents in the National Housing Corporation estates would be charged according to means and a survey was carried out in the National Housing Corporation estates but lo and behold the same Minister sat in Cabinet and a policy is apparently approved by Cabinet reversing that very policy. The successor to the Minister goes on national television and says that rents are going to be increased which differs from what the former Minister had said. His approach would be to charge an economic rent.

The present Minister says, "Let us have an across the board increase." But you know, Mr. Speaker, this Honourable Member does not allow these things to go. Apparently when I, speaking on behalf of the Barbados Labour Party, objected strongly to the increase in rents a couple hours after the Minister had made his press statement we saw a little backpedalling by the Government. Mr. Speaker, that is not enough. I came in here 2 weeks ago and demanded of the Government to make a clear statement as quickly as possible to settle the minds of the people whether there was going to be any increase in rents and the Government came out a couple of days ago and announced that rent increases will not now take place.

While I welcome that, let me say to the Government, I do not care what excuses it gives, it is because the Barbados Labour Party put pressure on them and indicated what it was prepared to do in order to bring the Government to its senses. So no sort of statement made that a protocol was signed... Let me say this, something would have to be wrong when a Government sits down and agrees to a protocol and then allows a Minister of Cabinet to go after that and agree to an increase in rents. There is some confusion not only in departments but some of the Ministers are confused. They cannot sit down and agree to a protocol and then a Minister goes out and makes a public statement making a fool of the Government and then leaving people to remind them of a protocol. Now, what are we really doing? 'Don't you see we are like "one step forward and 2 steps backward"'? All kinds of confusion. They are doing the marico and the both on people.

Now I am saying, Mr. Speaker, that this housing matter is serious. The Government must understand that it cannot in this day and age approach rent increases in an ad hoc manner. It has to decide in its mind what form it is going to pursue and I feel the Government has the media at its disposal to let the public know what is its policy. The Barbados Labour Party went on record as stating quite clearly that it opposes any rent increases because it is not justified, protocol or no protocol. If the reason given by the Minister is that housing needs money, let me tell the Minister there are 600 rental lots that people do not pay one cent for. Devise ways and means as to who is to collect rent for them. That is the way you will get money. I would go so far as to say that it has unfinished houses at Cane Garden. What prevents the Government from selling them?

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member recognises that I have given him a lot of area to speak on but certainly not beyond that limit.

Mr. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I agree with that. The low income houses. What I am saying is that the same people...

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes. As you will recognise, it is not relevant to the particular thing we are dealing with. I have given enough scope, but don't go beyond it.

Mr. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, what I am saying is that there is land even in the Cane Garden area which could be used for low income houses and persons are presently making applications to purchase the land and to purchase the houses because those houses were intended for low income persons. I am worried and I am saying that Government could use the money, I am aware. Government must be out front and tell us what is going on in housing. Let us understand that. Let us know what has gone on with Inversiones and the project that Government has entered into with them. Let us hear on the Floor of this Chamber. I am demanding that a statement be made in here letting us know what is the position, the state of affairs between Inversiones, the Venezuelan firm, and the Government. Something has to be wrong. There is some legal problem. They are locked in a problem. Let us and Barbados know what is preventing the Government and whether there is a legal battle and what it will cost the taxpayers of Barbados in terms of a settlement if any. Let us understand. Why should people be out there wondering, asking questions seeing half-built houses, unfinished houses, steel exposed and the real truth is not being told.

Mr. Speaker, it is nothing short of a national scandal. All will not be well when Government decides to sell them because they have to come here to this Chamber and ask for money to settle that. I am warning this Chamber that that is a distinct possibility and that reflects on housing because any money now realised from sales by National Housing Corporation may very well have to go to pay towards the settlement of that and hence deprive Barbadians from having houses. Is it not a scandal that Government has acquired land and is not in a position to put in the roads or the services? What are we doing coming here time and time again asking for the vesting of land in the National Housing Corporation but at the same time National Housing Corporation does not have the money to develop these pieces of land. I would have thought that the best thing if it is going to transfer land into the hands of the National Housing Corporation that the National Housing Corporation should be in a position to deal with it from the time the land is transferred or vested. But that is not the case, Sir. That is why I said we are going to have housing as a political football for the next couple of months and this should not be the case.

When you look at it seriously, does Government understand that people who have houses rented out have to drop their rents to as much as half what they used to get 2 to 3 years ago? Why it is that the people who have private houses have to be satisfied with drop in rents and some of them cannot get them rented because of the price they are

asking for the monthly rental and at the same time Government is talking about increasing rents. That is what I am saying. It is sheer madness. You cannot justify an increase or call for an increase at all, whether this year or next, because the economic situation is such that persons have to rent their houses way below the amount of money they have to pay back as a mortgage. This is not really good business practice. At least people would hope to recover the mortgage money but they have to subsidise mortgages and Government should have taken a cue.

'1.15 p.m.

Do not tell me that no one is in a position or has advised the Government that this is the present position in Barbados. They ought to know this. Who is advising the Government? Who is not following what is happening in Barbados? People must be realistic. I am going to say this. The problems in Rices are the problems that confront or face all other areas that are owned by the National Housing Corporation.

I would like to see a change in policy. It is not sufficient for the National Housing Corporation to seek the advice of any Land Tax Commissioner to determine the price of land because I will say this. It cannot be fair. That figure cannot be justified because it must be understood that most of the land that is acquired by Government it does not have to pay certain charges, example, transfer taxes. Government gets some of them free. Therefore, you should look at the cost of the land and determine what the level of rents or even sale should be.

When we talk about \$5 per square foot, let me say this. No one should take for granted that a \$5 or \$4.50 a square foot for land in these low income areas is justified. It is not justified. You have to look at the area and determine what is the going rent, or even the price of the houses or properties in that particular area. Everybody knows that. You could not go to certain parts of St. Andrew and charge \$5 or \$6 a square foot for land. Who would pay you \$6 per square foot for land in certain parts of St. Andrew? Yes, in Christ Church, as much as \$7.50 in Christ Church. We must understand what we are talking about. You could go into St. Joseph. Nobody would accept to purchase a property at \$6 per square foot for land in St. Joseph. Therefore, Government has an across the board policy towards rent for housing. It is wrong. It is flawed with problems. Therefore, I say Government has to rethink its approach to housing.

The Barbados Labour Party is diametrically opposed to any increase in rents whatsoever and the Government must understand that. No support at all will be coming from us because the National Housing Corporation, we have said, is in a position if it is allowed to function properly, to make money and it should be providing sites

and services. They should be concentrating on that and stop harassing the persons who live and rent Government houses. They should be looking at that. It is serious.

Look at people in Fernihurst. People could not sleep when they heard the announcement that they would have to pay rent increases from January 1. *Now, tell me*, why should people in Deacons Farm be asking to pay when most of the people are not working. Let us be realistic about it. They cannot afford to pay. They do not have any jobs. That is the hard fact, no work so therefore, you are asking a fellow to pay increased rents when he has no work at all. Even the private sector understands that and sometimes they are sympathetic to their tenants but Government is going to pursue them.

I am going to say this. I do not want to hear the Minister or anybody from Government telling tenants that if they cannot afford to buy they are going to resite them or put them in some other house. Let me say to the Government, you have a war on hand. I would lead that protest against the Government. It is wrong. Because someone is not able to purchase the land you are telling them that you are going to deprive them from that home? You are going to send them and put them some other place? That is how I interpret it. That is what the Government has said. The Minister has said that in a statement. Now, that is wrong. I am going to say that the Minister cannot do that. I would not allow that. The Barbados Labour Party would not allow that.

Aside.

Mr. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: The Honourable Members on that side do not understand clearly. Let me say it slowly for you. If you go out there, because people who have rented houses for 20 or so years and because of their economic situation, because some of them have been put out of jobs by the present Government, and you are telling them that because they cannot find the money that you are going to put them out of the houses? Let me say, over our dead bodies that will happen.

I am going to say this. When you have gotten jobs for them and they are in a better economic position, then you can pursue such a policy. I could understand the wisdom but in these times it is a "no go" situation and no threats. I deplore any Minister or any Government officer to issue those threats. There are dangerous steps. There are dangerous signs.

Mr. Speaker, let us understand what is going on. I have heard much talk about this Housing Credit Fund, nothing new. The Housing Credit Fund is linked closely with the low income housing because the Fund is there to assist persons to improve their houses. That is what it is for.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have no difficulty in having a condensed statement or a precise statement made but a debate on it is not appropriate at this time.

Mr. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, when I look at the abandonment I understand how the Honourable Member for St. Philip feels and how people out there who want to improve their houses in this low income area feel. The Government has come in here today to abandon a project which would have enabled people to improve their homes. That is what worries me. Money was there in this low income housing project. It was tied so that funds would be available for them to borrow from the banks and other financial institutions as well as the National Housing Corporation to enable them to improve their houses under this particular scheme. I am saying that I deplore Government's attitude. It is regrettable that they had to abandon it for the flimsy reasons that were given. Neither one of them can justify the abandonment of this project. I am hurt. Lots of people out there would like to have land and would like to build their own houses. Government is not building any houses for the lower income people. Where are we going?

I am saying that Government has alternatives. Make the lands available, yes, and give certain incentives so that people would be able to build houses. You can have a long-term lease. There is nothing wrong with that. Am I living in the Dark Ages when people only had one sort of policy and one approach to things? Because a man cannot buy nor rent it means that he is out of everything? I am asking. What about leasing, long-term leases, giving people an opportunity at a later stage in life to opt for purchase? That should be the approach. Government has nothing to lose but all to gain with that sort of policy. It is frightening, the average person out there renting a piece of Government land getting a notice.
1.25 p.m.

The average person out there renting a piece of Government land and getting a Notice. I have seen Notices coming to people in the Pinelands telling them either buy or we are going to evict you. Mr. Speaker, that is frightening. I contend that a different approach has got to be found to housing and people who are desperately in need of housing. Our housing situation is getting worse every day. There is nothing positive coming from the Government which would alleviate the problems. We are going to have nothing short of honors in housing in the not too distant future. We have to be serious.

I have said before, earlier in this debate that housing is an essential thing in one's life. Where there is inadequate housing a necessary follow-up is social dislocation, social problems. Thank God, so far we have managed to reduce the impact of the social problems. I hope that

the Government understands that it needs to have a concerted approach to housing and do not believe that all is well in the area of housing.

Mr. Speaker, there will be a time, in the near future for me, to expand further on the problems in housing. The Barbados Labour Party is clear. We are *in a position* to articulate a housing policy that will cater to the needs of Barbadians. A lot of thought is being put into it and we are soliciting the inputs of people who are ready, willing and able to make such inputs to help us alleviate the very important social needs of Barbados, that is, of housing.

Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Government would recognize that it needs to correct a number of things. All these problems in here may be parochial nonetheless they are problems, the offshoot of, the direct result of the lack of a positive housing policy. I ask Government to sit down and look at this in order to correct the problems which I really see coming to us in the not too distant future.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, Scarborough is situated in Christ Church South and it is natural that I would have an input on this Resolution. I want to say, from the beginning, Sir, that I do not believe the brief that the Honourable Minister quoted from. I do not believe that the reasons as stated by the Honourable Minister which he read from his brief are the real reasons for the abandonment of this acquisition. It is very clear, to me, that those reasons cannot be the true and accurate reasons for it is within my knowledge that with respect to one reason, namely, that this area falls within the noise zone of the Airport in Barbados could not be accurate because Scarborough is physically situated a further distance away from the Airport than Callendars, than Gibbons or Thornbury Hill.

In truth and in fact, very recently, Town and Country Planning permissions have been given at Callendars to subdivide the land for housing purposes. It is passing strange therefore that one of the reasons given here is that it is within the noise zone when Callendars which is physically nearer is not prohibited. That is a very important point.

I want it to be clearly understood that this question as to the juggling with noise zone has caused a tremendous amount of problems in the Christ Church area and it is about time that we have a full scale public enquiry into these decisions. Because it is wrong, in my opinion, for people to have to sit down and tolerate a situation in which they are told that they cannot develop their land and when they know the physical situation of their land that it is further away from the Airport, that there are other lands for which sub-division permissions are granted. This is a lack of transparency in Government policy. I hear there is a lot of talk here about transparency in Government policy. I would like it to be clearly understood that this Government

has an obligation to ensure that the functionaries and others who make these decisions make them in a way that they can stand scrutiny.

It is very clear to me, Sir, that the Government had found itself in a dilemma. This was a World Bank Project, along with a number of others. The truth of the matter is stated in a Statement that was published recently by the Prime Minister and that is that Barbados has to operate upon the basis that it is not getting any money from the World Bank. That is the truth of the matter. The Government and the World Bank are in disagreement with respect to their policies. The Government has to operate upon the basis that it will not get any money from the World Bank. This is one of the projects that obviously is a casualty of that problem. I do not mind that, Sir. But what I do mind is that this area of Scarborough is an area which was identified as being an area crying out for development. I am going to tell Honourable Members one of the reasons why it was crying out for development. It is because it is an area that is populated to a large extent by people who earn their living in the fishing industry. It has always been so. Scarborough has always been an area where people who work in the fishing industry live. It is a fact that there is a large number of houses in Scarborough which do not have all of the amenities that today, in this part of the Twentieth Century we feel they should have.

One of the problems that has arisen there is that it is very difficult in Scarborough to deal with the problem of the water table. Everybody knows that Scarborough is an area that has a very high water table. It is one of the few areas in Barbados that I have seen a septic tank above the ground. The last place I saw that was in New Orleans in the United States of America where they bury their dead above the ground and they have the septic tank above the ground. Because of the fact that if you dig a foot in many areas of Scarborough, not all, you get water. It was earmarked for one of these schemes where, together with the South Coast Sewerage Scheme that you would have a comprehensive scheme for redevelopment. It is also an area that from the time I know myself, and I have been living there for over 50 years, that there was a well recognized drainage canal which took water off that came down from Foundation School, led it into a drain below the gas station and into the sea. That was well known. The vestry used to keep that drain clear. Everybody used to keep that drain clear so that Scarborough was not picked out as an area because of any political reasons. Scarborough was picked out as one of the areas because of its particular physical characteristics and the need that it had for a comprehensive development scheme. What has happened now? By abandoning this, those people are going to be left in a position in which there is no hope for them for improvement at any reasonable cost.

1.35 p.m.

Now, Scarborough has again been unlucky because the Government itself, as the Minister said, has now found out that one of the consequences of their amendment to the Tenantry Act is that people who were beneficiaries under the original act as then worded, when it was passed, namely people at Scarborough now cease to have the rights granted by the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act because the definition has been changed and only where you have a tenantry of 5 and more tenants that you will now have these rights.

Now, there is a clear case for compensation because these rights have been taken away. The Government has amended the law and taken away the rights. These rights were vested rights in them. What about all of those people who have exercised their rights between the time when that was the law and have given their landlord notice. There are some of them. There were some people who had given their landlords notice. I cannot find how it could be possible for the Government to pursue a policy which would have such harmful consequences to these people who are in the lowest bracket in Barbados. That is a serious thing. The Government is demonstrating once again its indifference to the interest of people who really are in need of help.

Now, Sir, it seems very clear to me that it is also inaccurate to tell this House that since the Government has started this project, since they have decontrolled this tenantry, that the people have gone ahead and have done great improvements to their houses. I find it very difficult to follow, Sir. I know the area very well. I know people out there are willing to do things. Many of the people have made arrangements with their landlord or landlady, because they have landladies in there, with respect to the purchase of the land. And, on the faith of that some of them have put up wall foundations. That is a fact. So what is to happen to them now? There are no longer tenancies. The scheme for reorganising, redrawing and dealing with the matter considering that the area appears to be abandoned, the Government has not told us today, that notwithstanding all of this, we undertake to make sure that the usual improvements in the form of building roads in areas in districts in Barbados, in putting in water in Barbados, will apply to Scarborough.

This is a very serious matter, Sir. I do not believe that it is right that a Government should treat people in this way. Quite obviously we have to make it abundantly clear that this policy must be reversed.

Aside.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: This policy of abandoning low income housing.

Sir I want it to be clearly understood, we do not subscribe to the philosophy that the function of Government is only to provide law and order and sanitation. There cannot be any doubt about it that in a country like Barbados there is need for Government to use its powers periodically to introduce measures to ensure that some of the social conditions in this country do not remain as they are. Housing is an important area of activity in which, in our opinion, the private sector alone cannot deliver the goods. I can understand the concept of a partnership between the Government and the private sector but I think it is folly to believe that the Government has no role to play. In every country in the world, even in the biggest capitalist country, redevelopments in inner cities have to be undertaken by some Governmental authority. The Governmental authority may be at the municipal level, federal level or at the state level because you need the legal machinery of Government. So it is a myth for us to say, and that is one of the criticisms we have of the Minister introducing it, he is not holding out any hope at all to these people. He is just saying, I am abandoning it. What is the consequence of the abandonment? He is saying that we have deprived you of the rights. Of course it does not matter to me, Sir. When the time comes, Sir, and I go up in there ...

Aside.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: That is the problem, Sir. I go up in there all the time. I will just have to go up in there next Sunday morning and let the people understand that the Minister is saying, all of the rights that you had, he took away with the Tenantry Act. The Minister confessed that in here. A Minister of Government has confessed in the House of Assembly that rights which this group of people had under the Tenantry Act, were taken away. In other words the Government passed the law to take away the rights of these poor people. The Minister confessed that in here. There cannot be any doubt about that. I am asking the question on their behalf. What hope are you holding out? Is the Government going to tell us that the MTW or the Ministry of Public Works, sometimes I have a little difficulty in understanding the Ministries now. The Minister of Public Works, is he going to tell us that they are going to give high priority to cleaning the drain that is in Scarborough, to ensuring that the side roads which would have been improved will continue to be improved under the Government's normal public works programme?

I notice that the Prime Minister is saying that we must all get together to deal with the question of unemployment but the basic position the Prime Minister must understand is that you cannot tackle unemployment in Barbados without money.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order. Mr. Speaker, with due respect, I fail to see how this acquisition

or abandonment can lead us into the kind of discussion the Honourable Member is now engaging in.

Aside.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: That is why I am drawing it to the attention of the Chair.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I am sure, Sir, that the Honourable Member has obviously missed this morning, for some reason or the other, the connection between housing and employment, Sir. If the Government had carried out this project people would have to be employed.

Mr. SPEAKER: In as much as I have allowed a wider debate I did not open the flood gates so to speak and therefore I will say to the Honourable Member who made the statements yes, I can accept them, but as soon as we go into a wider debate I will have a problem with it.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: I am saying positively as a matter of fact, Sir, that had the Government carried out this scheme more people would be employed and the Honourable Prime Minister is talking about unemployment and he asked for cooperation. Well, I am telling him that if he carries out the scheme here instead of abandoning it he would have more employment because there is drainage, roads and water necessary and all of those things. There is no doubt about that at all. I want to say this in view of the injustices that have been done to the people. I want some assurance from the present Minister responsible for Public Works that high priority will be given to the improvement in the road conditions in that area.

1.45 p.m.

I want to point out another reason, Sir. Another reason for the scheme was that you had houses that were situated in what would be the logical pathways of roads. That is one of the reasons why you had a comprehensive plan. So that I am sure we can get the cooperation of many of the people there and that once the MTW decides that it will go in there with roads that we can get the cooperation and some of the areas which have cracks that in the rainy season cause problems to the people can be improved and upgraded. The sewage scheme I believe will come into operation. I certainly hope for Barbados' sake that the South Coast Sewage Scheme...

Aside.

Hon. H. B. St. JOHN: Sir, I do not know whether you can hear me. I am having a little difficulty hearing myself.

Mr. SPEAKER: Yes, I can because I do not listen to other people. I do not know why the Honourable Member always seem to rise to this debate.

Sir, the position is that I really hope that the sewage scheme will come into operation because on the south coast in this area real problems have arisen. I would like the present Minister of Health also to assure the people at Scarborough that consideration will be given to them now that the Government has abandoned this scheme an early date of ensuring that the benefits which would have flowed to this area as a result of a comprehensive development including sewage will take place. We must have this. You cannot leave the people without hope, Sir. Roads and sewage, Sir.

Now the drainage. The MTW must make sure of their services during the months of June and July. I have lived long enough to see how there has been a deterioration in the services in Barbados. That drain used to be dealt with every year like clock-work June and July before the rainy season. Every year they used to excavate the drain and make sure that when the water came down the hill from the Foundation School that it went straight down into the drain. Now we have the drain in the back of the gas station but sometimes it gets clogged up. Now we want to get these things clear and I hope again that we can get the assurance that work will be done again.

Sir, I want to make it clear that I do not accept those reasons. I want the Minister to come in here and tell us when was the policy changed with respect to the noise zone that it extends as far down as Oistins and how it is that Callenders housing can go on, and what is more 18 acres of land have just been given subdivision permission which is now cane land on top of Callenders. I can tell you the name of the owner too, Sir. I can tell you the date of the Town Planning permission. That is on top of the hill, Sir, nearer to the airport. That is a fact. That is part of Gibbons Land and it was part of Gibbons Plantation. So we would like to know how that is capable of subdivision and Scarborough is not capable of subdivision.

SUSPENSION

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: Sir, I move that this sitting be suspended until 3.00 p.m. today.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that the sitting be suspended until 3.00 p.m. today was put and resolved in the affirmative without division, and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly.

1.50 p.m.

RESUMPTION

Hon. E. E. GREAVES: Normally, Sir, I would allow the Question to be put, but in the light of some of the statements which were made I think I ought to respond to some of those statements for the purpose of the record.

You will recall that the Honourable Member for Christ Church South questioned the location of Scarborough in the NEF 40 zone and then went on to ask why is it that the Town and Country Planning Department gave permission for the development of Callendars which is closer to the airport than Scarborough is. I have a note, Sir, from the Town and Country Planning Department on that. I was asking for some additional information, but that note will be coming and I want to address that when the note comes.

Let me just refer to some of the comments made by some of the other Honourable Members who spoke on this Resolution. The Member for St. Philip South, in the course of his speech, spoke about Rices and indicated very clearly that some of the persons who are in Rices have been called upon by the National Housing Corporation to pay between \$300 and \$400 per quarter for the area of land which they have. I think whenever one makes statements, those statements must be taken in context.

The information which I have available suggests that a number of factors have been taken into consideration by the Government in fixing the purchase price of National low income housing projects. We have to bear in mind that this project is totally financed by the Government and basically it is dealing with upgrading and providing roads, drainage, water and electricity. The fact of the matter is that these things do not drop down out of the sky, they have to be put there and there is a cost involved in putting in water, drainage, roads and electricity. The National Housing Corporation has to pay for the roadworks to a private contractor, it has to pay the Light and Power, it also has to pay the Barbados Water Authority, and it does not get any particular ease from any of these corporations for the installation of these utilities. Whatever a private developer has to pay to the Barbados Water Authority for the installation of water in a development, the National Housing Corporation has to pay at the same rate. Whatever a private developer has to pay to the Barbados Light and Power for the installation of electricity in a development, the National Housing Corporation has to pay at the same rate. Whatever a private developer has to pay a road construction company for the provision of roads, drains and the kinds of things associated with that, the National Housing Corporation has to pay at the same rate. So that there is a cost which is involved in the development of a project.

Basically, what the Government seems to do with these developments is at least to try to recover the cost for the utilities and the cost for the development of the particular area. When you compare, Sir, the price which is asked per square foot in the National Housing Corporation's projects, even although it might be \$3 a square foot, it is far below what is paid for in a similar

development by a private developer. So that in truth and in fact persons who are living or who have an opportunity to use or to have access to one of the lots developed by the Government are really in a privileged position in terms of the rates which they pay.

As I understand it, the low income housing project is targeted at low income earners and the annual income of these low income earners, I am told, is approximately \$20 000. Some people may say that is not low income. The fact of the matter is that that is the rate which they have set, so people have to fall within that particular area. I said that the sale price is approximately \$3 a square foot and the market rate for a similar area of land in a similar location with similar development is about \$4.50 per square foot and, quite frankly, is more favourable than private tenancies where tenants have to purchase at market rates.

As far as the rental rates are concerned, this works out, I am informed, at about 19 cents per square foot, and of course this would then be related to the size of the lot. You cannot expect to occupy an 8 000 square foot lot and pay nothing for it. I cannot understand the argument. There are some people who have large lots and some who have small lots, so if therefore you have a large lot and you are called upon to pay commensurate with the size of the lot which you have, then I do not quite follow what the argument is. Obviously, in the light of some of the little difficulties which the economy has experienced over the last couple of years, the Government has indicated very clearly that it is prepared to look at some way to ease some of the pressure which people would experience in these particular areas.

The point which has been made about whether the amounts which people have paid for rents would go towards their purchase price is a point which I will certainly check, but I believe it is a point which the Government has already taken into consideration. I would want, however, to take advice on that, but I seem to recall that this was one of the points which had been dealt with. It is a matter which I will certainly draw to the attention of the Minister responsible for housing and to see whether or not this would be taken on board. I have a feeling somehow that you may very well be pushing an open door as far as that one is concerned. But, as I said, it is all structured on trying to recover the basic cost which has been expended in the development.

The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East, and I think the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, made reference to the argument which has been advanced about the noise zone, whether or not Scarborough is in the noise zone, and indeed questioned whether this was the real reason for the abandonment. This, Sir, is a question of fact. This is what we have indicated. I am

informed, and I want to repeat, that Scarborough is in the NEF 40 zone. The policy is, basically, that no new development would be permitted to create new lots. They would allow one single family house per property, and the information from the Town Planning Department suggests that Callendars is not in the NEF 40 zone. Part of Callendars was located in the NEF 30 and the NEF 30 zone was abandoned some time, I am informed, in the late 1980's. The NEF 40 is closer to the Grantley Adams International Airport than the abandoned NEF 30 is.

3.10 p.m.

I should point out that the NEF 40 was established in 1973 and the research suggests that Scarborough was included. These are facts which can be checked. It is not a question of anybody attempting to hoodwink any person. That is the last thing I would try to come in here to do particularly because Honourable Members are, I think, seised of these things and one has to be careful when one gets up and makes statements which would tend to convey the wrong impression to people and sometimes to give solace to people for wrongdoing.

I think what has been discovered is that there are a number of houses which have been constructed in the NEF 40 zone which I think I indicated in here already will have eventually to be moved because as I understand it a number of aircraft complain about interference from the television antennas and the whole situation there when they approach the airport. Indeed, I recall that these concerns were expressed in very strong terms by some of the airlines operating here in Barbados. I think we have to recognise the safety element in this and I understand that with the expansion programme and with the modernisation which will take place at the airport that a number of these factors will have to be taken into consideration.

Now, I think also that the point made-by the Member for St. Michael East in respect of the indication that there were 600 lots owned by the National Housing Corporation for which people do not pay rent, now, I really do not know how true this is because I have reason to believe that as near as possible the National Housing Corporation can account for the lands which it has but it is conceivable that there may be some areas where they may not be as careful as they ought to be and some people may very well slip through the net. Certainly as a good citizen I am sure that if the Honourable Member can indicate where the 600 lots are the management of the National Housing Corporation would be only too willing to proceed and get them on the books and ensure that they pay the rents for the area of land which they are occupying.

As you are aware, the National Housing Corporation has to operate as efficiently as possible and this means collecting what is owed to them. That is why it bothers me

when the impression is left by the Honourable Member for St. Michael East about the whole question of the payments of rents suggesting that the Government is putting pressure on people who owe rents to the 'National Housing Corporation.

I believe, Sir, that the people in the National Housing Corporation are reasonable people and they appreciate and understand some of the difficulties which people have been experiencing during the last 2 or 3 years and if people would up front go to them and explain their difficulties and make an arrangement they would be quite willing to listen and devise a programme to ensure that people are not put under undue pressure. I believe that that is possible and I believe that it happens but Sir, when you have a situation where people have been in default to the National Housing Corporation, and many of them, literally hundreds of them, to the tune of \$6 000 and in some instances \$12 000 and \$13 000 then these cannot be people who have been put out of work 2 years ago or who have been unemployed 2 years ago. These are people who have been deliberately refusing to pay the National Housing Corporation rent for many years and it is those people who cause all sorts of problems and it is those people who have to be made an example of.

I am sure, Sir, that you would not even in your private capacity or even as a representative in a constituency where there are lots of housing areas, condone a situation where a person would deliberately owe the Corporation \$12 000 or \$13 000 and then expect that they would be allowed to get away with that. So those would be the people whom the National Housing Corporation would want to make examples of because it is a fact that some of these people own properties elsewhere and some of these people can, I know, do better and can really make an effort to pay rents to the National Housing Corporation so that the National Housing Corporation could build other houses to assist other poor persons in getting access to houses.

All I am saying is that this is a matter which calls for an across party lines because it is something which I do not think we as parliamentarians and politicians should encourage people who owe rents. As I said, people who owe rents and have difficulties if they go into the National Housing Corporation I have every reason to believe they would be assisted but not people who have deliberately refused to pay rents to the tune of \$6 000. There are literally hundreds of them and there are some whose rent arrears exceed \$13 000.

Of course, a lot of blame has to be placed on the management of the Corporation for allowing that to take place because they should have been dealt with long ago and not at this stage but even if they have to be dealt with now they have to be dealt with and I do not think

that anyone in here could honestly say that the National Housing Corporation has been hard on them.

With respect to the land at Cane Garden and the houses which have not been completed, I am in no position at this point to state what the Government will do with it. One has taken on board the points made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael East in respect of his suggestion of selling off the land or leasing it but we have to look at this again in a clear way so we will be able to understand where we are going in this particular direction. The Honourable Member indicated that the Government is in a situation where it is seeking to ^{raise} rents and the private sector is lowering rents.

I think that if one were to look through the proposals from my recollection whatever the increases were they were minimal. I think that the newer areas were pitched at a rent which was considered to be an economic rent and would have been different from existing rents because the areas which were built particularly in Church Village which was the last project which was completed is a little different from some of the existing houses and obviously were put up at a higher rate and therefore would naturally fetch a higher rent.

In truth and in fact, Sir, to argue that the private sector was reducing rents and the Government increasing rents really does not hold water to the extent that the rents in the Government units are way below comparable rents in the private sector. That is a fact, Sir. There is nowhere in the private sector that you can get a house for \$12 a week of the kind that you get through the National Housing Corporation. One has to be reasonable in this particular area.

3.20 p.m.

The points which have been made by the Honourable Member, as I said, those points which are worthy of consideration will be taken on board and, certainly, the Government would look favourably at them but I thought it would not have been right for me to have allowed the opportunity to be lost where charges were made, unfounded charges in many instances, and the Government did not get an opportunity to reply to the points which had been made.

I think, Sir, it can be said that the Government's policy on housing and the whole question of rents is a human one, one which is not as difficult and as diabolical as Honourable Members would want to have the public believe. The Government is prepared, as I said, to look at those persons who have difficulties to try and see what kind of programme could be put in place to ensure that they, as comfortable as possible. But they have a responsibility to themselves, to the National Housing Corporation, to the country and to the people of Barbados to pay their rents in a timely manner and also to ensure that they keep their surroundings and their property which

is really their property, and property of all of us, in a presentable manner.

I thank you.

With those remarks I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

The question that the Resolution do now pass was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

ORDER NO. 6 — RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE
VESTING IN THE NATIONAL HOUSING COR-
PORATION OF LAND AT TWO MILE HILL,
PINELANDS, ST. MICHAEL, FOR
DEVELOPMENT FOR HOUSING
PURPOSES

Hon. E. E. GREAVES: This land, Mr. Speaker, that I am begging to move the passing of this Resolution, is a parcel of land at Two Mile Hill. The subject parcel measures 5 156.22 square metres. It has been occupied by tenants since 1947 and comprises 14 lots, all of which are tenanted.

This small parcel of land is part of a total of 324 acres, 1 rod, 25 perches which comprise lands of Pine Plantation purchased by the Crown in 1945. Of this total land area, some 200 acres were vested in the National Housing Authority, the predecessor of the National Housing Corporation, in accordance with section 17(1)(c) of the Housing Act, 1955, for the development of the Pinelands Housing Estate. The remaining lands were utilised for a variety of purposes including development of the Agricultural Livestock Station, the provision of accommodation for the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations, Public Works, Community Development and Sports, the siting of the offices of the Barbados Water Authority, the provision of offices for the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, the siting of the Pine Hill Dairy and provision of educational facilities offered by the Ministry of Education.

I just want the Press to be very careful in listening because I do not want to be reported that all of these developments are on the 5 156.22 square metres. I am indicating that this is part of a larger area, the Pine Plantation, 324 acres which over the years have been developed for particular purposes.

The area which is the subject of this debate was utilised by the National Housing Corporation to develop the Two Mile Hill Development although this land remained vested in the Crown. I am informed that several tenants have made payments to the National Housing Corporation towards the purchase of the lots on which they are now residing but these transactions cannot be finalised because the land is not vested in the Corporation.

Basically, what we are now seeking to do is to vest this area of land, described in the Resolution, in the National Housing Corporation so that the National Housing Corporation can proceed with the finalisation of the sales to those persons who have been occupying these lands for many years.

With that information I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

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

Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I think that the Honourable Members on this side are, perhaps, entitled to a little more than what the Minister has given us. We have complained time and again over here about the quality of the Addendum which comes to us attached to Resolutions. We are particularly disturbed that in more recent times sometimes the Addendum has been actually misleading. The Minister has done nothing to enlighten us about the history of this.

I have in front of me here, handed by the Clerk, an indenture which goes back to 1945 to say that certain lands were bought by the then Executive Committee of the Island of Barbados and a plan of part of the Pine Plantation which butts and abounds. This really does not help me. I would have been grateful if the Minister would describe a little more accurately to us exactly where this land is. It is not sufficient to say that it is at Two Mile Hill. There are a lot of things at Two Mile Hill, including Ilaro Court and Sherbourne.

Hon. E. E. GREAVES: If the Honourable Member would give way. The note here says that the land is described as follows: bounding on the north by lands of Ilaro Court, Dr. Scott, St. Barnabas Church, A. Lynch *et al.*

Miss B. A. MILLER: These are lands at the back of Ilaro Court. Now, we see a structure going up at Sherbourne, sometimes referred to as the "museum of madness", and one of the observations often made from this side in several debates in this House, Estimates debates and others, have to do with the question of security attaching to Ilaro Court and the way in which it would be compromised by building at Sherbourne. We are hearing now that there are concerns by those who now occupy, temporarily, Ilaro Court about security on account of these lands which lie, I would say in my estimation, to the south of Ilaro Court. The truth is that the security at Ilaro Court, as I have said, has been long ago compromised by the building or the attempt to build whatever is being attempted at Sherbourne and that is a consideration.

3.30 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this Addendum says that the land described in this Schedule to the Resolution is to be

developed by the National Housing Corporation for housing purposes. All that the Minister spoke of had to do with houses as I understand it, houses already established on this land to which people need to get decent title.

The Government has lands not only here at the Pine Plantation or part of what used to be the Pine Plantation. The Government has lands specifically acquired for housing purposes in other parts of Barbados as well. I am concerned, Sir, that at what is known as the Pondsides in the City of Bridgetown, the Government has just cleared lands. We are told that because there is going to be a Conference in April they did not want it to look untidy. The Exchange building was shoved down. Only a few days ago notices of some kind have been served on people living in that district.

I have a question down on the Order Paper, Sir, Question No. 86 which is asking the Government to state why the land acquired at Pondsides in the City of Bridgetown for housing development has remained undeveloped since 1986. I want to know what the Government's plans are.

The people who live at Waterloo Alley, to be specific at the Pondsides are deeply concerned having heard the Minister of Housing say that he will come in and shove down houses. I hope this is not going to happen to these people who live on the lands which were formerly of the Pine Plantation in the back of Ilaro Court.

Just as I am hoping that it will not happen to the people in Pondsides. They are deeply concerned because they know, Sir, that those lands were acquired at a time when the Barbados Labour Party was governing this country for housing purposes. They saw the beginning of it in what is now known as the Pondsides housing and knew that many more units were to have been built. This is one of the things that my question addresses. When are these units going to be built? What proposals has the Government got for satisfying the considerable backlog of valid applications for housing units from residents of the City of Bridgetown in particular and from many other parts of Barbados including St. Michael North West, Sir? What plans has the Government got for satisfying these?

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I say it to you all the time, somebody has to speak for your constituency. Nobody does but I am putting in a plug for it now because I know that there are people in St. Michael North West who have had applications, just as the people in the City of Bridgetown have, for years in the National Housing Corporation without any hope of getting any decent housing. You are fortunate, Sir, that courtesy of the Barbados Labour Party you have two relatively modern, well appointed housing estates in the constituency of St. Michael North West.

But the truth is that the Government has no housing plan, has no programme for housing and on the most ad hoc basis we are hearing and seeing all sorts of things in Barbados. Only a few weeks ago we heard that in the middle of a recession at a time when 30 000 are unemployed that the Government was about to raise the rents of the National Housing units.

Earlier today we heard that the Government was abandoning at Scarborough.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, please.

Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am addressing the Chair. One minute the Government is saying one thing, the other minute it is saying something else and what worries me is when it begins to do something. When the people at the Pondsides saw the bulldozers come in and shove down the properties, and clear the land there on Bay Street they lived in daily fear that the houses in which they live are going to have similar treatment. They have now gotten notices from the National Housing Corporation inviting them to come in for a very important meeting. It is not proper if the meeting is to tell them that their houses are going to get shoved down.

In this country people know the protocol which attaches to movement of houses when housing development is contemplated such as we hope would be contemplated at the Pondsides, at the Pine and in St. Michael North West too. They saw it happen when people moved from Chapman Lane to Clapham where the Democratic Labour Party was digging dry pits for them.

Aside.

Miss B. A. MILLER: Yes. Because even now in 1994 the Democratic Labour Party is still looking to dig dry pits for people.

Aside.

Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, those people know because I have told them, time and again, that they had to be totally recited somewhere else and they cannot be shoved out of their houses and expect that they would live on the sidewalk or at the side of the road. It is a shameful thing in 1994, Sir, that Barbadians who prize land so highly, who prize their little home so highly that some of them should be forced to live in fear, cannot sleep at night because they are so uncertain about whether they are going to be able to have a roof over their heads tomorrow morning when they wake up. That is what the Government is doing, creating a climate of insecurity. Imagine these

people living in the back of Ilaro Court do not know what is going to happen. For all of the years they have been waiting to get title. The people in Pondsides do not know from morning to morning when they wake up when they will see a bulldozer coming to shove down the house that they are living in.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, this Government has been in office for 7 years. It has failed to build one single house. At the last Estimates we saw that next to no money was voted for the Ministry of Housing. The Minister of Housing really and truly has no work to do.

Mr. H. A. BLACKMAN: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. We built all the houses at Pondsides. We built the houses at Lammings. We built the houses at the Glebe when the Barbados Labour Party had left those houses with grass running through them.

Asides.

Mr. H. A. BLACKMAN: Do not argue with me. I was the Minister. We built the houses at Maynard's in St. Peter when the Barbados Labour Party had abandoned them. We have just built a new complex in Church Village 50 something houses in Church Village. We have built 39 houses on Six Cross Roads and sold them to people. Checker Hall. Mr. Speaker I am not going to get into any argument. I think the Record should be put straight and if you want the number of houses we built and which year they were built we would tell you. It is as simple as that.

Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the real truth of this is that they finished building what we started.

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for the City were order, by Mr. SPEAKER to be expunged from the Record.

3.40 p.m.

Mr. H. A. BLACKMAN: On a point of order, you are misleading the House and the first point I want to make is, I am no longer a Minister by choice.

Certain remarks made by the Honourable Member for St. Philip South were ordered to be expunged from the record by Mr. SPEAKER.

Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I have been accused of misleading this Honourable House, but the person who is truly misleading the House is the Honourable Member for St. Philip South. I cast the foundation for the Pondsides houses.

Mr. H. A. BLACKMAN: On a point of order. I resent the Honourable Member saying that I mislead the House.

I have not misled this House and I am going to repeat what was built when I was Minister of Housing. I am going to repeat it slowly for you to go and check. The General Manager for National Housing is there in his seat.

Mr. Speaker, when I became the Minister of Housing the only thing at Pondsides was a lot of steel on the ground. No building had started and the then Prime Minister, E. W. Barrow, agreed with the Chief Town Planner that the 75 units that the Honourable Member started to build at Pondsides against all the wishes of the Town Planning Department and of every single person who knows about ...

Mr. SPEAKER: That is now going into a speech. The Honourable Member is making a speech. A point of order is only to correct or ...

The second point is this. If a Member makes a statement and an Honourable Member resents that statement, unless evidence that could substantiate either one of the two Members' points of view are placed before the Chamber, then I am in no position to rule on the matter no more than to say that the Honourable Member should avoid getting into a confrontation where no evidence is produced.

Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, it is a known fact that the Pondsides Housing Project was conceptualised and started by the Barbados Labour Party. The Honourable Member for St. Philip South has said that when he got there in the Ministry of Housing there was steel on the ground. That is totally true. It is not true to say that anything was done in contravention of Town Planning Regulations. The fact is ...

Mr. SPEAKER: I do not think now that we are getting anywhere for one or two reasons and the first reason is that the Resolution has nothing to do with Pondsides or even other areas. I have always allowed a wider debate on these matters for many reasons but at the same time if the Honourable Member has refuted the statement then it is incumbent on Honourable Members.

Miss B. A. MILLER: I refute the statement. It is not true to say that he built any houses in the Glebe. It is not true to say that he built houses at Maynards.

Mr. SPEAKER: We will have no more of that.

Miss B. A. MILLER: He finished off projects.

Mr. SPEAKER: I will ask the Honourable Member now to get on to the Resolution that deals with Two Mile Hill. Two Mile Hill is what we are dealing with.

Miss B. A. MILLER: Yes, that is what we are dealing with. I am concerned.

Aside.

Miss B. A. MILLER: It is a lot of foolish lies? People in Barbados who cannot get housing do not think they are foolish lies because they know the truth. People in this country, Sir, are concerned that there is no housing policy. The people in this country, Sir, are concerned that they do not have access to affordable housing. The people in this country are concerned that the Government will not lead by example on this vexed question of housing.

I am deeply concerned, Sir, for the people of the Pondsides. I am asking that my question No. 86 be answered. People cannot be put to live at the side of the road. It is a shameful thing that just because we are having a conference on sustainable development in April of this year, that the Government feels that it must push down housing which does not look desirable in the middle of the City of Bridgetown so that somehow they will look good.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order, Sir, the Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Government is not pushing down any houses because of any global conference. What houses are being pushed down would be part of the programme as deriving from the law which was passed by the Honourable Member's Government, which requires that there be a system of removal of derelict buildings. What global conference?

Miss B. A. MILLER: Why only in the visible part of Bridgetown, Sir? I can show you dirt floors in Bridgetown. They have not shovelled that down. Mr. Speaker, Sir, this is all window dressing to impress people in April at the expense of my constituents in the City of Bridgetown and they are not going to stand for it. People will not be made to live at the side of the road. The City of Bridgetown is one of the few places where people still have to bathe in public baths and have only public latrines at their disposal. The Democratic Labour Party has never had a care. The Barbados Labour Party is the only party that has ever had a programme and a policy for urban renewal in Barbados, particularly applying to the City of Bridgetown. And I am deeply concerned. What happened to the people here at the back of Ilaro Court, those whose property or the land on which they have been living, the subject of the Resolution before us today, I would not like that fate to befall the people of the City of Bridgetown.

The Pondsides has a frontage, Sir, right on to Bay Street. There are some people on the other side who feel that people in the City are not good enough to live in a place like that but that was the intention of the Barbados Labour Party. Let me tell you, Sir, whenever the Labour Party returns to Government it will complete the Pondsides housing project.

The people of Bridgetown have shown at Kensington Lodge that they can keep a housing estate in the best state of repair. The environment there is the envy of many. The people in the City have to wait to be the last in Barbados to have public housing. When there was public housing in St. Lucy and St. Philip and St. John and Christ Church and everywhere else the people in the City did not have any. Well they have now, Sir. We cannot have a situation where the Minister of Housing will push people off the houses in which they live for purposes of window dressing or for whatever reason without making proper alternative accommodation available to them. Those days are long gone.

I have a commitment to the City of Bridgetown, Sir, and this is part of the commitment that the people in the City should not live in any lesser quality of housing than people anywhere else in Barbados. For too many years we have had that. And it is not only Pondside, Sir, there is Greenfield, there is Church Village, waiting their turn. They know that in the time of the Democratic Labour Party nothing is coming to them as it never has and they know they have to wait for the return of the Barbados Labour Party Government before they can see housing of the kind and quality that they feel, like anybody else, that they are entitled to live in.
3.50 p.m.

Sir, regarding this land at the back of Ilaro Court and the lands referred to in this Resolution, we have not heard anything about the quality or the kind of housing which presently exists there. We have not heard about the quality or the kind of support services in terms of roads and utilities which exist there. Part of the reason why we have not seen social unrest such as we see in other countries of the Caribbean, which shall remain nameless, is because in Barbados we like to 'boast' that there is not that much gap between those that have and those who have not. We do not have too many of those enclaves where only a certain type of person lives. People live cheek-by-jowl in Barbados. I live in a house which has a wall house on one side and a chattel house on the other side just like you do, Sir, and so many others in here. But Ilaro Court is where the Prime Minister of this country lives. Take care that we do not create a situation where people are made to feel that they are living down the hill from where the Prime Minister lives and by virtue of living down the hill from where he lives must live in a substandard environment. None of this has the Minister said to us and I am beginning to be worried by so many things that are left unsaid in this Chamber. Debate after debate they get up and they are very selective, and for the most part it is what is left unsaid which constitutes the damage.

-I want to hear a little more about this land which is now going to be conveyed to people. At long last they are

going to get their title, but I want to hear what kind of housing they are living in. We are spending thousands or millions on Sherbourne. Nobody can live in there, Sir.

Aside.

Miss B. A. MILLER: The Central Bank is paying for itself which is more than can be said of Sherbourne. Do not bring that in here. What I am saying, Sir, is that in 1984/85 we were being told how much money it took to build the Central Bank that could have built houses. I want to know how many houses could be built from the money spent on Sherbourne? Now for years the Central Bank has been paying for itself and will pay for itself and much more besides. The same cannot be said for Sherbourne.

Aside.

Miss B. A. MILLER: The same cannot be said of Sherbourne. Yes, the Central Bank is income generating. At least it is paying for itself and Sherbourne will not.

Aside.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order please.

Miss M. A. MILLER: The Central Bank is not only paying for itself, it is paying for all like St. Joseph Hospital. That will shut you up for the moment.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, the days should be passed when a Minister could get up and make the kind of introduction that the Honourable Minister made when he introduced this matter when we could be fogged off with a 3, 4 or 5 line Addendum on an issue such as housing without any further information. Those days are passed now, Sir. We are not just going to sit down in here and do acquisitions because there is nothing else to do and all you do is get up and make one or two points and sit down again.

The Barbados Labour Party has a comprehensive social policy of which housing is an integral part, Sir. So it is only natural that we would want to hear what is the Government's counterpart. There was nothing in the manifesto.

Aside.

Miss B. A. MILLER: It was an 'amazing thing. Mr. Speaker, I am hoping that even if at this stage Parliamentary Question No. 86 cannot be answered today that some word will be given to the people at Pondside so that their insecurity will be lessened and they will not be afraid to wake up in the morning because they do not know what will happen to them. That is the worst condition in which anybody can be expected to live. I mean refugees live like that. Displaced persons live like that. We do

not expect that in Barbados and it is not fair in Barbados that people should be forced to live in those circumstances. Nowhere else in Barbados is that the case.

I would be glad if the Minister would help to perhaps remove some of the concerns that Honourable Members may have about the suitability of housing close to Ilaro Court. We have been hearing untoward things that we are not accustomed to and we do not like to hear in Barbados. We do not like to hear in Barbados that a Prime Minister does not want certain people living near him. We do not want to hear that and we want to hear a little more about what the intention here is to upgrade housing for the people living in what is really a tenantry in the back of Ilaro Court.

Mr. H. A. BLACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, I really had no intention of entering this debate. But the Honourable Member for the City decided to make certain statements here this evening that I can say now do not reflect the truth of the situation. Now I can understand if some person on a political platform in order to score a political point makes certain statements. But I believe in this Honourable House with Hansard being printed that the truth should be told at all times and that is what I have believed in in my entire political career, that in this Honourable House the truth must be told. I am going to speak the truth and nothing but the truth.

In 1986, Mr. Speaker, when the Democratic Labour Party formed the Government of this country... 4.00 p.m.

Aside.

Mr. H. A. BLACKMAN: I am defending the record of the Democratic Labour Party and my record as Minister of Housing in that Government against any person at all. In 1986 when the Democratic Labour Party became the Government of this country — and I am going to start with Pondsides — we found Pondsides, which the Honourable Member for the City, although she was not the Minister of Housing, apparently the Honourable Member could draw plans...

Miss B. A. MILLER: On a point of order, Sir. The fact is, Mr. Speaker, I can and have and do draw plans, but I did not draw plans for the Pondsides and it is perfectly wrong of the Honourable Member to suggest that I had anything to do with drawing plans at the Pondsides.

Mr. H. A. BLACKMAN: She wants me to say that now, because against all the advice of every single person in Barbados who knows about planning, including the Chief Town Planner and all the technical people, who told the Honourable Member that to put 75 terrace units in that small area at Pondsides was nothing short of craziness. The Honourable Member somehow persuaded the then Minister of Housing...

Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. There is no truth in this. The Democratic Labour Party cut back the number of units at Pondsides....

Mr. SPEAKER: Two Honourable Members are on their feet.

Mr. H. A. BLACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, if it is one thing I have it is a good memory. I sat at Cabinet on about five occasions discussing this matter with the reports from the Chief Town Planner and the technical people who said that the maximum number of units that should be accommodated at that site was 49.

Aside.

Mr. H. A. BLACKMAN: You all got people to approve anything. Mr. Speaker, let me proceed. The argument was made in here today that we did not build Pondsides. If, as the Honourable Member was saying, they had built or started Pondsides for 75 units, how then could we get only 49 units there unless we had made each unit almost twice as big or put a hotel on half of it? It is not a board house, it is wall. This is basic common sense. If you are building 75 units

Aside.

Mr. H. A. BLACKMAN: Oh, you were going up four storeys?

Asides.

Mr. H. A. BLACKMAN: Mr. Speaker, the point I am making is that this Government decided we would go along with the technical people and the Chief Town Planner that the maximum number of units was to be 49, I think it was, and we built 49 units at Pondsides. Mr. Speaker, the Barbados Labour Party spent \$4.3 million at Bonnetts and we had to finish Bonnetts. When we got in the houses were only about halfway.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to continue. The Glebe, where they were relocating people, resiting. I am going to call a name, Sir. If you remember, some of the Labour Party members used to brag about a fellow called Cumberbatch. Tom Adams one time said he was the greatest thing in the world when it comes to a contractor. When we became the Government the houses which should have been built were grass. Do you know grass up through the foundation? People called me and told me: "Mr. Minister, come up here by the Glebe." When I went there was grass growing up through the foundation. We had to build those houses for resiting people in the Glebe. The same thing happened at Maynards. The Democratic Labour Party had to build the houses at Maynards.

Aside.

Mr. H. A. BLACKMAN: Okay, I will use the word "completed". Lammings, Mr. Speaker. The Democratic Labour Party had to build the houses at Lammings in St. Joseph. I am going further. At Harmony Hall, behind the Pepper Pot, we had to build all the houses to relocate people behind the Pepper Pot. Let me go a little further. At Six Cross Roads, Mr. Speaker, just below Mr. Frank Springer's gas station on the road to Foursquare, we built 34 single units. I am going a bit further. Mr. Speaker, how can we forget that when the flood occurred in St. Peter the Barbados Labour Party took about 20 houses and dropped them on the ground at Springhall Plantation and this Democratic Labour Party had to build all of those houses at Golden Mile for the people? I built those. At Church Village, St. Philip, this Democratic Labour Party has just built 51 units and still the Democratic Labour Party has not built anything in seven years. In the Six Roads Housing Area, where the people were living in those houses for years with outdoor toilets, this Democratic Labour Party, including your humble servant as the Minister at the time, had to put 17 indoor toilets in the 17 houses, and the Democratic Labour Party has not done anything.

Mr. Speaker, I am not going to stay much longer, but I will just say this. I had no intention of getting into this debate. The problem that the Democratic Labour Party faced in 1986, because the Barbados Labour Party keeps distorting the record of 1981 and 1986, is that the Barbados Labour Party waited until the last minute in 1986, just before the elections, to conceptualise a lot of things. If the Barbados Labour Party had not left so many conceptualised projects and houses for me and the Democratic Labour Party to finish, we would have been able to use all of that money to build the terrace units they complain about. Let no one doubt that and do not distort the record. All the conceptualisation that you all did we had to finish. What you all have to understand is that you have to put the record straight and you, cannot keep saying that no houses were built under the Democratic Labour Party between 1986 and 1991 because it is untrue.

4.10 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that whenever I get involved in any debate in here I am going to speak so anyone can go and check the records to see if what I say is true or false. I am not trying to go back anywhere. I am setting the record straight and if the Honourable Member for the City of Bridgetown had not distorted the record of the Democratic Labour Party between 1986 and 1991 and of this humble servant as the Minister of Housing I would have no reason to get involved; but do not distort the record of this Party or of this Minister. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, this has been somewhat of an unfortunate debate given the fact that what

should have been at the core of it is the question of where we are going with housing in Barbados. Whether the Government wants to acknowledge it or not, great concern exists concerning the role of the National Housing Corporation. But the debate is now to do unfortunately with the record and the distorting record; and the Member for St. Philip South spoke with great passion about setting the record straight. I would think if the record is to be set straight perhaps we should set the record straight properly. I have before me the Economic Report published by the Government of Barbados in 1990 and it really says something about the record of the Democratic Labour Party between 1986 and 1990. The House has heard this argument before about the record of the Democratic Labour Party when the Member for St. Philip South was the Minister of Housing. What is distinguished about it, Sir, is that in each year more houses in Barbados were completed than were started.

In each year between 1986 and 1990 — and this is a fact which the House has heard before — the record as reported here states that in every year by some magic for 5 years the Democratic Labour Party managed to complete more houses than were started. Mr. Speaker, as to how that could be accomplished has never been properly explained.

Asides.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, the House would have in fact heard this argument put with great force in the Budget debate of 1990 when the then Leader of the Opposition did have to remind the Member for St. Philip South that he should not boast of his record because as stated the record was not clear. It is not possible over an extended period for more houses to be completed than are started. The record as it stands needs to be put straight in relation to what really happened in that period.

I say that, Sir, only by way of an aside because as I said this debate seemed to have been...

Asides.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Believe me, Sir, I am not going to get down to the question as to who started a house and who finished a house and whether a Minister started a house and whether a Minister finished a house. In fact, Mr. Speaker, Sir, I believe that the level of our public discussions has to rise above the question as to whether the Minister built anything at all.

In relation to Maynards for example, the Maynards Housing Project started in 1980 and by 1986 only finishing touches had to be put at Maynards.

Aside.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order, Sir, the Honourable Member is putting a new gloss on finishing touches. If finishing touches mean from the foundation up, then he is right. The Honourable Member ought not to mislead the House. The Honourable Member knows that there were no houses to speak of in Maynards.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, the Maynards Housing Project has also an unfortunate history because it was started even before the 1981 General Elections. The point I am making is that we really have to get away from this discussion about who started what and who completed what and have the House's time taken up. I think it really brings Parliament into the kind of disrepute that causes the public to be cynical of Parliament. What is at issue and what we want to focus on in this case is the need for the Government to speak in a far more forthcoming way on the more important aspects of the Government's housing policy. We need to hear that.

We must not distort the discussion by lumping the period 1986 to 1991 when the Government had an active role to play in housing. It is the period subsequent to 1991 which is the period in which the Government has become extremely passive. And the burden of the argument that is being put by this side is that we fundamentally believe that housing is a need; that the provision of housing is a social need that no Government in Barbados should walk away from. We believe fundamentally as a matter of policy that the notion of a Government of Barbados not having an active housing policy through the National Housing Corporation is a mistake.

We feel, Mr. Speaker, that the National Housing Corporation cannot and should not be forced to run only upon the basis of profit and loss accounting because there are still large pockets of poverty in this country and the application of profit and loss accounting precepts to the conceptualisation of government housing programmes in our judgment is a misguided policy that is going to lead to a greater level of social alienation in Barbados.

We want therefore to join a serious debate on this matter. We feel that over the last few years fundamental mistakes have been made in the way in which the Government has conceived of its housing policy. We feel as the Government is now apparently prepared to concede that Government's policy on rents has not been properly thought through... And we welcome indeed the fact that the Government has given itself 2 years to come up with a new housing policy that bears some relationship both to the needs of the National Housing Corporation and the circumstances of the people who live in the National Housing Corporation units.

We feel fundamentally that its rent policy has to be recast and redesigned in the light of the circumstances of

the tenants as well as the circumstances of the Corporation, but we are unhappy with the present rent policy. I spoke about it in the light of what Government had committed itself to through the incomes policy. But there are broader ramifications of the implied policy and I would think that now that the Government has determined it is going to give itself a grace period to look again at this rent policy that it will come forward with something more enlightened.

Mr. Speaker, the point I do not want to be missed in this debate amid the to-ing and fro-ing as to who did what, who started what and who did not complete what is that there is a tremendous pent-up demand in Barbados in virtually every constituency for sites.

4.20 p.m.

Aside.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, the point we must not miss in this debate is that throughout Barbados we have not yet put the problem of adequate housing behind us. There is a tremendous pent-up demand for spots to rent. There is a tremendous demand on the part of people for houses to rent as well. In addition, I still continue to believe that a satisfactory level of housing construction activity is necessary for the maintenance of satisfactory levels of economic activity in this country and for the maintenance of satisfactory levels of employment. We have gone on record as saying this.

In 1980 we were led to believe that it was a good policy to try to curtail construction activity, although construction imports amounted to no more than 7% of total imports. We disagree with that. I really will not support a policy which continues to dampen activity in the construction sector as a priority in order to protect the balance of payments of this country because construction materials represent too small a proportion of our total imports for us to sacrifice the meeting of important social needs in this society and the meeting of satisfactory level of jobs to deal with such a small external preserve problem.

We have to deal with the issue that we have not yet in Barbados solved the problem of housing. The point that has to be made in this House, and that is being made from this side, is that in the course of the last two years in particular, there has been a virtual abdication by Government of the role of attempting to find a public sector solution to part of our overall housing problem. We do not agree with it.

We want to stress on this side that we do not feel that Barbados should embrace a philosophy which says that the Government of Barbados should walk away from having an active role in the provision of shelter solutions. It

will mean that the National Housing Corporation will not and cannot function in the same way that it has functioned in the past. The fact that the Government should have an active role in housing does not mean that we are going to condone its inefficiencies in the National Housing Corporation.

What I fear, Mr. Speaker, in this particular matter is that the Government has moved from one extreme to the other. It has moved from one extreme where the existence of inefficiencies in the financial affairs, particularly, of the National Housing Corporation, would seem to have led it to accept a point of view which says that there should be no Government role at all. We find that very disturbing. We think the sooner the National Housing Corporation and the Government as a whole come back to the recognition that 26 years into independence we are not yet in a position to conceive of no public sector role in housing. The sooner that policy is informed by it, the better we will be in this society. That is the point that has to be made in this particular issue.

We are not on this side just going to support any size subsidy to the National Housing Corporation because housing is a priority. That is not our policy. We are not condoning the non-payment of rents by persons in the National Housing Corporation's units who can afford to pay. We are not supporting that. But at the same time we find it uncomfortable to contemplate a situation in which the National Housing Corporation is entirely stripped of any serious function in relation to the provision of shelter solutions in Barbados. In point of fact, our judgment is that this is the time when, in fact, the National Housing Corporation should be assisting in inviting creative solutions to the problem because the problem is real.

I am sure, Sir, that Honourable Members on the other side must be bombarded by constituents who would like to start families, and would like to find lots and houses and cannot find them in the private sector and feel that the Government should be in a position to assist. That is the point on this side that a lot of what has been coming to the House by way of land acquisitions and land abandonments in support of Government's housing policy tells us that the Government has not thought through this particular issue properly. We feel that it has relented in the face of pressure from international institutions to impose too draconian and anti-social a policy in housing. Now there seems to have been some relief from the pressures imposed on Government's housing policy by the multilateral institutions. We think the time is appropriate for the Government of Barbados to redefine a housing policy that has not *only*, as I said earlier, to do with the question of profit and loss at The National Housing Corporation, although that is important as well, but have also to do with what a housing policy, in the final analysis, should be concerned with, the finding of appropriate shelter solutions

within the context of the resources available to the country at large and the resources available to the Government.

As I said, Sir, this Parliament and politics in Barbados will forever be regarded with cynicism once our debates on public works have always to be informed by the kind of discourse to which this House was regaled this afternoon. On this side, we are interested in having the whole question of Government's housing policy debated because we feel very seriously that it is one of the key areas in which serious mistakes have been made in the course of the last two years – that it is an area in which it is still not too late for new directions to be given to what is still one of the areas in Barbados in which the pockets of real poverty continue to exist and where I think, and we think, the state has a real responsibility to assist in the removal of that abject poverty.

I am obliged to you, Sir.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: I thought I had caught your eye, Mr. Speaker, a little earlier but I gave way to the Leader of the Opposition in this regard so that I could study the aims, purposes and intent of his contribution. I sat and I have tried...

Aside.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: I am wiser, Sir, in respect of the aims and intent of his intervention. He has couched that intervention in terms of a need to become serious and the need for a fundamental debate relating to housing matters. The real intent was, however, to *try* to erase from the record the foolishness that had emanated from the mouth of the Honourable Member for the City, and to try to put the debate at a level which she did not rise to on this occasion and, perhaps, is incapable of rising to in these particular issues.

Aside.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Precisely, and I want to correct certain impressions which may have been created. It is not only the Member for St. Philip South. He was correct. 4.30 p.m.

Aside.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: The Member for St. Philip South had to correct the Member for the, City for the distortions.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: But I could correct you though. Other men have u~c~l and failed. Mr. Speaker,

this is no trial here. But, Sir, let me confirm what the Member for St. Philip South said. I did not put him on any backbench. He chose to go on the backbench.

Aside.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: It is obvious, Mr. Speaker, that Members were not listening very carefully. You heard the Member for St. Philip South using the word "we". He said "we".

Asides.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: We must have insights in these matters, Sir. Let me correct any impression which may have been given. I have never addressed the question of people living near Ilaro Court. I have never said I do not wish people living near Ilaro Court. They were all there before I went there, and when I went there... In fact I was persuaded to go there. I have never said anything about the people who live there, so there must have been references to a previous Prime Minister.

Aside.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: I do not know if the Honourable Member was referring to the Member for Christ Church South or it may be another Prime Minister who preceded him.

Aside.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: I do not know, Sir. If the Member for the City says it is the incumbent, that is absolutely untrue and I deny it categorically.

Aside.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: In due course we will address the question of the Government's housing policy. But let me make it absolutely clear that down through the years this Democratic Labour Party, while in Government, has done more for housing than either the Barbados Labour Party or any other Administration in order to raise the level of housing in this country. This is not a question of whether Government does this or private sector does that; the important thing is the provision of housing for the people of Barbados. This must, of necessity, be a combination of the contribution of the public sector and the private sector within a framework of financial and economic policies that will enable people to raise resources, to borrow money at acceptable interest rates and so on, depending on the prevailing market conditions. This is what it is all about.

Miss B. A. MILLER: On a point of order, Sir. I do not like to interrupt the Right Honourable Prime Minister

but if what he is saying is so, how does he justify what has been read by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition from the Economic Report?

If what you said is true how is it that you can still find yourself in a situation where you are completing more houses than you begin? If what you just said is true that you built more houses than anybody else.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Sir, we will address that particular point. First of all we will check the accuracy of what the Leader of the Opposition is saying. He is saying that every year, for several years, we have been completing more houses- than we have started. We will have to look at the record. We are not going to be discussing this in any offhand manner. We have already set out the policy, Sir, and policy will be set out very clearly in the different publications that we will put...

Asides.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: No, Sir. I am not doing any counting.

What I said is that this Government has a housing policy and this Government seeks...

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, please. May I have some order, please. Can I hear the Prime Minister?

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: What I am saying, Sir, is that this Government has a housing policy.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Mr. Speaker, I really do not understand what is going on. I am trying to speak about housing.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: I really cannot continue, Sir. I really do not know what is going on.

Mr. SPEAKER: Let us have a little order now. I understand the atmosphere but I need to hear the Prime Minister as well.

Aside.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have all the chances.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: I do not think the House is in the mood for the serious debate on housing

that the Member for St. Peter, Leader of the Opposition is calling for. I think we will have to find another time when we will join issues on this whole question of housing.

I only wish to say at this stage that the Development Plan for Barbados which will go down to the year 2 000 has already been approved by the Cabinet and it will be laid in this Honourable House of Assembly over the next couple of weeks. It will be laid very shortly. There will be a section on housing that will set out some of our approaches to housing over the coming years. We have, already, in our various publications, at Government and Party level and through various speeches, addressed the question of the role of housing in our society. We have perhaps spent more time in framing a policy and also implementing a policy for housing than any other organization in this country. We are committed to a positive role for the National Housing Corporation. We believe that body has to provide sites and services on a continuing basis throughout the foreseeable future.

Asides.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: The corporation will have a role in the area of . sites and services, and in construction of new houses particularly for the low income earners, because there is a continuing need — not only a backlog — to provide more housing for people in need particularly among the lower income groups. We believe that the private sector can help in the lower middle income and higher income groups. We also have to keep an appropriate economic framework within which people can get access to loans, mortgages and other facilities and resources area that will assist them in putting up their houses.
4.40 p.m.

We have also to concentrate on the ability, capacity and efficiency of the National Housing Corporation to get in the money that is owed to them.

Our policy also is based on making the people of this country owners of wealth in this country, and one way in which this can be demonstrated and realised is through home ownership. Government does not wish to be a landlord or a landlord over an extended period of time. Our policy is to ensure that the housing units which people have been renting for some time should be owned by the people. We have to find the ways and means, the schemes and the mechanisms whereby that can be done in the most efficient way. That is what we are committed to, Sir.

It may be a political point to say a Government has no housing policy but when you examine it, there is no basis at all for saying so, not in fact, but only in fiction, the kind of fiction that the Member for Christ Church South

was indulging in. I saw him reviewing some fiction over there, some Barbados Labour Party fiction which he seems to be taking very seriously. I did not know that he still indulged in that kind of stuff, Sir. So that is where it is. Let us put all of this talk about Government having no policy in relation to housing behind us, and let us continue on the path that we have been going whereby this Government has been fighting valiantly in the face of a grave economic situation to improve the housing sector in this country. That is what we are committed to, and that is what we will continue to do.

Mr. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a couple of points which I think ought to be made in this type of debate. I have listened to the Honourable Member for St. Philip South who is not now in his seat. I am sorry that he is not here to hear what I have to say on the whole question of housing and certain projects.

Mr. Speaker, it is time that some Members understand that projects are going to be left unfinished by some Government. Those projects will have to be completed by a successor Government. The point made by the Honourable Member for St. Philip South did not have any worth in it. Whether the Democratic Labour Party built the houses or not is immaterial. Let me hasten to add that what the Honourable Member should have said is that the present Government completed some of the projects. That would only be fair to this Chamber.

In Maynards I was Minister at the time when the construction of those houses started so therefore it is not true to say that the houses were built by the Minister or by the DLP Government. They were completed and I will give in to that. The houses at Bonnets; here again I was Minister, and those houses some of them were completed and the second phase was left. As a matter of fact there was some difficulty with the contractor and the contract was terminated and the project was completed by the present Government.

I said that because I think that the record must be set straight and when one gets up to score points, one must make sure that one is accurate and that what is said can only but redound to the good of this Parliament and Barbados generally.

It is sometimes fortunate for a Government and it has happened with this Government and other Governments, in difficult economic times they have got to put certain projects on hold. We have seen that with this Government. There is Sherbourne and the Polyclinic in St. John and the housing project, they have to put them on hold. What happens if a general election was called tomorrow morning and the Barbados Labour Party wins the Government we will have to complete them. I do not think it would be

fair for us to come in here and seek to score any political points. It is a non point. What really concerns me is this. What the Honourable Member should have done is give credit to the Barbados Labour Party. Yes, it was this party, the Barbados Labour Party, that produced Barbados' first White Paper on Housing. While I do not want to take credit for it I had an input because I initiated that White Paper. I am saying that you must understand that any housing policy thereafter would have to hinge on that particular White Paper which made us understand the housing needs of Barbados.

So when the Honourable Member got up and talked he must realise that, there were certain initiative taken by the Barbados Labour Party too. The project in Wildey Gardens, it was the first time we had a joint project, where Government provided the land and allowed Ideal Homes to build houses and those houses were marketed by National Housing Corporation. That was the first of its kind. When I hear Honourable Members on that side talking it would give the impression that ...

I am not worried about who built so many houses, it is a question of whether there is a need and whether the money is there. In these times the Government cannot boast about building any houses but that will not say if the Government has done something that deserves merit that it could not be said. And that is the point because we must not miss the very important point that housing is a very serious thing and we have to know how and when and why to get involved in housing.

The climate is not right. Out there it is very difficult. People are not buying properties. You will see reflected in Government's revenue that property transfer tax is down and that means that Government cannot hope to realise the sort of income that would help it to even come back into housing. There is a slow down in housing. That is what Members must understand. We are talking about houses and that you cannot build houses today. Where are you going to get the money from? People are not even committing themselves to mortgages with the Bank. It is difficult for people to get \$150 000 in mortgage. People are just not going for it. Advertise a property for \$200 000 and you will stay there for months. Even if you advertise it for rent at \$1 500, it has to be shut up. Mr. Speaker, that is a stark reality. Real Estate has gone flat. Let us understand that. That is why I am calling on the Government and I hope they understand.

Some people say to me, do not give Government certain suggestions, but I am saying I have a duty and I am saying the Government has to examine how best they can get people to get the banks to free up mortgages but I understand and people are not working and some of them who are working cannot even pay the mortgages. That is

one of the problems that is causing people not to get involved in mortgages. Yes, if you can have the private sector building houses and people buying houses, National Housing Corporation would not have the pressure. The pressure is on National Housing because the private sector has gone into their shell. They are saying that they need the land. I am going to suggest that Government can make land available to them and at the same time check the prices of the houses they are going to build on the market because you have got to watch that. You have to control that and say that "X" number of houses should be built for "X" income earners rather than give land as Government has been doing from time to time and they are building houses for \$250,000 and then cannot get them sold and neither can they attract overseas buyers either. These are the things you have to look at.

4.50 p.m.

I am saying that you have to look at a lease arrangement where Barbadians can build and Government will get the benefit, because if Government sells the land it will get money from the Property Transfer Tax and the taxes that go with it. National Housing must come up with this. They should be the leaders in providing a shell for people and allow them to put in the petitions rather than build a complete house. This is what obtains in Puerto Rico, but we want to give the full works and that is an added cost. I am hoping that at this time we can appeal to people to make inputs into completing houses. If we can do that, it will be good for the families and the communities that will redound to our nation building. Let us understand that we have to move away from building houses for sale when you know at the same time it is difficult to service a mortgage.

I have heard the Honourable Member for St. Philip South who is not here now talking about 100 per cent mortgages. He was all this good Housing Minister. What about that? It was never implemented. Never could he get up in here and call on the Government to implement it. He could not get it done but yet he is saying how good he was and singing praises. No wonder he was moved from where he was because I know the Prime Minister watches these things. I am going to say this, Sir. The thing that worries me, Sir, is there were house spots that were developed in Harmony Hall for sale to persons. Do you know that the very person who was the Minister allowed those house spots to be sold off privately and those house spots should have gone to persons who needed house spots? They should not have been sold to the person. They were developed for housing purposes and the land was sold off not for housing purposes. But I am saying that if it was acquired and developed for housing purposes, it should have gone for those purposes. If you were going to change the use, then you should have come back in here and notified Parliament or let the public know why you are changing your plans. Now we cannot have thw.

What it means is that you have taken 10 lots that were service lots which could have been available to relieve 10 families who are now seeking houses. I am sure these are things that you need to know. The Prime Minister is sitting there and nodding his head. I agree with him on this.

Sir, I have been saying this time and time again to let National Housing Corporation have the funds. You have vested land in them. They have a land bank. Let them sell the land. If they have to sell the land for \$3.00 or \$4.00 a square foot, it is best to dispose of the land and let people own the land and build. National Housing Corporation has money and let me say this. National Housing did not buy the land. It is given to them. I am saying that everyday you are vesting land in National Housing and they are saying that they are broke and have no money. I cannot understand that logic. Listen to me. There are some lots that will be leased by the Chief Town Planner where there are roads and services. Develop them and sell them off. Then the proceeds from those sales can go towards putting in roads in the back. But I do not understand this mad policy of waiting until you have all the money to develop. I can teach them if they want my advice and I can help them with that. Some of them feel because they are on the other side that we cannot tell them. But I am hoping that they will listen to me on this.

Sir, I will say this to you also. There are people out there who would like to buy their present house that they are living in, but the valuation is a deterrent. Some of them own houses for 25 or 30 years with asbestos and they have problems. They do not worth any \$35,000 or \$40,000 but National Housing Corporation is asking for that. I am saying that Government has to look at their pricing. Are you really serious about helping people? It is not a realistic price and I will say this. When people apply to purchase those houses, they have to seek a mortgage. When they go to the financial institution, they ask as a prerequisite for the mortgage a valuation. When an independent valuer goes out to value, his report says that it is not worth it. Do you see what is happening? You have to be realistic. These are things that are happening. So any effort that Government is going to make you have to find people who understand how to get a mortgage. Even if you are going to sell a piece of land, you have to watch the pricing. They are talking about a square foot in most areas. The banks are not lending one single cent nowadays unless you have a valuer. When you send a valuer, the valuer then reports that the land is not worth it. Now that is the thing. So let us understand what is going on.

Sir, let me turn to another point. You hear this thing about three million dollars in arrears. Let me tell you what is really going on. Do not mind killing yourself for \$3 million. Since the 1970's and 1980's there was \$3 million

outstanding. Let us understand this that no Government has ever gotten it down to \$1 million. Nobody has ever done that. Therefore, you have to look carefully. Some you will have to write off.

Sir, I will say this too that the National Housing Corporation has employed debt collectors. Let me say something about that. I am going to reveal something. Some of the people on the list are dead. What I am saying is this that it is embarrassing that you have hired people to collect from dead people. It is showing that something needs to be done with the record. There is no proper tab kept on people who have vacated houses and all of this is causing problems. In order for you to inherit a house, you must pay a dead person's arrears. What are we really talking about? If someone wants to rent a house in your constituency in Ferniehurst or in Rosemont and some old person was living in there and died and rents were accumulated, National Housing Corporation's policy is that they call upon the person in the house to pay the rent. I am saying that you need to treat these cases as individual and there cannot be an across-the-board policy as far as they are concerned. That is why I say you have to be realistic. You are not going to collect the \$3 million. Don't let anybody fool you. It is not going to be done. I was able to see the lists and I identified people in the Pine who have died, are old and cannot pay.
5.00 p.m.

I will say this too, because there are some things you have to say. Do you know why housing is faced with this question of people who are unable to pay? It is because of a policy which places the welfare cases in National Housing and the Welfare Department was supposed to pay the National Housing Corporation. If Welfare does not have the money then Housing cannot collect it. Many times we come in here and talk about the arrears and nobody takes time to explain that some of these people are cases that the Child Care Board have put there but you do not give the Child Care Board to pay for the houses. So this is what you have to look at. Seek some advice sometimes. I am just trying to tell you that we have got inputs in these matters. If you seek from time to time you can benefit. We all want to see these problems alleviated. We don't want to be going over them at all. It is time that Barbados move away from politicking on the question of housing.

The Government should think seriously about making land available to persons who are genuine on a long term lease. They are not running anywhere. Let them help themselves. I think people are willing to do that. I am saying do not go back to the person... What worries me is that those persons who would have lived in the Government houses and rented for 20 years would have paid back the cost of the houses. Anybody knows that it takes 20 years to get back the money that you outlay

in housing so when a person is renting a house 20 years, 30 is the minimum, the outlay of what it costs...

Aside.

Mr. DeL. 0. BRADSHAW: It is hurtful when people are living in those houses for 30 years and would have owed \$200 or \$300 they are treated like criminals. What you must take into consideration is how good a tenant is. Even business people will consider a good client over the years if he or she runs into difficulty. I would think that any government or any policy must make provision for those cases.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying we can look at this question of housing because I think we still have reason to feel that it probably can be tackled successfully but you cannot ignore some of the things that are happening. You must ask yourself why it is that people out there are not investing in apartments. Only a crazy man would go and borrow money from the bank to build apartments for rent. It is difficult. That is in the past. I am talking of the present. It is not a good investment. That is why people are reluctant to do so and if they are reluctant, do you know what that means? It means that housing will go nowhere, that you are not housing the people. We have to look at that.

I hope I have thrown a bit of light on one or two things that... I have heard the Member for St. Philip South. I ignored that contribution. It is not worthwhile. Ask who really built Pond Side or... Sometimes we have to be careful of what we say. Say what you like — the Chief Town Planner is vested with legal authority to refuse a town planning application and if the developer develops contrary to his wishes he is empowered to issue a stop notice or an enforcement notice. I do not want the Honourable Member to come in here and talk about... What I am worried about is that there are some people who were supposed to be resited from Licorish Village and the Belle and up to this day they have not been resited and I am worried about that. That is one of the things I want to know. You are talking about improving housing but people were identified as sitting on the water table, right in the water zone and their houses...

Aside.

Mr. DeL. 0. BRADSHAW: The land is there and I would like to see the land developed. When the Prime Minister goes walking I would like him to walk through Cutting Road and see that 20 houses are there and a lot of land at the back cannot be developed. These are things we have to concern us. Why on earth do you come here vesting the land and then the National Housing is in no position to develop the lands and to realise the objective of Government. Something has to be wrong.

Government has to reflect on how best it can get its policy... It is not a matter of policy but how best to implement it. The mechanism has to be devised. If it is there, it needs to be looked at and reviewed with a view to getting it functioning again. I have no doubt in my mind that there is a role for National Housing Corporation. There is still some fine tuning left to be done. Give them the staff. Let them have their roles properly and clearly spelt out and persons who interfere with the Corporation and I know some things that go on and which need to be highlighted where certain contracts... I question them because when persons owed they had a legal officer there who would tell the person come in and list all the things in their houses. Some of the things were not belonging to the tenant. Now that caused a lot of embarrassment. I am sure the Prime Minister is listening to this. This is what happened. It was wrong. They should have established whether the furniture, the belongings, were belonging to the tenant. They made them sign some agreement and charged them \$100 a week when they know some of the people were not working. What this is doing to the person is affecting him psychologically.

If it is reasonable I can understand that but that is unreasonable and it is frustrating people. I think Government must understand what is really going on. This happens. All of us have constituencies which have some sort of housing areas. I know the Bay land, Ferniehurst. The Honourable Member does not have a housing area so he does not understand what causes people to be up against politicians because the goods are not delivered.

I would like to see proper maintenance of the housing estates. I am calling on Government to do that. Nothing can satisfy me that a landlord should not maintain his property. There are a lot of toilet bowls and face basins which are cracked. A lot of panes of glass knocked out of houses and the National Housing Corporation will tell you up-to-date it does not have any money. If your rent is not up to date they will not do it. I am saying that that is even wrong. That is the sort of frustration. I have seen the beauty in the Bay Land. I want to see some of that beauty in Ferniehurst and in the Pinelands and in Maynards too. Nice Barber Green roads, some nylon roads for the people to travel on. I want to see all of that. Then we can say we have enhanced housing. Let some of those people who live in the housing estates feel that they belong.

Asides.

Mr. DeL. 0. BRADSHAW: I would like to see the Government start that and at the same time while it is building and providing new terraced units because it was in the policy of the Barbados Labour Party to build additional terrace units to meet the demand. Over 3 000 applications for rental houses and we have not been building.

I hope, Mr. Speaker, that we will address these problems so that we can all....

Asides.

Mr. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: The Report says that units were completed at Maynards. I know that they were put on hold.
5.10 p.m.

All I am saying is that the record must be corrected. I was succeeded by Minister Brathwaite and he completed some of the houses at Maynards but, as I said, there were Phases 1 and 2. Like at Bonnets and the Ivy, I was the Minister so it is not fair or even true to get in here and say that the Government built houses. I would settle for the word "completed" some of the houses. As I said, it is an ongoing thing and we must be fair to each other. If the Barbados Labour Party's tenure of office was not interrupted by an election, I am sure they would all have been completed. I am looking forward to completing some of the present Government's projects. I will do that as soon as next year. I give you the undertaking. We will complete them like the St. John Polyclinic that has trees growing up through it.

Mr. SPEAKER: But how did we arrive at polyclinics now? We are still at Two Mile.

Mr. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: I said I would be willing to complete it and the one at Cane Garden because this Government would not be able to...

Aside.

Mr. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: I want the Honourable Member to understand. The Minister will make some statements and then come and correct them. I would not be surprised if the Minister comes and corrects the statement about selling because I know about that legal matter that has to be resolved, so let us face it. You had better check.

Aside.

Mr. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: The legal matter on Inversiones. Do not let me re-open that. It needs to be resolved. I am looking forward to completing that project because I think it is an ongoing thing.

Mr. SPEAKER: I am sure the Honourable Member would recognise now that I cannot go further than Two Mile now.

Mr. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: Sir, I hope the project in Two Mile Hill where this land is – I do not subscribe to the rumour that the Prime Minister said anything about

that. I do not associate myself with them. These are things that are said but I do not get involved in that.

Mr. SPEAKER: I will give the Honourable Member one minute more. Your time has expired.

Mr. DeL. O. BRADSHAW: I will hope that this area of land is developed for sites and services because it is not land that really lends itself to terraced houses. I hope that whatever the Government does that it considers laying it out in spots and offering the persons in that area an opportunity to purchase the lots.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I hope that the Government is a little wiser. I want to thank you also, for allowing me that little bit of latitude. It is very much welcome, Sir.

Hon. E. E. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, when I introduced this Resolution I did not anticipate that we would have been so long on it, especially since it was really, in my view, and obviously in the view of some members, such a straightforward Resolution. I know that you have been extremely generous with the contributions of Honourable Members and I would not want to question that.

There are just two things really that I would want to state. The Honourable Member for St. Michael South East who just concluded his speech indicated that he is looking forward to finishing Canewood. I know that he is in real estate and I am assuming that he is making an offer to purchase that off the Government and therefore finish it in that respect. That is the only way I believe he would get an opportunity to finish that. I am sure that Honourable Members would be aware that the Government is committed to getting that particular project completed because it is part of the major housing project which we have embarked on and we propose to complete it in spite of some of the difficulties which have arisen during the phase of construction.

The Honourable Member for the City who spoke first for the Opposition on this Resolution raised questions about the particular area of land and the purpose for which it was being acquired. I seem to have gotten the impression from her intervention that she totally ignored the point which I made in that what we are seeking to do in this Resolution is to vest the area of land concerned in the National Housing Corporation because there are houses already on the land. There are 14 tenants. They have paid money into the National Housing Corporation. Most of them have paid into the NHC money for the value of the land but the NHC could not at the time, and even now, convey the land to those 14 tenants because it does not have proper title to the land.

What we are seeking to do is to vest the land in the National Housing Corporation so that it can complete the sale of these 14 lots to the persons concerned. Obviously there will be some land over and above the 14 lots but the point is that it is not a National Housing Corporation project in the sense that the NHC has built houses down there. As I understand it, these are lots which were allocated to persons who then proceeded to construct houses privately. There is electricity there. The Honourable Member asked those questions. There is running water and there is a road leading to and from the houses.

I would not want the Honourable Member to give the impression, and particularly when she sought to draw comparisons between these persons and persons living at Pondsider where she claims that the Government has threatened to push these down and she would not want to have a similar fate — I am using her words —, attend to those persons in the area described in this Resolution. That is precisely what the situation is.

Just for the sake of the record, the Honourable Member made a charge that the Exchange on Bay Street was pushed down for the purposes of the Global Conference. It is a matter of record that a decision for some time has been taken at two levels to demolish the Exchange on Bay Street for the road widening purposes and, secondly, it also tied in with the point made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael West where he indicated that the Government was implementing its policy for the demolition of derelict buildings. Derelict buildings are demolished not only in Bridgetown but in other parts of Barbados. I would like to see the programme stepped up so that a number of derelict buildings which are breeding places for vermin and which become a haven for a number of illegal activities could be demolished as soon as possible.
5.20 p.m.

I do not want any Honourable Member to give the impression that the exchange was pushed down because of the commitment which the Government has to hold a Conference here. It is part of an ongoing policy.

Aside.

Hon. E. E. GREAVES: On Bay Street. Yes.

Aside.

Hon. E. E. GREAVES: The Honourable Member for Christ Church South has even confirmed that it was to be pushed down 15 years ago.

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: I think the Honourable Member must be treated with respect.

Asides.

Hon. E. E. GREAVES: With those remarks, Sir, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

The question that the Resolution do now pass was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

APPOINTMENT TO PUBLIC ACCOUNTS COMMITTEE

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, Sir, this brings us to the end of Government Business for the day. We did not get as far as I would have liked us to go.

Sir, at a former sitting of this House Your Honour made a nomination in accordance with the Standing Order for the filling of the vacancy created by the departure from a particular office, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West. The nomination you made was that that vacancy should be filled by the Honourable Member for Christ Church West. That nomination was made in accordance with the Standing Orders.

I am about to recommend that the House accept the nomination of Your Honour the Speaker. But I want to make this point, Sir, that the Speaker has the right to nominate, under the Standing Orders, Standing Order 60(9). I think that Standing Order gives the Speaker the right to make that nomination.

I want to make this point, Sir, that the Public Accounts Committee consists of 7 persons inclusive of the Chairman who is the Leader of the Opposition, in accordance with the Standing Orders. It has always been the practice that the Government would have 4 Members on that Committee. It has always been. I asked for and I have received a copy dating back 30 years as to what had been the practice in terms of the composition of the Standing Orders. The only time it had been varied was in 1991. All the time that they formed the Government and that we formed the Government except for the past 3 years the Government had 4 Members on the Public Accounts Committee. It was this Prime Minister who made the recommendation that the Opposition should have 4 Members on the Committee.

I want to make this point that we do not necessarily commit ourselves should another vacancy arise during this term that it will be filled by a Member on the other side. On this occasion, we have agreed, Sir, that we would accept the nomination of Your Honour the Speaker and that the Honourable Member for Christ Church West be so appointed. That is for this occasion and this occasion

only. I do not want to hear should another one arise, the Honourable Leader of the Opposition or anybody else from that side should think that they are laying claim to a position that is not theirs.

With that, I beg to move that the nomination of yourself of the Honourable Member for Christ Church West to fill the vacancy on the Public Accounts Committee be adopted.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: I beg to second that, Sir.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I rise to second the nomination. But I would seek to have clarification on this particular matter. This matter arose largely because I did write the Clerk bringing to his attention the fact that there seemed to have been a vacancy created on the Public Accounts Committee and asking to be put in a position that if it were necessary that a motion had to be brought to the House to have it filled that I would want to be in that position. I was guided by you that the matter could be handled and should be handled by a method other than by a motion. That method is described by Section 60(9) of the Standing Orders which ^{says} that:

"The Speaker may nominate another Member"

and, that:

"Every nomination under this Standing Order shall be announced to the House at the next meeting."

Indeed, Sir, the capacity and right of the Speaker or the discretion of the Speaker to nominate a Member and announce that nomination, Sir, is consistent with what I gather, Sir, is your discretion in relation to other Select Committees as set out at Section 59 4. 2. which says:

"The Committee shall consist of such Members as may be directed by order of the House and, in the absence of such direction, shall consist of Members who shall be nominated by the Speaker."

Mr. Speaker, Sir, it seems to me that our Rules provide you with a discretion to fill a vacancy on a Committee by nomination. And it also seems to me in respect to other select Committees that it is quite clear that it resides within your capacity to nominate Members to serve on the Committee. I am raising this matter, 'Sir, for clarification. Because when I read 60(9) it seems to me to be stating that if a vacancy arises on a Committee, that the vacancy shall be filled by your nominating a person; and that all that is necessary in the circumstances is that you should announce that nominee to the House. Nomination in this particular regard seems to have the force of appointment.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I believe that a clarification is required if only because in my original letter to the House I asked if it would have been necessary for a motion to have been brought. I was told, Sir, that there would have been no need for a motion. If there had been no need for a motion then I have to wonder what is the validity of the process through which we are now going?

My letter to the House raised the question of the vacancy on the Committee and, in fact, I went to the extent of saying — and I want to read it, Sir:

"In the event that Mr. Forde's demittal of office as Leader of the Opposition means that he can no longer be a Member of the Committee except by a motion approved by the House I would wish to be put in a position that the relevant motion can be brought."

I was advised then that there was no need for a motion to be brought to the House; that it fell within the discretion of the Speaker to nominate and to announce that nomination. It is therefore important that we should be clear as to the process that should be followed in circumstances where a matter like this occurs. Does it fall to the prerogative of the Speaker to simply nominate and announce or is the Speaker's nomination subject to ratification by the House? I would like for the purpose of precedence...

Aside.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: And announce. I would like, Mr. Speaker for that matter to be clarified so that any future conflict in relation to how these matters should be resolved be put behind us once and for all.
5.30 p.m.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to comment on this matter because it is one of the areas in which much confusion has been brought about by the publication of information abroad that is not accurate. One of the reasons why we have some difficulty is that our practice has tended to borrow from the practice of what obtains in the House of Commons. In the . House of Commons, except for one specific committee, the way in which committees are appointed is quite different from how they are appointed in this House.

In the House of Commons the Committees are in fact appointed by the Speaker and/or the Deputy Speakers and/or the nominating officers. I am using that language Honourable Members would know and as a result the committees that are appointed within the House are in fact determined by the Speaker and/or someone delegated by the Speaker. What, however, needs to be taken account of is that such appointment is done in a way as to reflect

the composition of the House of Commons so that such nomination and/or appointment as made by Mr. Speaker is by agreement and it reflects the composition of the House. In recent times in the United Kingdom Parliament there has been a change in the composition of the committees because there was a change in the composition of the House of Commons itself.

I really believe that it is important for the people of Barbados that the Committee of Public Accounts should be given wider, and if I may say, dispassionate promulgation instead of the quite partisan approach which has, in recent times, been brought to the attention of the people of Barbados.

In the United Kingdom, Sir, the Committee of Public Accounts of the House of Commons is appointed by the Speaker. The Committee consists of 15 members. The members are nominated at the beginning of each Parliament on the basis, of a motion made by a Government Minister after consultation with the Opposition. This differs from the procedure for nominating the Select Committees related to Government Departments where the motion is made by the Chairman of Selection and that is what we do not have in this part of the world. We do not have a Chairman of Committee of Selection but we do not have a Parliament in excess of 600 Members so we do not need a Committee of Selection. The Public Accounts Committee is appointed in London in the House of Commons on a motion by a Government Minister. It has 15 Members. It has a quorum of 4 and changes in membership are made from time to time during the Parliament often because Members have become Ministers or Front Bench Opposition spokesmen. So Front Bench Opposition spokesmen and Ministers do not sit on the Public Accounts Committee in the United Kingdom. And the party proportions of the Committee, like other committees, are the same as in the House. At present, for example, in the Public Accounts Committee, in the United Kingdom there are 8 Members of the Conservatives, 6 Members of the Labour Party and one Minority Party Member from the Liberal Democrats. This was at the time of the last document which was published in 1993, 15th of July.

So, this concept of the Opposition having a majority in the Committee of Public Accounts in Barbados was a gesture of the present Minister who is the Prime Minister who in his capacity as Minister of Finance, on hearing that the Public Accounts Committee was not meeting because it could not form a quorum determined, and this side accepted ...

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: On a point of order, Sir, the Honourable Member is misleading the House. The Prime Minister and Minister of Finance may have control over what happens in Cabinet and how his Cabinet is

constituted. Surely he does not have control over the composition or constitution of Committee of this Parliament. And for the Member who is on his feet when I am speaking on a point of order, Sir ...

Asides.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Member for St. Michael West is so ...

Mr. SPEAKER: I am not going to entertain any sort of debate of this sort. Just make the comment and I will listen carefully and that is all.

Certain remarks made by the Member for St. Peter were ordered to be expunged from the record by Mr. SPEAKER.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Speaker, I was making the point which — if the Honourable Member who has not had as much Parliamentary experience as he probably should have had otherwise he would not have jumped up — I was making the point that before we came to this Parliament, when we were discussing the strategy, the tactics with regard to the creation of Committees that the Right Honourable gentleman who is now Prime Minister indicated, and this side agreed, that we would give the Opposition a majority on the Public Accounts Committee.

Aside.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: How do you mean, so what? Why should the Leader of the Opposition get up like a yo yo suggesting that the Member is saying that the Prime Minister has jurisdiction over the Parliament. The Honourable Member could only be infantile to suggest that. It offends me, Sir, that he would attack my integrity to suggest that I would not know that the Prime Minister does not have jurisdiction over Parliament.

Mr. SPEAKER: I have already corrected that. I made sure that that reference to you in that respect was not taken ...

Hon. B. M. TAITT: Sir, I am making the point it was the Prime Minister who indicated to this side that since it was being said ... This is irrefutable fact, that since it has been said constantly that the Public Accounts Committee could not meet because it could not form a quorum, that the quorum being 4, the majority would be given to the Opposition and Honourable Members on this side agreed to it because they had no reason not to. We did not think that it would be abused. Therefore they did not have any reason to feel that they should not agree to it. That is the point that is being made but it has been from time immemorial and it is the position that the Government has a position

in the Committee of Public Accounts both in the United Kingdom Parliament and in the history of Barbados in keeping with the configuration of the parties.

I was reading from the Official document of the House of Commons of July 15, 1993 to point out that the party proportions of the committee, like other committees, are the same and I am quoting, Sir, from page 1.

"As in the House and at present this is 8 conservatives, 6 Labour Members and one Minority Party Member at present from the Liberal Democrats. One of the Members is the Financial Secretary to the Treasury who does not normally attend. The Committee chooses its own Chairman", which is another deviation.

It is only in Barbados and again it was because the then Prime Minister the late E. W. Barrow insisted that the Standing Orders would give the Leader of the Opposition the Chairmanship of the Public Accounts Committee because he wanted, back in the 1960s, to establish that the Opposition had the right to question the expenditure by the Government.

In Parliament, in London, contrary to some of the garbage which is written in some of the newspapers in this country, the official document indicates that in fact the Chairmanship of the Committee of Public Accounts is determined by the Members. The Committee chooses its own Chairman, traditionally an Opposition Member with previous experience as a Treasury Minister. The present Member would not have qualified.

Divisions in the Committee are very rare, generally occurring less than once a year. But there is another point. I really hope, Sir — I do not want to get into a long discussion on this — I really hope that this document will be made available to the public for scrutiny. So they can see what the Committee of Public Accounts in Great Britain actually does and what the Committee of Public Accounts in Barbados used to do and what its Constitution requires it to do. I believe, Sir, that it would be of public importance for this document to be reproduced in one or both of the newspapers of this country so that, when one tries to point out what are the specific responsibilities of a Committee of Public Accounts, one is not accused of trying to "white wash" and/or obfuscate and/or "cover-up".

5.40 p.m.

The Committee of Public Accounts cannot investigate any matter that has not been laid before Parliament according to this. It cannot behave as a Commission of Inquiry according to this. It has no powers other than the powers that are given to it by Parliament itself as a Committee of Parliament. There is nothing that can give it the power of a Commission of Inquiry and any attempt by

any Public Accounts Committee or by whatever name called to usurp powers which are not given to it makes anything it does irrespective of who speaks *ultra vires*.

Mr. Speaker, the Standing Order itself sets out what the Public Accounts Committee can do. As a victim of misrepresentation in the newspapers and as a victim of a so called report, I can speak with authority and say that, unless a Public Accounts Committee is going to stick to the letter and the spirit of its existence, there will always be confusion. It is fascinating that the Honourable Member for St. Thomas recently in a case which he is appearing in a different capacity used the exact precise argument to convince people at a higher level about a matter in which he and I normally would agree. I am always fascinated to see how that Honourable Member is able in a facile manner to move from such a high position of argumentation to another position of politics which allows him to make statements which he and I know are not always valid. But that is another matter which we will take up in due course. I wanted to put that in the record, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has raised a question. But my view was that the Standing Order itself was not explicit enough to make a decision other than the one that I made, bearing in mind generally anyhow that all committees are Committees of the House and one will still have to use one's discretion in making that nomination. So I took the nomination with the fact that the House would be somehow involved where it says report to the House and it can only report to the House for more than one reason. I took the reason to be that as I was the first person who nominated the Committee then in the second place maybe or possibly the House may be involved with that. So I took the simple view of it. I did not go beyond the details of it because the Standing Order itself is so lean that any interpretation could come to it.

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, are we on the adjournment?

Mr. SPEAKER: No, we were speaking on the nomination of the Public Accounts Committee by the Honourable Member and I gave the opportunity to air these views. But once again we must recognise that our Standing Orders need now to be given more muscle. I think a lot of it now is still in the loose end of it and very often you have to be coming straight down the middle in order to make sure that a proper decision is made. I do not think that the House would be in any way aggrieved if they themselves were part in having a say in what the Committee should be, because the underlining principle of it is that all committees are Committees of the House to do business for the House which itself would normally not be able to do in any large manner. So I took the broad view and not the narrow view. But I think that it is necessary that these Standing Orders be looked at.

I will still at this point remind Honourable Members that I still have a view, apart from what the Honourable Member for St. Michael West has said, that in Britain you could never have had a report of a Public Accounts Committee without any reference from the Ministry that is affected. Now clearly in our Standing Orders what is obvious to me that even in this House, if a motion that reflects on any Ministry or the Government, the Government has the right to defend that position. Now surely the Public Accounts Committee or any Committee is an extension of the House's business and I would think that there is good reason that, if we used that provision within the system in which the Public Accounts Committee operates in the United Kingdom, certainly we would have had a better solution to the problem because the Ministry itself ought to be able to respond to any matter that effects that Ministry. I will suggest that we should be looking at that kind of development in order to help bring the process to a much more comfortable understanding. I hope members will read it again. It has particular significance for a committee especially when the committee itself was not comprised in a way as to reflect the normal Government/Opposition's position.

I also would like to say at this point in time that we ought to discuss these matters when we can that interim reports need to be carefully studied because they have implications for ongoing without coming to a conclusion but at the same time we are faced with decisions with an inconclusive measure. These are areas that we can look in our Standing Orders to bring them much more in line in order to reflect this kind of behaviour in Parliament.

I think it is easy to say that, if there is no objection to that nomination, then the objection stands rather than put it in the form of a motion. So there is no objection and the nomination stands.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, at this point, I move that this House do now adjourn until Tuesday, February 22, 1994 at 12 o'clock noon.

Hon. B. M. TAITT: I beg to second that, Sir. Mr.

SPEAKER: The question is that...

Mr. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I would like to speak on the motion of the adjournment. I was very gratified that you spoke to the need for us to look at the Standing Orders of Parliament and substantially revise them. I would like to speak to that particular issue, Sir.

As you will recall, last year there was a motion put by Government of the possibility of amalgamating the

Budget debate or what we have come to know as the Budget debate and the Estimates debate. Speaking on the motion for the adjournment of the House in the last Budget debate, the then Leader of the Opposition said that he thought that the matter should have referred to the Standing Orders Committee of the House since the rules governing the Budget debate provided for under Section 31 and the rules governing the Estimates debate are provided for under Sections 63 to 67 of the Standing Orders of the House.

Sir, I wrote you on October 8, 1993 on this particular matter referring to the possibility of the amalgamation of these two debates and urging that you use your good offices to have the matter of the amalgamation of the Estimates and the Budget debate referred to the Standing Orders Committee of Parliament. I did not get a response and I wrote again on November 15 asking that this matter be explored. Mr. Speaker, Sir, as the situation now stands, the Estimates as provided for and governed by the Rules 63, 67 the debate on the budgetary proposals and the annual financial statements are to be governed by Rule 31. If there is going to be any amalgamation as suggested by the Government last year, I believe that we might have the same conundrum that arose when this situation was first mooted by Government.
5.50 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I believe that the Opposition has discharged its responsibility in this matter. In the absence of a clear revision of the Standing Orders, in my judgment and in the judgment of the then Leader of the Opposition, it would be on very shaky ground in proceeding to have the two debates amalgamated. I would therefore want to hear at a very early date, since the question of the budget is in the air, what is going to be the situation this year. Are we going to have what has obtained hitherto, 2 debates, governed by the Rules as now prescribed, or are we going to have one debate in the absence of Rules governing that one debate? I would really like to have this matter clarified before we go into the Budget session and have to have the time of the House taken up with dealing with an issue that really could have been dealt with once the letters were sent to the House.

I am raising this matter because I believe that these 2 debates are too important for procedural matters which ought to be clear to cause the House not to be put in a position where we can have the most serious discussion on the proposals themselves and the Estimates rather than the procedures of the House.

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I merely want to say that this is a matter to which we are still giving consideration. We have not moved away from the idea. It is not dead. I do not believe there is sufficient time

to provide for the amendment to the Standing Order in order to allow a serial debate to take place.

The Attorney General says it can be done by agreement.

Mr. SPEAKER: Or it could be done in such a way that if you suspend the relevant Standing Orders and then come to an agreement it can be accepted.

Hon. P. M. GREAVES: That is something we will consider and I will notify the Honourable Leader of the *Opposition* and yourself, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. SPEAKER: I think that that was the reason why the Honourable Leader of the Opposition did not get a reply from me because I was in no position to make a positive statement. Now I think it is much clearer.

The question that the Sitting do now adjourn until February 22, 1994 at 12 o'clock noon was put and resolved in the affirmative, and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.

5.55 p.m.

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