

THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1994 - 99

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, November 28, 1995.

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 11.15 a.m. o'clock on Tuesday, November 28, 1995.

PRESENT

His Honour I. A. ROETT, B.A., Dip. Ed., (Speaker)
His Honour R. D. MARSHALL, (Deputy Speaker)
Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD, B.A., M.A., (Econ.),

J.P.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR, M.Sc. (Econ.), (Prime Minister, Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs and Minister for the Civil Service)

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Hons.) (Leader of the Opposition)

Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN, Q.C., LL.B.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER (Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Tourism and International Transport) (Leader of the House)

Mr. J. O. TUDOR, J.P.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE (Minister of Public Works, Transport and Housing)

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND, J.P., B.A., (Hons.), Dip. Ed., LL.B. (Hons.), L.E.C. (Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development)

Mr. D. Carter

Mr. G. A. CLARKE, B.Sc., Dip. Ed., (Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Public Works, Transport and Housing)

Mr. J. M. EDGHILL

Mr. F. J. STUART, B.A., LL.M.

Mr. W. C. C. CALLENDER, J.P., B.A., Dip. Ed., B.Sc., (Chairman of Committees)

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN, LL.B., (Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Tourism and International Transport)

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON, LL.B., (Minister of Health and the Environment)

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY, LL.B., (Minister of Education, Youth Affairs and Culture).

Prayers were led by Rev. Laurence Small. Mr.

SPEAKER: The House is in session.

MINUTES

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I beg to move that the Minutes of the proceedings of the Honourable the House of Assembly for its meetings of the 14th and 17th days of November, 1995, which have been circulated, be taken as read, Sir.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I beg to second that, Sir.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mr. SPEAKER: I am to report that I am in receipt of the Accounts and Statements for the month of August 1995 as prepared by the Accountant General.

PAPERS

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am commanded to lay the Report of the Accountant General for the financial year 1994-95.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the Annual Report of the National Housing Corporation for the financial year 1993-94.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to give notice of a Resolution to approve the compulsory acquisition of land at Grazettes in the parish of St Michael for road improvement and further Sir, to give notice of a Resolution to approve the sale of land at Pritchard Hill, St. Patricks, in the parish of Christ Church to Mrs. Eunice Murrell.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' NOTICES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. John.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice of a Resolution to note the Agreement for Economic Co-operation between the Government of Barbados and the Member Governments of the OECS and secondly, a Resolution to note the letter by the Prime Minister to the President of the IADB setting out policy reforms being undertaken by Government

CONGRATULATORY SPEECHES

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, it gives me the greatest possible pleasure to announce that the Honourable Prime Minister, Member of Parliament, for St. Peter, Prime Minister of Barbados, has been appointed a member of Her Majesty's Privy Council in Britain.

News of this appointment, Sir, was received here in Barbados from the High Commissioner for Barbados at London, High Commissioner Simmons. This honour Sir, was conferred on the Prime Minister in an Instrument which was signed by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II earlier this month, and with immediate effect Prime Minister Arthur will be referred to as the Right Honourable. The now Rt. Honourable Prime Minister became Prime Minister of Barbados on September 6, 1994.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, from time to time people write letters, people make statements and refer to Ministers, Prime Ministers, even Leaders of the Opposition as Rt. Honourable. It is sometimes because they don't know any better and it is sometimes because somehow they view it as their way of showing what we now call in local parlance "nuff respect". But it is a very singular honour which Her Majesty the Queen may visit upon one of her subjects.

It is not anything that comes automatically. I do believe that this is a sign that the now Rt. Honourable Prime Minister Arthur has found favour, not only in the

eyes of Barbadians, but in the eyes of the greater commonwealth of nations to which we belong.

I would wish that Barbadians would join with me, and particularly the Honourable Members here assembled, to add congratulations to the Rt Honourable Prime Minister and that in the future, as we have with others who have received this high honour, for the rest of time refer to him as the Rt Honourable.

Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we don't treat ourselves and our own in a manner befitting the honours which come to us from time to time or the manner befitting the posts in which we find ourselves from time to time. This is indeed high honour and I would wish on my own personal behalf and on behalf of the Honourable Members, certainly on this side of the House to offer our personal congratulations to the Honourable Member for St. Peter, the Rt. Honourable Prime Minister on the elevation to this post of membership to Her Majesty's Privy Council.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, Sir, until the Leader of the House spoke, I was not aware of the honour which has been bestowed on the Prime Minister and therefore I must say that I was not fully prepared for this item on the agenda. 11.25a.m.

However, that should not, in anyway, diminish the comments which I will make. I certainly do not profess myself to know much about the system of honours, and the preferments which are part of the Commonwealth system, nor for that matter about the local arrangements. At the same time, as long as a Barbadian is being singled out for some high achievement, it is my duty, as the Leader of the Opposition, to join with any accolades which are showered on him for any deserving tide which is given to him.

Therefore, I should like to join with the Leader of the House, who has spoken on behalf of the Government, to extend on behalf of the Opposition, and I am certain if the Leader of the Minority Opposition were here he would also do likewise, our congratulations most sincere to the Prime Minister. We are very happy at his achievement.

Thank you.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: Mr. Speaker, I just rise to offer certainly the congratulations of what may well be considered the younger arm of the Barbados Labour Party, both in terms of...

Aside.

Hon. Miss M. A. MOTTLEY: The Honourable Member for SL Andrew has asked that he also be included by special remit to that group.

But, Sir, it is certainly a signal honour being conferred upon the RL Hon. Prime Minister and, I believe, one that is well deserved and, as indicated by the Honourable Deputy Prime Minister, one which, in fact, indicates the high standard which he has on the international arena.

I had the fortune, Sir, of being recently at the University Council Meetings and, without exception, everyone who was at that meeting who happened to have attended the West Indian Committee Meeting in London in September, made it their business to come and say that the speech delivered by the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister, on his first official visit to the United Kingdom, was one which they believed should be read by every Caribbean person in Government and, certainly, by those in the wider Commonwealth because he spoke brilliantly on the prospects relating to the future of countries such as ours as we seek to move from a situation of protectionism to one of reciprocal trade. They felt it was an indication of the brilliance he has shown throughout his career, not only as a leader of Government and a Member of the Opposition, but, indeed, throughout his academic career.

I believe, Sir, that this is a fitting honour for the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister and I would only wish to see him continue through his work and his humility which has remained with him in spite of being in office as Head of Government for the last 15 months, that he would continue to grow from strength to strength and, indeed, complete the process that needs to be completed before this country moves into the 21st Century because, at the end of the day, it is impossible to move a country forward unless one has a vision but, more importantly, a commitment to those who are the least advantaged in our communities, and the Rt. Hon. Prime Minister has shown that to date.

In those circumstances, Sir, I am extremely proud this morning to be able to associate with the remarks made in this debate to date, and would wish to offer the congratulations, as I said, of the younger Members of this Government, and the Barbados Labour Party and, certainly, my own personal congratulations.

Thank you, Sir.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Mr. Speaker, I was not in my seat, but I understood an announcement was made to the effect that the Prime Minister of Barbados and the Honourable Member for SL Peter has been elevated to membership of Her Majesty's Privy Council, and is therefore entitled to be styled The Right Honourable.

I would wish, Sir, to associate myself with the comments made in praise of the high honour that has been bestowed upon the Right Honourable gentleman and Prime Minister of Barbados. I would extend to him my congratulations on this very signal honour. I would like to welcome him to the very exclusive club of those who have been so honoured. I think he will discharge his responsibilities in that particular regard with distinction and bear his honours with equanimity.

I certainly would wish him all the best on that elevation and hope he will be able to use that status in furtherance of the interests of the country which we all love so well.

Thank you.

Hon. Sir HAROLD SL JOHN: Mr. Speaker, I just rise to associate myself with the remarks made and to say on behalf of the Honourable Members of this side of the House that we, too, join in congratulating the Prime Minister on his elevation.

The office of Prime Minister is a very burdensome one and the award of honours is, perhaps, one of the few compensations, if one can call it that, that one gets. I know the Prime Minister is well aware that however effusive the congratulatory remarks are today that will in no way dissuade, particularly Members of the opposite side, on an appropriate occasion from being condemnatory in their remarks. This is just the beginning, I am sure, of many other opportunities we will have to wish the Prime Minister well.

On behalf of the back bench here, I would join with other Members in congratulating the Right Honourable Prime Minister.

Mr. SPEAKER: On behalf of this Honourable Chair I would like to associate myself with all those remarks that have been made and wish the Prime Minister the best, and hope that he continues, of course, to gain more honours.
11.35a.m.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, on the last occasion that the House met when it was adjourned until this day, I had indicated that we would want to initiate the debate on the Education White Paper. It transpired that the Opposition is not ready, at this time, to proceed with that debate and the Leader of the Opposition and I have spoken on the matter.

Instead, it is proposed today that certain items of Government Business particularly Resolutions which

deal with acquisitions and other such Resolutions would be the order of the Government's Business today. It was also felt, Mr. Speaker, Sir, when I spoke to the Leader of the Opposition that we might have been able to proceed with Private Members' Business on this day as well and, perhaps, to try to bring to closure some of the Private Members' Resolutions which are, at this time, unfinished rather than start new business at this time of the year. The Leader of the Opposition had indicated that he would be pleased to proceed with the 300th Anniversary of the Combermere School. I need to have further speech with the Leader of the Opposition.

It turns out that the grandmother of the Honourable Member for St. Joseph has passed this life and is being buried this afternoon. I believe several Honourable Members would wish to be there in support of him and his family. We may not be able to get to Private Members' Business after the luncheon interval as anticipated. I would crave the indulgence of the Chair to confer with the Leader of the Opposition at a later time on this matter.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

In the circumstances, I beg to move that Standing Orders 6,16,18,20,42(5), 43 and 44 be suspended for the rest of this day's sitting.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to report that last Friday the Leader of the House did speak to me on the telephone. I was happy to hear from her and we discussed today's arrangements, as is usual, in the Westminster system.

There is just one point that I would not want the wrong impression to be created about and I think it comes from her comments that the Opposition is not ready. The reason why I have come to my feet is to point out that it is not really a simple matter of the Opposition not being ready but we have some concerns which were communicated by the Shadow Minister of Education to the Minister of Education relative to the White Paper.

Our principal concern relates to the fact that, in our consultations with interest groups, including teachers' unions and other entities that they too do not seem to have fully consulted, discussed, nor are they ready to react formally to proposals which are contained in the White Paper. We feel that there are many other issues - I would not delay on this - which have had even much wider public discussion and debate and I have argued that a longer period of time should be given not only for the dissemination of the White Paper but also for the discussion of the proposals. Because, after all, a White

Paper is for discussion by, I assume, everybody. I do not think there has been, at least we certainly do not feel so. The Government may have different views and is entitled to have different views. We do not feel that there has been adequate discussion, adequate understanding of the White Paper in the public domain and it is also our duty to see, in this modern era of greater participatory, democracy viewpoints from the public on issues. I thought the notice was a bit short, 10 days would be a bit short for us to carry out those consultations. We will be carrying them out during next month and January and we will hope to be ready very, very early in the new year, subject to Government's arrangements to debate the White Paper in full.

That really explains our position on the matter, if we were simply going about this exercise for ourselves we would be able to debate it today, but we feel there is a need for much wider consultation with the public.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, among that matters what we would want to proceed with today would be matters of which I gave notice earlier on, two Resolutions to do with the acquisition of land as well. I would propose that we would start with Order No. 3 on the Order Paper.

Mr. SPEAKER: Could we have someone second the motion for the Suspension of Standing Orders first?

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: I beg to second that, Sir.

The question that those Standing Orders be suspended for the remainder of the day's sitting was put and resolved in the affirmative without division.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Mr. SPEAKER: Government Business is now the Order of the Day. The Honourable Member for the City, you were saying, Order No. 3?

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Yes, Sir.

RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE COMPULSORY ACQUISITION OF LAND AT BAYWOODS, APES HILL, ST. JAMES FOR HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move the passing of a Resolution for the acquisition of 4.43 hectares of land at Baywoods, Apes Hill, St. James for the purpose of housing development.

Mr. Speaker, this acquisition is an example of another intervention by this Administration, since September 6, when we came to office, in order to alleviate some of

the problems being faced by a number of low income persons in this country.

Mr. Speaker, one of the first policies of the Ministry of Housing was to embark on a policy whereby marginal lands on the periphery of existing villages are utilized for housing development. A number of parcels of land have been identified in this exercise and the land at Baywoods, Apes Hill, St. James is part of the larger acquisition involving 2 other parcels of land at Waterhall and Apes Hill, St. James, the Resolutions for which are not ready today.

Mr. Speaker, it is hoped that on one of these parcels of land that we will be able to continue the policy of a past Barbados Labour Party Administration whereby we construct a number of terrace units at certain locations throughout the country where the need is greatest. As you know, the Barbados Labour Party's Administration first started this exercise way back with the Pine Housing Area in the 1950's.

It is hoped that on one of these parcels of land we will be able to construct a modern type terrace unit village with other facilities like day care centres. It is hoped that we will be able to utilize the land in a meaningful way and you would be probably seeing a 3-storey type structure at this location. 11.45a.m.

While I am on this, Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention the similarities with the design which we are doing in the City at Pondsides which involves a 4-storey structure with shops on the ground floor, a community centre, a day care centre and proper parking facilities on the ground floor.

We are hoping, Mr. Speaker, that on the other area which relates to this acquisition we will also be able to construct a number of starter homes. This again, Mr. Speaker, is a project for which the Barbados Labour Party administration can be very proud. We started the first such project at West Terrace while we were in Government a number of years ago and this project was a tremendous success. It is hoped that we will be able to construct a number of starter homes in the other areas of the Waterhall/Apes Hill Project. In the third phase, Mr. Speaker, it is hoped that we would also be able to do a joint venture arrangement with persons in the private sector.

Mr. Speaker, it is hoped from this exercise, that we would be able to provide housing for over 100 citizens in the immediate area. I would also like to stress that one of the other purposes of this acquisition is to ensure that persons who were displaced in the areas of the Scotland District can find suitable house spots to relocate. There are a number of persons in the Scotland District, St. Joseph

and St. Andrew in particular who have been dislocated as a result of the slippage of the land in those areas. A number of them have indicated that they would not want to settle in the immediate area where their houses are presently located. In their words, they would like to move to lower ground. It is hoped that we would also be able to accommodate some of them in this particular area, the Apes Hill/Waterhall area.

In addition to that, Mr. Speaker, we are also hoping to relocate a number of tenants who have been displaced because of the fact that they have not qualified as *bonafide* tenants under the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act to purchase the land on which they live in that the particular tenancy carries less than five tenants. It is hoped that we would be able to accommodate a number of persons in the immediate area in this exercise.

Mr. Speaker, I think I alluded earlier, at another session of Parliament, to the fact that since September 6, Government has instituted a policy whereby these tenants who have been displaced, as a result of not being able to exercise the option under the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act, will be given a cash grant of \$15 000 to assist in the relocation exercise. This is the first time that this facility has been offered to tenants and this is in addition to the house spots which we are also making available to these tenants. Already a number of tenants have taken up this offer and we are hoping that within the next five years no one who has been displaced, when we have built up a sort of mini land bank, no one will be displaced as a result their landlord evicting them and they not being able to find a suitable house spot on which to place their homes.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to mention here too the completion and the stage of one or two other projects we are embarking on which in some respects are similar to the type of project that we would hope to implement at Bay-Woods/Apes Hill. I was speaking of the terrace units. We have just completed, within the contract period, the construction of ten terrace units at Maynards. The contract for the second phase since we came into Government will start hopefully before the end of the year. The contract has been awarded and we are hoping that we will be able to have an additional 15 lots to add to the 10 which we have just finished before the end of the financial year.

We are also presently in the process of completing the 30 lots at Corbins Village. The contractor is doing an excellent job, notwithstanding the fact that the weather has been a hindrance. It is hoped that this project will be completed very shortly, here again to supplement the type of programme that we are doing at Apes Hill/Waterhall.

I would also like to say that there are a number of acres of land in the Scotland District area, in

particular St. Andrew, which are owned by the Agricultural Development Corporation which are not presently utilized. I have toured the area with the Parliamentary Secretary and the officials from the Ministry of Housing and we believe that this land should be put to good use, certainly for housing purposes. I believe that initially this land was earmarked for agriculture but the land is presently not being utilised and we are presently doing a survey of the area. I believe that the area involved is about 50 acres and I would be recommending very shortly to my colleagues in Cabinet, depending on the outcome of the survey, that these lands be transferred to the Ministry of Housing for vesting in the National Housing Corporation so that we will have a greater amount of land to carry out our programme to ensure that we satisfy the housing needs of all Barbadians.

We are also doing 40 lots at Haggatt Hall to supplement 40 lots which are presently in progress. We will also be going back to Husbands to do another 40 lots. The contract has just been awarded and it is hoped that these lots will be completed very close to the end of this financial year. We are also taking in 15 lots at Parish Land. 11.55a.m.

I have already mentioned Pondside. Pondside will involve 50 terraced units. I must say that the start up of the project at Pondside has been hampered somewhat by the fact that we have had the unfortunate situation at Weston, whereby we have had to suspend the relocations which we were doing in that area in order to house a number of persons who were displaced by the floods at Weston. We have been able, notwithstanding that, to acquire lands at Bakers, even though the formalities have not been completed, and I believe at this very moment the officials at the National Housing Corporation are placing the prefabricated units on the sites at Bakers to ensure that most of the persons who were displaced by the floods at Weston are accommodated before Christmas.

We will be acquiring at Weston all the lands that are within the watercourse so that the owners of the land will not be displaced for any length of time. Taking into consideration the fact that these acquisitions and the payment at compensation normally take a long time, we will be verifying within the legal unit of the Ministry of Housing the ownership of the land and after we have obtained a first valuation from the Commissioner of Valuations we will be paying immediately 50% of that value and the remainder of the money will be paid when the formalities of the acquisition have been completed. We will also be giving to persons who own their houses a similar type house at Bakers, and those people who were renting will also be allowed to rent on the same terms that they were renting at Weston.

We will also very shortly be doing about 48 units at Hoyte's Village. Work on this particular project was

hampered somewhat because the Architects who were assisting in the designs for the starter homes realised at the last minute that the playing field was located in part of the area on which we had planned to construct some of the starter homes.

I must say that this programme is in addition to the programme which we will be doing when all of the marginal lands on the periphery of existing villages have been identified. We have not yet done the surveys on most of the acquisitions which we are doing from time to time in this respect. I know the Honourable Member for St. John on a previous occasion had expressed his concern that the development - I think it is in Clifton Hall - had not yet started, but a number of these areas we will have to prioritise before we decide the areas we will be doing in the next financial year. I should like to give the Honourable Member the assurance, because I know he will mention it, that as long as the Ministry feels that there is a need for that area over and above other areas, and taking into consideration the points I mentioned about the land slippage in the Scotland District area, there is a possibility that we might be coming to Clifton Hall in the next financial year, but that depends on the advice from the officers within the Ministry.

Mr. Speaker, I just also want to mention here that with respect to Baywoods this will also be relevant. We have already decided to increase the loan limit at the National Housing Corporation from \$20 000 to \$40 000 so that a number of persons who found it difficult to complete the construction of their homes on the loans which were given from the National Housing Corporation will be able to do so, taking into consideration the increased cost in building over the last ten years or so.

With those few remarks, Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

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

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I should like to congratulate the Minister for presenting the programme on housing so beautifully this morning. I should also like to say that since 1994 the programme that has been put in place by the present administration has been one to redress some of the imbalances and injustices that were taking place over the last five or so years.

It is a fact that land and housing are very important and I believe may be the second most important problem we have to face as a Government, second only to unemployment. Throughout Barbados there are problems of housing and land. As the Minister rightly pointed

out, it is the Government's intention to look at land on the estates throughout Barbados. We believe that on every plantation there exists either marginal land which can be used for housing. We are very clear on this. Our policy was well documented and enunciated by the Honourable Prime Minister even before he was Prime Minister. When he was the Leader of the Opposition I remember debating and discussing with him the policy we would want to introduce as a Government, and from then we recognised that in every plantation tenantry there exists land near the tenantry which can be used for housing and we have started this programme. Throughout Barbados, whether it is in the Scotland District, St. John, St. Philip, St. George, Christ Church or St Michael, we have earmarked a number of parcels of land which can be used for housing, some of which the Minister has just mentioned that will be used over the next couple of years. I believe the next financial year will see the heightening of Government's housing programme to such an extent, because a number of cases have been coming to our attention every day. I see at my office, on a weekly basis, more than 40 people asking for house spots. 12.05 p.m.

On Saturday mornings, people are coming to say they want a house spot. We have a serious problem on our hands and when the amendment to the Tenantry Freehold Purchase Act came in 1990 a number of people were displaced, and that has made the problem even greater so that a tenantry is now defined as a spot of land where you have 5 or more houses on it. Landlords are on a daily basis giving persons on their lots eviction notices. I have had a number of cases of this sort.

I believe Mr. Speaker, you have drawn to my attention the case of Snagg Land where attorneys at law, lawyers, seem to me that they are not too *aufait* with the regulations and are constantly driving fear in the hearts of many tenants. For example, the law states that you cannot increase house rent more than 20% or if you want to increase it beyond a certain limit you have to get the permission from a magistrate. In the case of Snagg Land where persons now pay \$6 per quarter or per month they are being asked to pay \$20 increase and I believe that is very bad.

We believe that Parliament must stand up against the injustice that is being done to people because they want the spots.

The other problem that we are faced with, Mr. * Speaker, is the cost of land I believe that although we know that the people in the urban area are faced with a disadvantage because they cannot buy the land at 10 cents,

because they are under control, that the market value for land has been increasing constantly over time so that the same size lot in a country like Lower Estate might cost a tenant \$1 000 whereas the person on Snagg Land or a similar sized lot within the urban area is asked to pay some ridiculous price like \$20 000 or even more than that. It is very unfair because the Act says the landlord can set a market price, but many of these tenants cannot buy at market price. So something has to be done to protect the people living within the urban area.

I know that some of these people do not realise that money exists under the Housing Credit Fund where persons who are working for less than \$25 000 a year can get some assistance to purchase the land to build homes, to repair homes. I think the Minister spoke to this a while ago.

Within St. Michael, there are many problems which the urban residents are facing and we have to address them, not only the problems of derelict buildings and poor health standards. I have gone to places like Cats Castle in the City and places in Wellington Street. I have gone to places in St. Michael that really need some attention and land has to be found to restore some sanity to the St. Michael area, places like the Bayland, and I know that a former Honourable Prime Minister represents that area, I know that a lot of things have been done in that area but the point is that more has to be done to give people the light to purchase those small lots in the Bayland area and to clean it up.

The Ministry of Health along with the Ministry of Housing are trying not only to debush and clean up the area within St. Michael, but we are trying to make sure that people have proper housing and a title to their land, I think one can safely say that the Barbados Labour Party Administration is very conscious of the fact that people have a right to own their land. We have put it as a priority*

Whenever the Barbados Labour Party was in office, we have set out to give people the right to own their spots, so that we have to correct a number of problems, which will be coming before this Parliament very soon, but it is a fact also that those tenants who live in St. Michael must be satisfied that they are not at a disadvantage. We need to improve housing and I know that the Honourable Member for Christ Church South has been constantly saying that we need to put 3-storey buildings within the Bridgetown area, because land space is very important and soon from now we might be running out of land.

I would hope that the Minister responsible for town planning would make the necessary adjustment when the time comes. We have to look at that I have gone

to a city in Latin America and the same thing that the Honourable Member for the City has been saying about urbanisation and development of housing within the city I have seen it with my own eyes, where shops and businesses are placed on the ground floor of residents. People are living in cities and I believe a city that is moving, that is worthwhile, is one where people live. We have to do something to bring people, not only back to the city, but to clean up the urban areas and to make life in the urban areas of Bridgetown and the suburbs more habitable for people.

I also want to make another point. Within the National Housing Corporation lots of money is available and the Minister has spoken to the fact that the loan limit has now been raised from \$30 000 to \$40 000. That is important. Already I understand it will soon be put in place.

Already Cabinet has approved the limit from \$20 000 to \$40 000 where persons will be able to get more money. You see, you cannot repair a house nowadays for less than \$20 000 or buy land or even get mortgages; and this loan was put in place years ago, since the 1950s, The General Workers' Fund was put in place where people can acquire chattel homes, buy land and this is only through the National Housing Corporation. I think sometimes the National Housing Corporation sell themselves short. I think they need to advertise and let people know that funds are available where people can repair their homes. A man in St. John living at Pool, for example, in a chattel home can borrow \$20 000 to repair his home. He does not have to get a guarantee. If he owns the land, so be it. If he does not own the land he needs a letter from his landlord giving him permission to occupy the land.

This is better than the commercial banks because the National Housing Corporation will give the loan on the strength of just renting or leasing the spot. So money is available there. 12.15 p.m.

I believe that more Barbadians, especially at this time, should use the National Housing Corporation to obtain their funds. Of course, it is Christmas time and many people would want to buy some lumber, get some paint, galvanise and so on to improve their dwellings.

I would like to see over the next 5 years general improvement of the housing stock within Barbados. If you travel through Barbados one still sees a lot of derelict buildings, a lot of old chattel houses that really need repairing. I believe the National Assistance Board must also do some more in the repairing of the old people's homes.

A number of people come to me on a daily basis. I know the last Government did not do very much in repairing the welfare homes. Sometimes on a daily basis I have to ask the photographers of the "*Nation*" and the "*Advocate*" newspapers not to take pictures of certain homes. We have a lot of cases in Barbados where old people are seeing the skies at night. A number of senior citizens do not have adequate homes. These people suffer from all the elements at night such as water, dew, and die like. I believe that in a person's twilight years he or she should be comfortable. I think Government has a social responsibility to help senior citizens. I know we cannot do all.

I know it is difficult for the private sector to get involved in welfare homes, but I would hope the day would come when some of the private enterprise would help to at least put some funds into housing to protect those senior citizens.

Mr. Speaker, finally I want to say that I believe Members of Parliament should try to identify areas they think Government could assist in helping to provide land and lots for people. It is a very important point.

We have identified in your area, Mr. Speaker, for example, in the Bank Hall/Bush Hall area where we would be putting 30 units at Bush Hall within the next financial year. We will have to alleviate problems in your area by providing terraced units. There are also small areas in Eckstein Village which we have identified, so we are mindful of the need for housing.

We believe that over the coming months, the Minister of Housing will bring to the House a number of Resolutions seeking to acquire land for the people of Barbados.

I thank you.

His Honour R. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, I too rise to support the Resolution brought here this morning by our quite able Minister of Housing. The Barbados Labour Party in its Manifesto has spent a lot of time and energy in describing the situation in Barbados that existed when this party came in office in 1994. If one were to look at the Manifesto, pages 26-27, one would see the plans the Barbados Labour Party have in this country for the development of people where housing is concerned.

People talk about unemployment being a serious problem, yes, I agree with that, but besides that,

housing is a very serious problem for people. When one leaves school, one first looks to find a job, after that one looks forward to having a roof over his or her head. I get many calls in the constituency from very young people who are presently looking at housing themselves.

A lot of people talk about young people do not want this and they do not want that, but I can safely say, only this morning a young lady called me about trying to get a piece of Government land to rent. She is asking me to guide her in that direction. I also mentioned to her about the funds available through the National Housing Corporation in borrowing funds in order to build that little house. Everybody will not be able to build a wall structure, but we can go back to previous years when people started with a little wooden house, then building wall from the back and coming forward. People as they work and things get better for them they try and improve on their houses.

In St. Michael West Central, we have an area known as the George Rogers Estate. Right now that estate is in contention in the law courts in that the family has a dispute about who is to own what, and who is to get what.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member, please.

His Honour R. D. MARSHALL: Sorry, Sir.

There are other areas too, Sir, like the Eckstein area where, at present, the children from the Polytechnic use a parcel of land there for agricultural purposes. It is about 5 acres of land. Over the last 3 or 4 years I have found that much of the land is not used for agricultural purposes. No plan was done.

I am asking the Minister responsible if we can look at placing those children elsewhere, maybe some part of the rural area of Barbados, and use that land, it is Crown land, for sites and services because, as I said, the Barbados Labour Party in our Manifesto talked, and not only talked, but since the Minister of Housing has been in that Ministry, he has been working very hard to make sure that what we talked about in our Manifesto that we are putting in place. We are not just making empty promises. That was done in the past by the other side.

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at the kind of chattel housing in the St. Michael area, one can see where a lot of the houses are clustered together, where there are people living behind somebody else's paling, and a lot of these houses were there before and up to this moment one finds that people are still putting houses in that position without the approval of the Town and Country Planning. Again, as

I said, people need some place to live and they are going to take chances. We do not want to deprive people of having a roof over their heads. 12.25 p.m.

But, Sir, if we look at the amount of land available in St. Michael, as the Minister is doing, we will be able more or less to improve the living conditions for these people. Because if you have more sites and services, you have more land to use for a house and you would be able then to put in your facilities, road improvement, water mains, you can space the house. Many people go to the insurance company to insure their house and when the insurers go and take a look at where the houses are situated, sometimes they turn down the people because the houses are too close to each other. You know with chattel houses and in these kinds of conditions and there is a fire you realize what would happen to the whole community. There will not only be loss of house but loss of lives.

I am very glad that the Minister, in his wisdom, is working hard to ensure that these sites and services are available to Barbadians. I am glad that he is not only looking at the rural areas but that he will also be looking at the urban areas, the St Michael area. Your Honour's area in Bush Hall. Your Honour too have some problems up there. In our walking around together some time I hear the problems that people bring to Your Honour.

I can only say, in closing, that the Minister must be complimented for doing a fine job. There is just one thing I want to add. The Member for St George North mentioned the credit fund at National Housing. I am glad to hear that the amount to be borrowed has been increased from \$20 000 to a maximum of \$40 000. But I want the Minister of Housing to take an in-depth look into how one can qualify for this money and the length of time one has to wait in order to get this money.

I have a situation where one of my constituents was trying to get a loan since March last year and it was only because I was able to keep on those people at Housing that she was able to have her loan approved within the last 4 to 6 weeks. It is very, very serious. I have talked to people over there at National Housing and the morale is low in there.

I am asking the Minister to look at it seriously because the ones that are being affected are those poor people who are working for \$150, \$200 and \$250 a week. Those are the ones that are suffering. Many people call me and they complain about this length of time. As I said, I went over there and I talked with some people and I believe that if the Minister goes in there and investigates what is really happening, I believe that someone

has to take the bull by the horn and make sure that people that apply for this money can have the money without too much red tape.

Thank you, Sir.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Right Honourable Member for St. Michajel South.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Mr. Speaker, I rise to make a short contribution, during this debate, and I wish to start by noting that, here we are, Sir, in this country a few days away from the anniversary of our Independence in Barbados and so far there has been no significant comment in here during this debate - the House of Assembly is in session -. from the Government side relating to Independence and the significance of what we are doing for the independence of the people of this country.

If we are to make this Chamber relevant...

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: On a point of order, Sir, the Honourable Member is not addressing the resolution.

Mr. SPEAKER: Could you continue please?

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Yes, Mr. Speaker. If the Minister...

Aside,

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD:... that is precisely what I am going to say __ is so stunted in his outlook that he cannot see the relevance of this resolution to the question of independence of the people of St. James, Sf. Andrew and the whole of Barbados. I think we are in a sad state. We should really, when we are looking at this resolution, be able to point out the connection between that great step that was taken in 1966 and what, as a House of Assembly, we are seeking to do to uplift the people of this country.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member, I am trying to follow you. You are saying that the relevance is not there but I should still like you to make your point clear. Connect it with the Resolution, please.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Yes, Sir. I am one for great connections. They did not make the connection. The Minister did not make the connection. You did not ask for the connection with some Snagg's Land.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Right Honourable Member, I am sure you do realize that the resolution as it debated Snagg's

Land which is in Bush Hall was very appropriately handled at that point.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Let me come to the main point that I wish to make here, Sir, and it is that I should like to know whether this land that is being acquired, some 4.4 hectares, was agricultural land that is being alienated from agriculture and being allocated now for housing purposes. I want to know, if that is so, what has been the position of the Minister of Agriculture, my representative for St. James North, on this matter with respect to the alienation of land...

Aside.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: No. I do not hear from St. Michael North. When he was on the backbenches he used, occasionally, to get up and speak. But I cannot hear him now at all.

Aside.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, please. Let us do it orderly, please. Could you continue, please?

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: I do not hear my honourable friend anymore. I know he must have something to say.

I want to know what position the Minister of Agriculture has taken in regard to this alienation of land from agriculture for housing purposes. I well recall, whenever any thrown out land or land which was no longer productive in terms of agriculture, by my Administration, whenever there was any attempt to use such land for purposes other than agriculture, we used to hear many sound, many bytes as they say nowadays in terms of how wrong that policy was.

And now here, Sir, without one squeak from the proponents of the theory that one should not alienate agricultural land for housing or other purposes, we see that that step is being taken here now.

It may be that, with the terraced units, there may be some agriculture in the back yard. I do not know. I am giving the 2 Ministers an out here on this one. Maybe they will wish to say that.

But, Sir, I want to know if there is still an extension service at the Ministry of Agriculture, which will be available to those residents in the Baywoods, to advise and help those persons who will set up their homesteads in that area to grow some tamdew melons, Sir. 12.35 p.m.

I know the Member for Christ Church South, Sir, was a believer. He liked to eat the tamdew melons, Sir, and I want to know if the extension officers of the Ministry of Agriculture, in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing, will be working to develop a plan so that the land will not all be lost from agriculture.

I believe there is a way of combining the two activities, Sir. But I think something should be said about that. And I would hope that the Minister or Ministers would address those issues as we look at them. If they do not address them now, we will be addressing them, Sir, in another forum tomorrow night. Come and hear an exposition, Sir. I hope, Sir, they will address this issue. I do not recall if the Minister told us...

Asides.

Rt. Hon. L. E. SANDIFORD: Sir, we are not speaking against the Resolution because we have not been given the basis for speaking against it or for it for that matter. Maybe when we hear the reconciliation of the issues involved here we would be in a position to speak on this matter.

I heard the Parliamentary Secretary, the Member for St. George North, referring to the Bay Land and I listened quite carefully. I thought he was going to tell me something that I did not know. He only mentioned the area, Sir; but I have to advise those who come to me now from that particular area which I have the honour to represent, that if they want to access the Credit Fund they should go and live with somebody in St. Peter or in the City of Bridgetown, and apply from there, using those addresses, and maybe they will get a little attention.

I was glad to hear the information that was given; and I know that perhaps we will get around and see some action being taken in terms of this Resolution.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: Mr. Speaker, I must first decline the invitation to attend a planned charade tomorrow night in the City on the grounds that I have information that the rehearsals to date for such a charade have been so disappointing as not to warrant any sort of attention so I must decline that invitation extended to me by the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South. I will be otherwise engaged and shall pursue my time more meaningfully.

Mr. Speaker, the background to the matter that we have here is this. Before our administration took office last year we had a great and insistent demand by the people of

Barbados for adequate state sponsored housing. This demand was accompanied, Mr. Speaker, by an equally important demand for house spots and so the background is that we were given office in this country in a situation where we gave the people of Barbados, in our Manifesto, an undertaking that given an opportunity to serve we would try to do something about the improvement of the quality of housing stock and about the quantum of housing stock while at the same time aiming to increase the number of house spots available to persons.

Mr. Speaker, I am going to quote from a document which I believe is already a document of this Honourable House where at page 27 of this document, the 1994 Barbados Labour Party Manifesto, at paragraph 5 it says:

"A BLP administration will also immediately resume an active sites and services programme through which house spots are made available to those persons who wish to build their own houses and starter homes which facilitate those who need a more incremental approach."

Elsewhere in this Manifesto, Mr. Speaker, we gave an undertaking that we would do something about the problem of a shortage of state sponsored housing.

Mr. Speaker, we have heard in this country that certain persons, not associated with our great party, have said that a Manifesto is never a sacred document and it is not anything meet to be followed. However, while we run counter to that position we intend faithfully to observe this Manifesto as a pact between sovereign Barbados and ourselves and we also see our responsibility as having to live up to the promises that we make to the people of Barbados.

The fact of the matter, Mr. Speaker, is that the Honourable Minister of Public Transport and Housing is doing his utmost, both to ensure that our manifesto pledges in relation to housing are met, and at the same time to review the situation in Barbados with the aim being to do the best he can for a proper sites and services programme in this country.

The Right Honourable Member for St Michael South, in a moment of joviality and very much savouring the fact that shortly he will be celebrating a public holiday this week when he can give himself to even greater levity, suggested that the Ministry of Agriculture may have been delinquent in permitting agricultural land to have been alienated for purposes other than agriculture. The factual background is that this Right Honourable Member is given to going on early morning walks, aided by an umbrella

he uses as a prop. The umbrella is blue and yellow, the independence colours of Barbados. He is aided along by this umbrella and he has been seen walking hard by this very area one morning between 5.30 and 7.00 recently and he should have taken time to look at the area that the Honourable Member has taken for his housing programme. The fact of the matter, Mr. Speaker, is that this particular area of land is not any substantial agricultural land. 12.45 p.m.

It is hard by a place that had a Friendly Society called the Buccaneer, where your Mend, Mr. Sylvan Clarke, alias "Boo Picket", was President extraordinaire for years, a man given both to being a long time President of a Friendly Society called the Buccaneer and at the same time he was a member of your party, a man called "Boo Picket". This is close to this place at Baywoods. It is not agricultural land in any substantial sense, and in that it is useful for development not just to give an opportunity for housing, but to integrate itself with an existing community, I think the Honourable Member for St. Andrew should be congratulated on his move.

Any enlightened housing programme will, apart from seeing the need to generate more houses, always look at community and housing. For example, Mr. Speaker, even if you are minded to introduce in Barbados a housing development unit, the question of community should be at the forefront of such a programme. I am respectfully saying that there is already a community at Baywoods, a very good community, a hard working community, and the addition of these units for housing purposes at Baywoods will enhance greater community living. I do not see this as operating prejudicially against the interest of agriculture in Barbados.

With the utmost respect, much as I am honoured to be parliamentarian for this Right Honourable Member who represents St. Michael South, he must know that when he goes for his recreational walks at various points in Barbados he should stop and stare. He should really not go on the type of walk that he is doing right now, aided by the yellow and blue umbrella, he should stop and stare and learn countryside Barbados, even though he represents an urban area.

He also raised the question of the extent to which extension services are available for farmers of a particular type of melon. The melons he is referring to are not now threatened by any pest or disease, not even any substantial amount of praedial larceny, because he, who is the principal farmer of that type of melon in this whole country, will tell you that he has not even been hit by praedial larceny, because the people around the community

so respect him and are so law abiding that they permit him to reap his melons in peace. I challenge him to show his skill and his generosity during this coming Yuletide Season by bringing some of these melons to this Honourable House and distributing them downstairs to Honourable Members, or asking the caterer to let Honourable Members savour his melons. There is no need, Mr. Speaker, for any special extension services for Barbados' principal producer of melons. He has never complained to me. Whenever he has any agricultural concern, he calls me apart and raises it, and he is usually very scholarly, very erudite and he listens well, but he has never lodged a formal complaint to me that his melon crop is under any sort of threat. What I am dismayed about is that he has never, despite boasting how successful he is, been able to come and tell us: "Well, hold two there, Minister from St. Andrew," "hold two there, the Honourable Member from Christ Church." He has to get generous and stop being so parsimonious, Mr. Speaker. He should have been as parsimonious in his speech as he is in his ways, but I take it that his contribution today is very much anticipatory of what will happen Thursday when we in St. James are going to celebrate Independence in the true spirit and with some levity as we recognise the occasion.

Mr. Speaker, with those few brief remarks, I must say that I was really drawn into this because of the histrionic behaviour of the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South.

Thank you very much.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, it is not normal for me to congratulate anybody, but I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Honourable Member for St Andrew on his housing policy. The reason why I can afford to congratulate him is that when I listened to him I heard Husbands Development, I heard Haggatt Hall Development and I sat back and said that these things sounded familiar to me. I said if they sound familiar to me they should sound familiar to the Honourable Member for St. Philip South also.

I believe the Honourable Member for St Andrew is batting on a good wicket, one that was well laid by myself and the Honourable Member for St Philip South, where we left some very good housing developments for him to continue at Husbands and also at Haggatt Hall, so if he is continuing the policies of the Democratic Labour Party, then he has no problem in implementing a good housing policy in Barbados. I would like to believe that he would not only continue the ones in Haggatt Hall and at Husbands, but he will also continue the others left throughout this country.

With those few words, Sir, I just wanted to identify that some of these projects are not new, they were projects left there by the Democratic Labour Party.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I just want, in winding up the debate on this Resolution, to allude to one or two important points which were raised by the previous speakers. In this respect I do not think it is necessary for me to respond to anything that the Right Honourable Member for St. Michael South has said.

The Honourable Member for St. George North in his presentation mentioned the problem with respect to the urban tenancies. The urban tenancies are a source of concern to us in the Ministry. At the time when the Tenancies Freehold Purchase Act was passed, I will admit because of the speed with which that legislation was hurried into Parliament there were a number of matters which were not addressed, but I think that the amendment which was made by the last administration to redress an imbalance with respect to owners of land with less than five tenants is one of them. I think it is unfortunate that at the time the legislation was passed the question of the urban tenancies was not addressed. What we have now is a situation whereby persons on plantation tenancies are entitled to purchase their land at 10 cents per square foot as long as they are qualified tenants within the meaning of the Act, and yet we have a number of tenancies in the urban areas, sometimes over 100 tenants, and these persons are not so entitled. It is a pity that in the definition of tenancies we did not put the urban tenancies alongside the plantation tenancies, so that people in Delamere Land, in Hanschell Land...

Aside.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: When I say urban tenancies, people in tenancies similar to these were not entitled to purchase their land at 10 cents per square foot. I think there was a good argument for these people in the sense that most of them were living on their lands for over 100 years, when you include the time their parents and their grandparents also lived on the land. Even though these persons have the option to purchase, they have to pay for the land at market value and the greater argument for them to pay for the land at the same 10 cents per square foot was also due to the fact that in many respects Government had developed the tenancies. 12.55 p.m.

What we are witnessing now is the case of a number of what I would term unscrupulous landlords, who are calling on tenants to pay as much as \$5 and \$6 a square foot for land in these areas.

It is a matter that we have to address. We estimate that there are about 6 000 such tenants affected and we would not want at this stage to do an amendment to our Constitution to address this problem. What we will have to look at some time is the acquisition of all of those parcels of land where these tenants have been affected and have the land sold to these tenants at a concessionary price in order to regularise the situation. As I said, it is a source of concern to us.

What is also of concern to us in the urban tenancies is the fact that there are a number of derelict, abandoned and disused buildings and I was somewhat surprised in coming to the Ministry when I asked for a survey to be done on these tenancies that the figure given me was 1 700 abandoned units in the St. Michael area. I could not believe it. This is also an area that we have to address. We are presently looking at the change in the policy of the IDE which is now considering lending money for low income purposes in order to extend its scope of lending to countries under its portfolio. It is hoped that if this, together with other projects which I don't have the time to mention, will come to fruition, we would be able to deal with some of the pressing problems of housing in this country.

Mr. Speaker, with those few remarks I move that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I beg to second that.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that this House do now adjourn until Tuesday, the 5th day of December 1995 at 11 o'clock in the morning.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I beg to second that.
1.00 p.m.

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