
THE House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1994 – 99

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, April 16, 1996

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 11.15 a.m. o'clock on Tuesday, April 16, 1996.

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.

Mr. B. M. TAITT, B.A. (Hons.), M.P.A., LL.B. (Hons.)

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.

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

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

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.), LEC (Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development)

Dr. R. C. HAYNES, M.B., Ch.B., F.R.C.P. (Edin.)

Mr. D. CARTER

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE, B.A., LL.B. (Minister of Labour, Community Development and Sports)

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

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

Mr. H. F. LASHLEY

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPM, LL.B. (Minister of State in the Ministry of Foreign affairs, Tourism and International Transport)

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN

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

Prayers were let by Canon Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Wednesday, March 27, 1996.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes of this Honourable House of Assembly for Tuesday, March 27, 1996 which have been circulated, Sir, be taken as read.

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

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR THE SPEAKER

Mr. SPEAKER: I am to report that I am in receipt of the Accounts and Statements including Appropriation and Revenue Accounts for the Financial Year 1994/95. Also, I am receipt of the Report of the Auditor General for the year 1995.

PAPERS

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: I am commanded, Mr. Speaker, to lay the following:

1. Representation of the people (Expenses) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations, 1996.
2. The Customs Tariff (Amendment) (No. 3) Order, 1996.
3. Annual Report of the Central Bank of Barbados for the year 1995.
4. Health Services (Food Hygiene) (Amendment) Regulations, 1996.

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following:

1. Annual Report and Financial Statement of the Barbados Port Authority for the year ended December 31, 1994.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: I beg to move that Standing Orders Nos. 16, 18, 20, 42(5) 43 and 44 be suspended for the remainder of the sitting.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: I beg to second that.

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

Mr. SPEAKER: Government Business is now the order of the day.

ORDER NO. 2 – TO MOVE THE PASSING OF A
RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE COMPULSORY
ACQUISITION OF LAND AT HEADLEY'S
ROAD, DEACONS ROAD, ST MICHAEL
FOR ROAD IMPROVEMENT

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, this is a Resolution . . .

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Speaker, I cannot hear what exactly is going on. I can make out what is being said but something is not functional. We are having some difficulty.

Asides.

SUSPENSION

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that we suspend until the technical difficulties have been rectified.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: I beg to second that.

Mr. SPEAKER: I think we should suspend until we can have the technical problems corrected. The House is suspended until the bell is rung.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the sitting accordingly.
11.20 a.m.

RESUMPTION

Mr. SPEAKER: This sitting is resumed.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, this is a Resolution for the acquisition of 23.42 square metres of land at Headley's Road, Deacons Road, St. Michael.

During the past 10 years, there have been a number of acquisitions or I should say interventions by the Ministry of Public Works, in an effort to construct sidewalks and for footpaths and widen roads in certain areas, particularly in the St. Michael area.

It so happened that a number of these acquisitions have accumulated over a period of time, and it has become necessary for us to regularise all of these acquisitions. This is another in the series of those interventions. The small area was utilised sometime between 1981 and 1982 by the Ministry, in the course of the improvement of the Road Works Act, Deacons Road, and this Resolution seeks to regularise what was done at that particular time.

Cabinet has given approval for the acquisition of this land and legal steps have been taken to give effect to the Cabinet decision. Compensation will be paid to the relevant owner, in due course, after the normal compensation has been completed.

The Notices required in accordance with Section 3 of the Land Acquisition Act have been published and authorisations required under Section 4 have been signed. The parcel of land has been surveyed and the Plan is available for inspection by Honourable Members.

All other legal requirements have been met for the approval of the Honourable House and we are now seeking formal approval by Parliament for this Resolution. With those brief remarks, Mr. Speaker, I beg that this Resolution do now pass.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Speaker, this acquisition of land happens to fall within the Constituency of St. Michael West, and as the Honourable Minister has said the Government is seeking to regularise the state of affairs which extended over a period of time.

In this House, over many years, we have had debates over and over again about the difficulty imposed on various people as a result of governmental action. We are into 1996. This land was acquired in 1981. I mean, Sir, the Minister said that steps will be taken to pay the people. I hope that the Government would pay with interest. The interest should be at 6% from the date of acquisition. I would like the Minister, when he winds up, to confirm that it would be the Government's intention first of all to pay urgently, like yesterday. In other words, this is one that **should** be leapfrogged to the top of the list. Secondly, confirm the beneficiary, if beneficiary is the correct word, **because** when they acquired your land in 1981 and by 1986 you have not been paid, I **am** not sure if you are a beneficiary. It seems more like you have been punished. I am not accusing the Government of doing that because it happens no matter who is in office. From 1981 to 1996 is a little long for, a small piece of land, for people who **cannot** afford the length of time.

I hope that the Minister will vigorously go through the large quantity of lands acquired by successive Governments over many years, to ensure that there is no more suffering for persons who were waiting in the long line to collect money.

Sir, the Anglican Church is in grave difficulty, financially. That is not a secret.

Mr. SPEAKER: That has to do with land acquisition?

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Yes, Sir. It has to do with acquisition, in that general area, Sir. I **am** dealing with Westbury Road, as you know, runs straight through to Deacons Road, where Headley's Land is located, Sir. I **am** dealing with **Westbury** Road as part of the Anglican Church, Sir. **Westbury** Road, St. Leonards has a piece that has been acquired, and it is part of the principle that I am discussing. They have not been paid for all of the lands that have been acquired, not yesterday.
11.45 a.m.

Let us concede that some time is required to do the procedures etc. A year or two or three might go by but we have lands that are acquired with this kind of time scale and the Anglican Church is one of the entities in Barbados that have been waiting very patiently for some kind of settlement of lands not far from these lands which were acquired and a series of other lands that have not been paid for. I think that if in fact the Government could see it

within its bountiful measures to pay these people that it would change dramatically the state of the coffers of the Anglican Church, to say nothing of the poor people in Headley's land.

Now, Sir, I have reason to feel that an estate will be getting the payment here because, Sir, my recollection, of what has happened in Headley's Road would suggest that the person who is waiting for this payment may very well have left us. It is not a lot of money but for a poor person it translates into a substantial sum of money. I am not going to dwell on this. I would like the Minister to confirm that these 8 persons will be paid promptly, and promptly here meaning promptly and not the phrase that is used in legal jargon; and that there will be an interest of not less than 6% from 1981. I think that that is the best I can do for my constituent under the circumstances. If the Government feels that 8% would be a much better manifestation of their regret at having taken so long to pay, I do not think we will resist 8%, but not less than 6%. I look forward to the response from the Minister ably advised by the Minister of Finance who has demonstrated over the years, according to his language, that there should be no taxes on land furthermore taking away people's land and not paying for it.

His Honour R. D. MARSHALL: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I rise to give support to this Resolution for Headley's Land, Deacons Road. Now this is an area adjacent to the constituency that I represent and this area in Deacons Road is a road that I would say is quite busy. This is a road that traffic coming off the highway at Black Rock use to divert on to Deacons Road. There is heavy traffic on that road and it is a road that many **ZRs** and minibuses run on. The Minister said that in acquiring these lands we are looking at making sidewalks for pedestrians and so on. It is a road also that when the rain falls it becomes impassable since water settles on both sides of the road and I do believe that this is one of the areas where we would have to concentrate on giving proper sidewalks to these people. It is also an area that has two housing areas – the old Deacons Housing Area and the Farm Housing Area. As you know, Sir, these areas have lots and lots of young people walking on those roads. It is a road where people coming from Eagle Hall, Alkins, Richmond Gap area use to go to **Brandons** Beach and it is this road that **carries** a large amount of not only pedestrian traffic but vehicular traffic and I am glad to know that something is being done to alleviate these problems. I thank you.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, this Resolution is important because very often Government has to acquire land for road improvement. The Honourable Minister has already pointed out the number of road improvements that will be undertaken during the current parliamentary term and therefore the road at

Headley's Land is one of the roads that will be acquired. In fact one Honourable Member said that this road improvement took place since 1981.

Now, one of the difficulties that the Ministry has been facing is the fact that owners sometimes do not agree with Government when payments are to be made. Sometimes, Mr. Speaker, owners agree to a final payment but very often we find that owners feel that they can get more for a parcel of land that has been taken from them and the list goes on and on. There are a number of owners throughout the length and breadth of Barbados who do not agree to the final price that has been offered by Government and sometimes in order to speed up the process of improving the roads, the Ministry has to come in and take the parcel of land in order to get on with the job and we would hope that many of these owners can come forward and agree, either the lawyers or agents or the persons who have been left in their Wills as beneficiaries but that is the problem.

I would also want to say that during the current session there will be road widening in Bridgetown, in greater Bridgetown and areas around Eagle Hall. There will also be widening in Bay Street and many parcels will have to be taken in order to improve conditions for motorists. Members must understand that most of these roads were built at a time when vehicles were not as heavy or as long as they are today. Today we are seeing long vehicles - 18 wheelers - being used in Barbados. The many tractor trailers which are being used and it is necessary for any Government to widen roads and to straighten bends. Certainly in my constituency a number of bends will be widened.

From time to time, Mr. Speaker, Government has to get on with the job and I noticed that road widening has continued, not only in St. Michael but I believe the Minister of Transport and Works has gone as far as St. John and I see a lot of work being done in Gall Hill, St. John and in St. Peter. So Members will from time to time come across a number of landlords, who Government has acquired their land or has money for them but as I pointed out before, Mr. Speaker, it is not that Government does not intend to pay but many of these landlords do not complete their agreement and sometimes their lawyers keep their papers for decades. Therefore we have to understand that road widening has to continue and I would only hope that many Honourable Members here would allow the Minister to know when landlords in their constituencies complained about money owing to them by government and be well aware of what is happening in their constituencies. They should allow the Ministry of Public workers to know when there are problems, so they will be mindful of these things. So that the widening or improvement can take place within the urban as well as the rural areas. I thank you.

11.55 a.m.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael West had raised a query relative to the payment of interest from the date of the intervention to which I referred in introducing this Resolution. I think that he should be well aware that in accordance with the law payment of interest will follow the actual payment of the full sum on completion. I will not be able to tell him at this stage whether it is 6 per cent or 8 per cent but I can give him the assurance that whatever is the relevant interest at the time of completion will be paid from the date of acquisition which was in 1981.

With respect to the actual ownership, there was some dispute with reference to this particular parcel of land in that there was a lady who had been claiming ownership of this small parcel of land and there were some other persons who were claiming through an estate. What we decided to do in the Ministry was to go ahead with the acquisition and leave the question of compensation to be negotiated at a later date when the Legal Division of the Ministry of Housing would be able to look at the title deeds and decide after a proper investigation of title as to who is the correct owner. This is normal. The actual valuation of the property at this time is approximately \$4.00 per square foot.

With those few remarks, I now move that this Resolution do now pass.

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

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

ORDER NO. 3 - TO MOVE THE PASSING TO
APPROVE THE COMPULSORY ACQUISITION
OF A PARCEL OF LAND SITUATED AT
LODGE ROAD, CHRIST CHURCH
FOR ROAD IMPROVEMENT

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, this is a similar acquisition to the one which I dealt with just now with respect to the query which was being raised in the earlier Resolution and because it would appear to me as though from my response the Honourable Member for St. Michael West is somewhat puzzled at the fact that we do the acquisition and then the compensation follows. This is normal and there is no other way that you could actually do the acquisition. Well, I might be reading you wrong but you cannot do the acquisition and determine the compensation before you come to Parliament. The acquisition is done, the question of the title deeds and the ownership are dealt with by the Legal Unit and then the compensation is made. As a matter of fact, there are situations where the actual process has been completed and people have not even come in for their monies. So this is just another process.

In this particular acquisition, there are 2 parcels of land measuring 376.4 square metres and 597.3 square metres at Chase Road renamed Kings Court, Lodge Road, Christ Church which were utilized by the Ministry of Public Works in 1981. The Housing Section of the Ministry of Public Works is in the process of negotiating a price for these said 2 parcels. Compensation will be paid to Mrs. Daphney Greenidge upon proof of ownership. The notices required in accordance with Section 3 of the Land Acquisition Act were published. The authorizations under Section 4 of the said Act were signed by the Acting Governor-General on July 26, 1995 and published in the *Official Gazette* and the *Advocate News*. The survey plans are available for inspection. Parliament is now invited to approve this Resolution. I now move that this Resolution do now pass.

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

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael West.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I take this opportunity to explain. I accept the advice tendered by the Honourable Member and Acting Deputy Prime Minister who just spoke. I just wish to say that I understand the process. But when I was speaking on the other Resolution, it was the unconscionable period which had elapsed between 1981 and 1996 that was the gravamen of my suggestion or complaint rather than the fact that the compensation was going to follow. I was concerned that the impression was given that, after having waited until 1996 to have it come before the House, it will now have to go to the Legal Unit after having passed the House for them to deliberate. Well, that will be another 15 years and I was merely suggesting that the Minister in the circumstances should seek to ensure that an unusual amount of speed for the Unit could be brought to bear so that the persons concerned would be able to benefit from the acquisition which happened in 1981. That was the only point that I was making, Sir. I have no difficulty with understanding the process of acquisition. The only point of departure we have had between the two parties was that the Honourable Member for Christ Church South used to be in favour of the section which allowed the taking of possession before the acquisition process and then dealing with all other things thereafter, whereas we on this side believe that the Section 3 notice should be published. We have always believed that the Section 3 notice should be published before taking possession of the property. But it is a small point. I mean it is just a point of methodology. It does not change anything relating to the acquisition and it does not change anything relating to the payment. What in fact has happened with the Government, not necessarily the present administration but the Government generally, is that people have had to wait 17, 18, 19 or 20 years to get

paid for land that was acquired and that cannot be correct and proper in a democracy. It is not fair and it does not matter how much interest you are paid subsequently.
12.05 p.m.

It just is not right that the Government should acquire land and some 15 years or more go by and the people do not get their money. We have to devise a system by which people can get their money. I think the Freeman that are currently held up in a farmhouse somewhere in the United States, in Montana, are perceived by ordinary people as crazy people, but when the Government oppresses or appears to be oppressing people for a long enough period, the system of civilisation that we have become accustomed to says that you can take steps to restore yourself within the context of natural rights. So if you do not pay people for their land and their property and they decide to come and blow it up, they will then be deemed to be violent, but there can be nothing more violent than a Government with all of its power taking away somebody's property and then paying them 15 or more years later.

Aside.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I am not here saying that the present administration has done that, because the present administration has not been in power for 15 years or 20 years or any years, and they will not be there long enough for this principle I am now adumbrating to apply to them, so I absolve them of all responsibility in this regard, except that when the Minister of Finance came here to change the Crown Proceedings Act by amendment, one of the *raisons d'être* for that change was that persons could be paid swiftly, and I draw it to the Minister's attention. The former Acting Prime Minister, now Deputy, Acting Deputy Prime Minister and Acting Leader of the House today, I draw it to his attention that he cannot come down here and change the law for a particular reason and then not implement the law, so I wish to hear no more dilly dallying about paying people for acquisition of land. When the Honourable Member gets up to respond this time I don't wish him to tell me what the procedure is, I wish him to give me his ministerial assurance in this House that those people will be paid in accordance with the new philosophy. I think the Honourable Member understands, Sir.

Mr. D. CARTER: Mr. Speaker, first of all I should like to support this Resolution before the House. The last speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael West, was acting like a prophet, making statements to the effect that we will not be in office for 15 years.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I exempt him from that, Sir.

Mr. D. CARTER: I should like first to congratulate the Minister for his speedy work in relation to

these land acquisitions. This is the third time in this Parliament that my constituency was fortunate to get these things come here, and certainly I am hoping in the very near future that the money will be paid to the respective people. Mrs. Daphney Greenidge is a lady I know very well and this matter came here in 1981 or 1982. It has taken a long time. Obviously it was during our administration and the Honourable Member for Christ Church South was the person who started it, but some 15 years later we are still trying to get payment for the people in that area. I hope that the Minister, since he has started this work so speedily, will carry it out to the end where, as I said, there is some \$10 000 involved and ordinary and poor people in Lodge Road would be looking forward for such payment.

Now we are talking about acquisition in the same area, I would like to ask the Minister for a little help in relation to Christ Church Boys' and Girls' Schools which for a long time had no playing fields attached. There are over 1 000 children going to those two schools and I believe the time is right. I know I will get support from the Honourable Member for Christ Church South in relation to this.

I should like to commend and congratulate some people in the Water Street area who for a long time were helping children to cross the road. I would like to draw to the Minister's attention that a crossing is needed in the area where Lodge Road crosses over to Water Street, and certainly two crossings to the respective schools, to assist those 1 000 children on mornings and evenings to get across the road. I know that we are providing jobs and it would be nice if some of those parents who are assisting the children would be able to get a three or four hour pick in order to help the children and certainly to help themselves.

All in all, Mr. Speaker, I would like to compliment the Minister and certainly I support this Resolution.

Thank you.

Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN: Mr. Speaker, I welcome any acquisition of land in this area, because it is well known that this area of Barbados has been subjected to phenomenal development over the last 15 years. When one thinks of it, that in the Kingsland, Wotton, Lodge Road, Newton Terrace area, well over 4 000 to 5 000 houses have been built, so the traffic on that main road from Oistin leading right up to Newton roundabout is so much that the roads just cannot take it. There was a scheme that there should be sidewalks to keep the people off the road in that area, starting from Oistin Hill. I notice that there are some next to the Foundation School, but I must as a matter of urgency support the Honourable Member for Christ Church East Central in his call for the continuation of that programme. It is a priority. There is an

industrial estate at the top and any afternoon, or morning for that matter, when you pass there you see masses of young people and other people, school children, industrial estate workers competing on the road, and there is no sidewalk. I hope that area will be earmarked for a special project. That is one I believe could come under the World Bank Rehabilitation Scheme.

Similarly, as the Honourable Member has said, with respect to Water Street. There you have all of those young children coming from Wotton going to the Christ Church Boys' and Girls' Schools, and again that area merges now with Silver Hill and when you look at what has happened in that area you will see that as a result of the explosion of population there the need for sidewalks has become very, very evident.

So I support it, Sir, and I do hope that our calls for that activity in that area will be addressed.

Mr. W. C. C. CALLENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this Resolution. When I look back I realise that this activity had taken place some time in 1982 and it really represents the history of Christ Church, in that what we see happening is that during the period 1976 too 1986 a number of things were done to improve the parts of Christ Church, the areas of Lodge Road, Maxwell, Breedys, Inch Marlowe, and the acquisition of this land is for improvement of the road at that time.

12.15 p.m.

What I am saying is that we would want this to continue with the return to power of the Barbados Labour Party. We would want to see these road improvements continuing. A number of **tenantries** were developed during that period as well and there are still 1 or 2 areas which are still undone and we would like to see these areas addressed, areas such as St. **Patricks** in the street area.

On a matter of land acquisitions, I too support the call to have these matters addressed quickly and I am thinking of another family that lives in the Lodge Road area, the Games family. They happen to own a piece of land in Inch Marlowe/Walls area. That land is used by the cricketers from the Walls Cricket Club. They have been playing cricket there for years. I am aware, Sir, that this family would want to have the gentlemen of Inch Marlowe to continue to play on that land and that they would be prepared to sell this land to the Government.

As we sat here discussing this matter, I was saying to myself I would hate to be involved in a situation where people in a community spirit are going to be giving up land and yet they have to wait all those years to be compensated, especially when we are thinking in terms of people who are not youngsters at this point in time, people who are relatively advanced in age. I believe,

especially in the case of people who are advanced in age, it is almost uncivilised to have these people die and not get compensation for the land which they have given up for a good civic purpose. I think that we need to quickly **address** compensation for land which is acquired in the interests of the community. I really do hope that in the case of this land at **Warrens**, which I spoke to the **Minster** of Sports about, since it is a matter relating to a sports club but which may perhaps be better addressed to the Minister of Transport and Works and which I propose to address to **him** shortly that we need to look at acquiring this land so that we do not have the problems that happened in St. **George** where we find that there is a last minute dash to save a cricket club which is serving a good purpose in the community.

I don't want a situation where it appears as if there is a last minute dash but that we address these things. Whether it be a dash to save somebody from having their land being abused or whatever, we need to look at **regularising** these things so that it is clear as to what purpose the land will serve and this matter will be addressed so that later down the road we don't have a case where the boys want to play cricket and football and the landowners want to take over the land for whatever reason but that we can amicably address that situation in the early that **arrangements** be put in place so that these people can be paid for their land while they are yet alive.

It is true that these people normally want to leave something for their children but I am sure it is better for **them** to enjoy some of these things within their own lifetime.

With these few words I want to say I support this Resolution and I want to applaud the efforts of the **current** Minister for addressing payments being given to people whose lands have been acquired back in the 80s.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, it would seem **from** the comments of Honourable Members who spoke that there are some concerns at the long delay which has taken place between the time of the possession by Government and the time of payment. I would like to say that **from** what I have been able to see in the Ministry – remember that we are trying to clean up, for want of a better word – all of these outstanding acquisitions. The delay has a lot to do with the fact that in the past due to the fact that the Ministry was frustrated by owners of land who refused to come in and accept their payments. They just decided to do nothing about it.

I do not think that there is any easy solution to this problem, because if the legislation is amended to make it a speedier **effort** on the part of Government and the owners firstly decide that they are not going to accept the amount

being offered or the amount that has been assessed by the relevant valuer or if in a situation whereby a person claims that he is the owner of land and he does not have the relevant title deeds, the process will be delayed no matter what you do. I am saying that in these cases all of these acquisitions that we are bringing in order to regularise the situation fall into this category and no legislation could actually remedy that.

I can think of a particular case in my own constituency, Standard playing field where cricket is presently played. This is land that was acquired way back in the 1970s.

Asides.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, the owner of this land refuses to bring in her title deeds and refuses to accept the amount of money that has been offered by Government. She also refuses to go to a lawyer. She says Government should find alternative land for the people in the district to play on. The case has just been left hanging. I don't think that with these types of landowners that any amount of legislation would be able to get around it. She has not come to collect the money.

With respect to the other points which have been raised by Members on this side for additional land for schools and playing field facilities I can only say that as soon as the relevant information comes to the Ministry, the Division of Housing will deal with it.

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

I beg to second that.

ORDER NO. 9 – RESOLUTION THE TO MOVE PASSING OF PAYMENT OF INCREASED **COST** OF LIVING ALLOWANCE TO GOVERNMENT PENSIONERS

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, Sir, it has been the policy to increase pensions paid to former Government employees at the time of the revision of salaries and wages of the incumbent Government employees. The increase is in the form of a cost of living allowance and it has been usual to make this cost of living allowance a portion of the level of the increase paid to public officers, reflecting the fact that the statutory rate of a basic pension cannot exceed half of the rate of the last salary of the recipients.

The average rate of increase for public officers over the biennium 1995-97 is 6.5%. Since pensions in payment cannot be based on current levels of salary applicable to the holders of comparable posts it is proposed

that an increase of 2.5% subject to a minimum of \$20 per month be granted to all pensioners with effect from April 1, 1995.

In addition, Sir, there are some pensioners who retired prior to April 1, 1996 and who would not have received the benefits of a national insurance pension duplicated with a public service pension, nor the level of pensions enjoyed by more recent retirees who have been the beneficiaries of higher salaries. It is considered now appropriate to give such persons an additional increase of \$5 per month.

Mr. Speaker, I would have again to remind the House that it is still the Government's intention later in the year to introduce a productivity bonus for public servants and this matter of allowances to pensioners is going in all probability to be revisited during the course of the year.
12.25 p.m.

I trust this will be the last occasion on which a cost of living allowance to pensioners who were former Government employees is introduced in the form of a percentage of a wage increase subject to the provision that the basic pension of such pensioners cannot in law exceed half of their last salary. I feel that we have to find a way if the adjustment is, in fact, to be intended to be a *bona fide* cost of living allowance, to make it precisely that because there is the real danger of the real income standard of living of pensioners being substantially eroded by the condition that their basic pension cannot exceed more than half of their last salary.

In making the adjustment, a proportion of the wage increase is not the same thing as providing for a cost of living allowance. I believe the whole question of pensions paid to former Government employees is a matter that should be reopened with a view to restructuring the nature of the cost of living allowance that is allowed and its relation to the pensioner's last salary. I give the House the assurance that this really will be the last occasion on which such a cost of living allowance takes the present form.

Sir, the increase is modest. I expect, of course, the Opposition benches to say exactly that. As I said, I have given the House the assurance that the overall package of wages and salary increases for this year does not only include a wage increase per se but provision is also made, and is being made, for the payment of a productivity bonus and this matter will be revisited during the course of the year. I truly feel that this must be the last time on which a cost of living allowance is structured other than as a true cost of living allowance and that the procedure that relates it to the last salary of the person employed is something that really robs it of the aspects of a true cost of living allowance.

I therefore, against that background, and with those assurances, Sir, beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I will not be very long. I must say I am a bit troubled that this particular matter has come so long after the orders and resolution with respect to the salary increases in the public sector. Unless the Government sees itself as a glutton for punishment, which may be one interpretation, I cannot understand why at the time of the arrangements which were made for public officers this matter did not also come to the attention of the House.

You would remember, Mr. Speaker, that many Members on this side had to remind the Government about the plight of pensioners in Barbados, in particular, the very worthy publication of the Democratic Labour Party known as "The Constituent" put out by the Honourable Member for St. Michael South had to make a case for the pensioners. There were hundreds of Government pensioners throughout Barbados who were actually wondering whether they, in fact, would be getting an increase at all.

Now, what I think the Honourable Member for St. Peter should be telling us is not to bother himself too much about this paltry increase and tell us what efforts he is going to make to mitigate the impact in particular of the introduction of other measures, including the Value Added Tax on the pensioners in Barbados because this is going to be a very serious matter, and in view of the fact that we are talking about cost of living allowances which, although they do not bear any relationship to the potential or actual increase in cost of living, I still feel that perhaps some assurances should be given by the Minister of Finance to this sector of our community.

Mr. Speaker, on this side we do not make the payment of pensions an issue for gloating and I am glad that on this occasion the Honourable Member for St. Peter did not do so because we saw the spectacle in the last Budget debate, for example, in which members on that side, quite inexperienced and jejune in their approach, extolling the virtue of a \$5 increase and telling us what basket of goodies persons were able to shop for and not shoplift for in the supermarkets of Barbados.

This is nothing to gloat about, Sir. If we were able to give a much larger increase to the pensioners of Barbados the Democratic Labour Party would be entirely in support of it because we believe that there is substantial hardship out there and that hardship is not being met by any major mitigation. There is a higher ceiling for the tax threshold for pensioners which the Democratic Labour Party introduced in 1993 but Government's aggressive land tax collection programme, Government's aggressive tax collection programmes which are impacting in

relation to water rates, rents, land taxes and a whole range of imposts which the citizens have to bear, are not being met with any compensating mitigating circumstances in relation to pensioners. I think some of the methods which are being used to give relief to pensioners are antediluvian and need to be modernised.

We did talk, as the Honourable Member for St. Peter is well aware and criticized the Democratic Labour Party, about indexation, a whole range of reforms. I think those kinds of issues do need to be addressed. They need to be addressed particularly in the context of the hardship which I see being visited upon this section of the public by some of the policies which are going to come on stream and which, unwittingly, may have a much sharper impact in a short time, even though in the long-term it may be more beneficial.

I would like to hear from the Honourable Member for St. Peter what measures he is likely to undertake to mitigate the impact of that. What measures he is going to undertake to assist pensioners from losing their land particularly by the tax collection programme and the sale of land under the Land Tax Act and from the aggressive collection of water rates and other efforts which Government is making in a whole range of areas.

I want to know first, Mr. Speaker, what accounts for the delay because I think it is sending the wrong signal to those persons who have toiled hard throughout their life who have reached retirement and who would have seen other public officers receiving their increases as a matter of priority while they have been relegated to the background, have been elbowed out and left past the mid-point. I would like to know what the position is relative to their pensions.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.
12.35 p.m.

Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I just want to say a few things, raise a few matters on this issue because all of us recognise, I am sure, that these amounts, which we are voting now, will be inadequate to allow the pensioners to cope with their cost of living.

I want, Sir, in particular to deal with some of the concerns raised by the Honourable Leader of the Opposition, one of which, I am a little disturb about, Sir, namely the question of the land tax.

My understanding of the position is that, in 99 out of 100 cases, tax relief is granted to anybody who is a pensioner. There is relief that is granted on tax.

Mr. SPE. XER: Please, please. Let us hear the Honourable Member.

Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN: I would wish that matter be carefully investigated because that has always been the policy over the last 30 years. Old age pensioners, unless they are in a relatively well-off position, were granted tax relief. So that perhaps the mitigation that the Honourable Member called for, can be achieved by policy directions, if there are necessary, to the Tax Relief Board. There is such a Board, Sir.

The other area that I would like to touch on today, Sir, is this. This is a very important occasion and useful occasion for me, Sir, to remind the Government of the need in Barbados for us to have a comprehensive look at our legislation dealing with the incentives to people to provide their own pension.

Many countries in the world now, in the developed world, have taken the view point that citizens should be encouraged from a very early stage in their working life, to make provision for their own retirement by way of a supplement to any pension they get from their employer.

We need to have an "all Party" approach to this matter, Sir. At one stage it was mooted in Barbados that we will have a national integrated pension scheme, but that takes a considerable period of time to occur. I do hope, Sir, that the call that is made, Sir, here today for a comprehensive, a holistic look, at our existing incentives for people to provide their own pensions from an early stage in their working life will be looked into.

As I understand it, the statistics, the demographics of Barbados indicate that we are likely to be going through a period in which a larger proportion of our population will be retiring, and a fewer number of people will be paying into the National Pension Fund. So, that again is the reason why we should have a look in this area.

Thank you, Sir.

Dr. R. C. HAYNES: Over the past 4 to 6 weeks, Mr. Speaker, I was surprised by the large number of telephone calls and the large number of letters which I received from Government pensioners outlining their plight, and asking me to do what I could to urge the Government to provide for some increase in their pensions as expeditiously as possible.

I was surprised, Mr. Speaker, to note the extent of hardship and the extent of suffering which several Government pensioners are undergoing in Barbados today. I think that it is very important for us to clearly understand the kind of pressures which these Government pensioners have to face from day-to-day. We all have to face the very high cost of living. They have to face the high cost of living as well.

The issue of land taxes. There was a time in Barbados, during the 1970s and 1980s, to some extent, and I will agree with this, where applications to the Land Tax Relief Board where it was almost automatic, unless that Board suspected or had evidence that the person had the ability to pay. This is no longer the case.

I have personal knowledge of several persons who **can only** be considered to be marginally destitute, and have been refused tax relief. Then, Sir, there are many things happening in the social sector of Barbados which, in recent times, have been casting significant additional burdens on our pensioners. For example in the area of Health.

Now 15 years ago in Barbados, if you were a pensioner, you can be guaranteed that you could go to a public institution and get any drug that was prescribed for you by a doctor free of charge. That is no longer the case in Barbados. To start with, they can only get those drugs that are on the formulary, in the first instance.

In the second instance, very often, there are shortages of drugs and there is also the additional problem that many urgent and necessary investigations, such as X-rays and so on, which the elderly require, far more frequently than younger people. There was a time in Barbados, when all a doctor had to write on an X-ray form is "this patient is a pensioner and cannot afford it," and they would get any examination, radiological examination, any test of any kind done free either at a Hospital, at Enmore, which now, it has been replaced by the Sir Winston Scott Polyclinic. That is no longer the case,

Very often these elderly people have to find \$85 to get a Chest X-ray. Perhaps a \$150 to get ordinary barium studies and so on done. That is a fact. As a matter of fact I will tell you this too, that if in the middle of the night one of those elderly person should fall ill, and a private doctor is called in, since there are no public doctors available in the middle of the night, and that doctor requests a Chest X-ray on the elderly person, there is no institution in Barbados today where they can get that done free. The mere fact that it is requested by a private doctor who may have visited the person and may not have charged them because of their destitute situation they have to pay to get that investigation done.
12.45 p.m.

The point I am making is that a larger slice of the money available to the elderly in Barbados is being consumed by expenditure on health care, which in the past was totally free.

Now we hoped, and I believe that people felt that the introduction of a drug service and other changes in the health service that the effect of that would be to have

expanded the free services available to the elderly. This has not happened and that is the harsh reality today that we have, that there has been a reduction in the available free health services **available** to the elderly people in Barbados.

That is a significant slice of their budget which is being spent on health at the moment and the older they get, generally speaking, the more money they spend on health. Then there is another area, There was a time in Barbados when almost all of our old age pensioners could get on a bus free of charge. I agree the policy has not changed. The only problem is there are fewer buses on the routes so therefore a larger number of old age pensioners have to pay and therefore transport is taking a larger slice of the budget.

Mr. Speaker, I do not want to deprive others of the opportunity of speaking before 1.00 o'clock and therefore I am not going to go on for much longer but what I am saying is this, that there are a lot of changes taking place in the social sector and there are many other things happening and those things are eroding more and more, everyday, the purchasing power of the limited money available to pensioners.

Now, Sir, it is very interesting. All I have to do is to put together those letters that I have received over the past 4 to 6 weeks and when you look at the complaints of government pensioners they themselves realise what is happening to them and that they have less and less money available for basic things like food and clothing and so on. Many of these people live in constant fear of poverty and destitution whilst they are still on this side of the river. So, Sir, we need to look at this thing very seriously and therefore we need to look and see what are the appropriate levels of increases that are necessary, to look and see whether, as Government takes in more money from these various areas in the social service, whether or not it should not be ploughing back more in a larger cost of living allowance or in larger increases in pensions but it is an area which needs to be addressed.

I do not think, certainly not for many a year, have I received so many telephone calls or so much correspondence from any group of people in Barbados, as I have received over the past 4 to 6 weeks from Government pensioners, many of them begging and urging that something be done to help them.

I am very glad, Mr. Speaker, to have had the opportunity to have voiced some of their concerns and I believe that I have been very accurate in describing those particular areas in which greater demands are being made on the small pensions available to the Government pensioners in Barbados. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Dr. R. L. CHELTENHAM: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I am glad for this opportunity to express a few concerns about the elderly in Barbados and particularly about our pensioners and our pension policy. It is, if I may say so, Mr. Speaker, one of the areas in which we need a sustained focus and that sustained focus has to come from the Government even though in the end it is also a concern of corporate leaders and corporate managers to be concerned with the elderly.

The Labour Party must not disconnect itself from its past. Sometimes we forget our own history but it has been rightly pointed out by the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, that the late leader of the Barbados Labour Party, Mr. Tom Adams expressed the Party's commitment to a national integrated pensions scheme and that remains an unrealised item in the agenda of the Barbados Labour Party.

The present administration would be well-advised to take back up that issue because the population of Barbados is greying at an alarming rate, Mr. Speaker, on the same scale as much of the population of Western Europe and that greying while in the short term comes to a climax around 2015 or thereabouts. But starting from about now if indeed we are not already too late we really have to make very widespread provisions for the elderly in Barbados for the future. We have to provide a far larger range of incentives so that the private sector would make provision for the elderly and the pension class in our country. For example, those who are proprietors of retirement homes in Barbados are not helping much and perhaps by way of the next budget or the one to come after that, Government needs to ensure that the proprietors of retirement homes in Barbados are given certain tax free regimes so that they can make better provision for the furnishing of those homes and for equipment generally for them. But the incentives need to go much beyond that.

I believe the time has come, Mr. Speaker, when the Government should put in motion a study on the impact of indexing all Government pensioners. It seems to me that the trade unions would take it up for certain as their next issue and that the country cannot avoid the indexation of pensions in the future. What has happened is in the past, particularly in the period of the late sixties to the late eighties, there were fairly significant increases in the income of Government workers on a 3-yearly basis. At first it used to be on a 5-yearly basis and then it got more frequent, on a 2-yearly basis. But within the last 7 years or thereabouts I think it is fairly clear that the salaries of Government workers will not increase on the scale of the recent past. The result is that their pensions too will not increase on the same scale and there is need for individuals in the country to be encouraged to make provision for their own pensions outside of the Government pensions scheme.

In many countries, upwards of 10% of your taxable income is exempted so that you can pay money into a pension scheme on your own behalf and that is separate and apart from what is deducted for any national pension scheme. In Barbados we are lagging far behind in that regard.

In addition, Mr. Speaker, the National Insurance is only giving a pension based on \$3 100 as your taxable maximum. That too needs to be increased dramatically. The maximum pension you can earn in Barbados right now is about \$1 800 a month and if you are working for \$6 000 or thereabouts or more clearly a pension of only \$1 800 is inadequate and unless you have made private provision to supplement that you will certainly be very deficient as far as your pension income is concerned in your old age. So there are many reasons why we need to look in a very systematic way at our pension provisions and the Government's policy in relation to pensions.

I want to talk about a class that is often forgotten and in 1986 the Barbados Labour Party's administration, led by the Honourable Member for Christ Church South, actually gave a 50% increase, I think it was, to those who had retired prior to 1976. We forget them, Mr. Speaker, but they still constitute a fairly significant class of persons in Barbados. Now they retired before you had the major classifications. For example, take the teachers in the primary school. You will recall Mr. Speaker, that there was around 1978 to 1979 a major reclassification where Headmasters and Deputies actually doubled their income. 12.55 p.m.

Many of them are 80 years and more today and their pensions are very small indeed. If you are talking about policemen, they retired before the PUISINELLI reclassification and there were several other classifications affecting nurses and other sectors of public workers and the \$5.00 increase is most inadequate in relation to them. A special deal must be done in relation to them. But as I said looking into the future, it is clear that unless pensions are indexed there are a lot of sectors of the pensions that will continue to suffer and suffer very acutely. As their life span is extended, you have many people in the 70's and 80's who are suffering very acutely because of inadequate pension. That is happening at a time when the extended family has broken down. It is happening at a time when they do not have the other supports that you used to have in the Barbados of 30 or 40 years ago. It seems to me that the time has come for the Government to take a new look at the whole question of the care of the elderly of which the pension provision is only one of the major components.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on this Resolution and I would like to say that when one looks at the inflation between the years 1991 and 1996, one will realize that these pensioners in truth and

in fact, Sir, really are due to over 14 per cent increase. It is not politics, Sir. The problem is that these pensioners do not have an opportunity now to come and compete with the younger civil servants for a job on the market and we have to find a way of compensating those pensioners for the amount that they would have given up since 1991 up to 1996.

In light of increases that are happening daily, Sir, we really should look at this increase and the 2.5 per cent in my opinion, Sir, is low. I agree with the Prime Minister that we have to find another way of compensating these workers. But, Sir, it is not all just to say that we have to find another way because while these pensioners are waiting for us to find another way a lot of them are suffering. Some of them have situations where sometimes a mahogany tree might fall on their houses and it might be a year, it might be 2 years and they are still waiting on the National Assistance Board to fix that roof. I am saying, Sir, that if you take the increase that they are getting and ask them to repair the roof, the amount of money that they are receiving as an increase cannot repair the roof. So if you are going to ask the pensioners to accept a 2.5 per cent increase, what I am saying is that the Government agencies will have to do more than what they are accustomed doing so that the demand on these pensioners would not be so great. All I am asking, Sir, is that if you are going to say that they are going to get 2.5 per cent that the Government agencies should do their job, Sir, and help these poor pensioners.

Mr. SPEAKER: Two minutes, Sir.

Mr. H. deB. FORDE: Yes, Sir, I am not going to delay the House because I am sure there will be many occasions on which I will have the opportunity to speak on the whole issue of pensions. I have intervened in the debate very briefly merely to advert to some of the suggestions made by Honourable Members, specifically the Honourable Member for St. Joseph about increasing the statutory limit for contribution rate as at present exists under the National Insurance Act.

Mr. Speaker, let me first say that Barbados is projecting a profile of a developed society in many respects and one of the hallmarks of that projection is the ageing population that we have. If we look through, for instance, the vital statistics for the last few years and I have 1990 and 1993 in my hand, you will see that more people are living to an older age and that there is an increase in the number deaths over 80 plus both in the male and female sectors of our population. What that is saying to us is that people are living longer and it is soon going to become almost a natural phenomenon to see people getting to a hundred years very easily. I hope that some Honourable Members in this House will get to that milestone. But the effect is this, Mr. Speaker, Sir. It means therefore that if

we are retiring people at the age at which we now retire them we are carrying them longer either on the national budget if they are being funded as Government pensioners are or on the National Security Scheme. Secondly, it also has the impact that it deprives us to some extent of the human resources and the experience of those persons. One of the areas of national policy that we must address and study very carefully is whether or not as we develop in the next 20 to 30 years the Barbados working population will not have to be an older population. In fact, we are becoming an older population so that the pensionable age may well have to be increased in the future because of the demographic profile which we are presented. If we take a national policy not to increase that profile, then obviously we have some cost factors. I will obtain the Minister's and the Board's approval to make available to Members in due course a study which was undertaken of our National Insurance Scheme. I think that it may surprise Members to find that instead the pensioners lagging behind that in many respects the pensioners have kept ahead of the normal population in terms of the increases of the working population and in terms of the percentage of the increases under successive Governments. That may well surprise a lot of our political people here who have not done a detailed study of these matters but there are figures that support this.

Sir, we also have to be very careful that we do not continue to exclude some classes of people who are in full time employment with the Government but are not appointed. So that we have to look at the legislation dealing with Casual Pensions, for instance, to revise that legislation. I think that the Government I understand is taking that under very serious notice. We also have to put in place for the Government on a permanent basis and not merely on an *ad hoc* basis actuarial advice. Although it comes out of the Consolidated Fund, the Government should be able to look down the road 20 to 30 years possibly 40 years in order to assess its contingent liability for pensions and how much it will cost the country. We also, Sir, have to put in place particularly among the category of persons of whom the Honourable Member for St. Joseph speaks, that is the recognition that there are other avenues for funding retirement. For instance, Sir, I make a plea for a greater use of registered retirement plans under the Income Tax Act. A lot of this is not used.

1.05 p.m.

Aside.

Mr. H. deB. FORDE: Maybe it is not so much the wording of the Act as the administration of the Act, but it is possible to use those private schemes in order to supplement high earners who wish to save and to prepare for their retirement at the standard of living they have been accustomed to. Those are areas we should explore.

Finally, Sir, I wish to give the House the assurance that the actuarial study required under the National Insurance Act, the last study was delayed but we have now had that report and the report has been forwarded to the Minister and I hope soon that it will be before the House. That only relates to the National Insurance Scheme, but I would respectfully suggest that perhaps the Government would wish to move to the stage where we do have permanent actuarial advice to deal with most of these matters.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Mr. Speaker, I rise to conclude the debate and to thank Members on both sides for the very constructive suggestions that have been proffered on this very important matter. I have already signalled that savings and a radical change in the country's instruments for savings are occupying the Ministry of Finance and will be addressed shortly. I will add the suggestions that have originated from the Floor of this House in relation to the matter in which pension plans and pension arrangements can be amplified in Barbados to the additional list the Government has received from other sections of the society in relation to the broadening of plans for the generation of savings and for the general change in the country's pension plan arrangements. In fact, I would go so far as to say that Barbados truly needs and will soon get a fairly drastic change in the arrangement for investing through the accumulation of pension income. I will say no more on the matter at this stage.

Aside,

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: It is an important matter the House has addressed elsewhere, and the House has addressed it because it is an issue that has been addressed, for example, in Chile. Chile pioneered an arrangement whereby there was a larger individual input into a person's arrangement for pension that has been a model in places like Mexico. The House can be assured that this matter is receiving attention and will soon be addressed. We will have a full debate in all of its manifestations, because the plight of Government pensioners is but part of the general plight of pensioners in general in Barbados and has to do with the fact that pension rights accumulated in one period obviously can be eroded by changing prices over a period of time. In this respect, if we are to address the question of new arrangements for Government pensioners, then I believe quite frankly that the manner in which it should be addressed is the change in the provision that says that the statutory rate of a basic pension cannot exceed half of the last salary of the recipient. That is where the problem is, Sir, because a person's income accruing in the sixties or the seventies obviously cannot now be the constraint that governs the level of income a person has access to in the nineties by way of a pension. I feel that periodic adjustments in the base that free us from the legal

restriction that says that a person's statutory rate of a pension cannot exceed half of his salary is where we have to start.

Aside.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Indexation alone, as proposed, is not the solution. We have to make periodic adjustments in the base, but indexation if applied would have meant that if the rate of inflation is 1.7%, then the pensioner would be getting around 1.7% and indexation in that sense does not make sense. We have to free ourselves of the legal limitations that a person's basic pension cannot be more than half of his last salary. That is going to be the starting point of the adjustment.

Sir, Members of both sides of this House drew reference to problems in relation to the land tax appeal system of Barbados. I will give Members the assurance that I will have their complaints investigated and if Members would be good enough to bring to my attention cases of any persons who lack the means to pay land tax, who have appealed to the Land Tax Appeal Board for relief and have not received relief, the necessary action will be taken for relief to be granted. I say that to make the general point that there is still a Land Tax Appeal Board in existence. It is intended to carry out the policy that has been in existence from time immemorial, that where it can be demonstrated that a person does not have the means, particularly pensioners, relief should be granted. There has been no change of policy. If there are instances which Members can document where persons are being disadvantaged, I give the House the assurance that the matter will be addressed.

Some Members of Parliament referred to the Government's aggressive tax collection policy as it pertains particularly to the collection of water rates arrears. I just want to remind this Parliament that as one of the conditions of the IADB loan for the South Coast Sewerage Project, this is a fact, insofar as the Barbados Water Authority is responsible for the repayment of part of the loan, the understanding and one of the conditions has been that the Water Authority has substantially to work down the arrears owed it by the public. The inability of the Water Authority in fact to work down substantially the arrears with a view to putting itself in a position to repay the loan that is being raised, almost \$100 million, to put in a sewerage system, has been one of the factors that has disabled us from being able to access the funds to get the sewerage works carried out as expeditiously as we would wish. Members spoke in terms of the Government's inability to start the Capital Programme, and I have told the House that part of the problem is the conditionalities attached to some of these loans that were negotiated some time before. The Barbados Water Authority therefore has a programme of

reduction for the portion of its arrears relative to its income, and it is working to have those arrears put in such a condition that we can get on with the business of having the sewerage project completed. It is adopting a sensitive approach to situations of hardship, but it is also the case, Mr. Speaker, that there are too many people in Barbados who feel that they should pay Light & Power because they will turn off their lights if they do not pay, they pay the telephone bills, but they do not believe they should pay the Water Authority. I would suggest to the House that it is a great shame that nobody is in arrears to Light & Power, nobody is in arrears to the Telephone Company, but you have a situation where a Government owned statutory institution providing a basic need finds itself in a situation where over \$20 million is owed to it by the public of Barbados.

I give the House the assurance, Mr. Speaker, that this matter of the collection of arrears will be sensitively addressed and generally that the Government will not use the collection of arrears as a means of imposing hardship.
1.15 p.m.

I also want to take this opportunity to give Members on the other side the assurance that there will be nothing contained in the valued added tax that will impose hardship on any section of the Barbadian society, including pensioners, including small businessmen, beyond what would have been agreed to by the Democratic Labour Party Cabinet when the question of a VAT went before the Democratic Labour Party Cabinet. The House will see by way of comparative analyses, because they will be done, that the VAT arrangements that will eventually be put in place will be less exacting than those that were agreed to by the Democratic Labour Party Cabinet.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, we now have the quite unfortunate situation where too often members of the former Democratic Labour Party Cabinet who agreed for example to impose fees on students at the University when they were in Government and agreed to that as a matter of policy...

Mr. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order, Sir. I draw Your Honour's attention to the Rules concerning relevance.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR Mr. Speaker, the question of the VAT was raised and insofar as it was raised and acknowledged as having been relevant for the purposes of this debate, I want to speak to the issues as they were set out.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Rt. Honourable Member is asked to wind up.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: I am winding up, Sir. Already there is a kind of opinion that is being propagated by persons who conceived the VAT, spent large amounts of time trying to construct a VAT, settled positions as to what a VAT will represent and there is now an opinion being taken by those same persons about the inequities of the very VAT that they themselves conceived of and structured. I just want to make the point, Sir, that there is nothing that is being proposed by the new VAT on any sector or any group in Barbados that is more exacting than the Democratic Labour Party Cabinet agreed to.

We have taken a position, even in Opposition, that we would support a VAT. The Democratic Labour Party took a position that they would support a VAT. The **NDP** has taken a position that they will support a VAT and I want to repeat that there will be no measures involved in the introduction of a VAT that will be more exacting than those agreed to by the former Democratic Labour Party Cabinet and those persons like the Member for St. Michael East who was a member of the Cabinet...

Mr. SPEAKER: Order! Please! Honourable Prime Minister, I would prefer you to address the Resolution before the House. You are really going away from the Resolution.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, the matter of the VAT was raised.

Mr. SPEAKER: This does not mean that you can go on on that topic. The matter was raised. You have answered the query that was raised. VAT is not the question before the House, please.

Rt. Hon. O. S. ARTHUR: Sir, I was just about to conclude by saying that those persons who, like the Member for St. Michael East, agreed to the introduction of university fees while in Government but oppose it in Opposition, those persons will not be allowed to continue with double standards in the presentation of their public opinions.

I beg to move, Sir, that this Resolution do now pass.

Mr. SPEAKER: On what do you rise, Sir?

Mr. J. O. TUDOR: The Rt. Honourable Prime Minister knows full well that I was a member of Cabinet and I never agreed to the charging of any fees to any student anywhere. The Rt. Honourable Prime Minister should know that he is now the Prime Minister and Leader of this country and he can make his own decision. Because the Democratic Labour Party might have, would have or could have is not the point. He is the Prime Minister

of this country and the leader of a government and he can make his own decision. He does not have to introduce VAT. He can go against whatever the Democratic Labour Party introduced.

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

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, this concludes Government's Business for the day. I beg to move

that the House do now adjourn until Tuesday, April 30, 1996 at 11 a.m.

Hon. R. C. EASTMOND: I beg to second that.

The question that the House do now adjourn until Tuesday, April 30, 1996 was put and resolved in the affirmative and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.
1.23 p.m.

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CHELtenham, Dr. R. L. (St. Joseph)
CLARKE, Mr. **G. A.** (St. George North)
FORDE, Mr. H. **deB.** (Christ Church West)
HAYNES, Dr. R. C. (St. Michael South Central)
KELLMAN, Mr. D. St. E. (St. Lucy)
MARSHALL, His Honour R. D. (St. Michael
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PAYNE, Hon. **G. W.** (St. Andrew)
St. JOHN, Hon. Sir Harold B. (Christ Church South)
TAITT, Mr. B. M. (St. Michael West)
THOMPSON, Mr. D. J. H. (St. John)
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