THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1994 – 99

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, July 23, 1996

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 11.15 a.m. on Tuesday, July 23, 1996.

PRESENT

His Honour I. A. ROETT, B.A., Dip. Ed. (Speaker)
His Honour R. D. MARSHALL, (Deputy Speaker)
Mr. B. M. TAITT, B.A. (Hons.), M.P.A., LL.B. (Hons.)
Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON, LL.B. (Hons.)
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.)
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. 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 in the 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. Father Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: This House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, July 16, 1996.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move that the Minutes of Proceedings of the Honourable the House of Assembly for its meeting of the 16th day of July, 1996, which Minutes have been circulated be taken as read.

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

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

ORAL REPLIES TO QUESTIONS

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice that the reply to Parliamentary Question Number 23 asked by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is ready.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, 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.

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

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

Government Business is now the Order of the day.

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

ORDER NO. 9 – RESOLUTION TO APPROVE SALE OF LAND TO MICHAEL COZIER TOGETHER WITH THE BUILDING THEREON AT GLENDALE, ST. THOMAS

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I beg to move a Resolution for the acquisition of a property which formerly housed the Glendale Children's Home in St. Thomas to Mr. Michael Cozier. Mr. Speaker, this property is being sold by Government in pursuance of an earlier policy by the Planning and Priorities Committee to dispose of Government owned properties that have been abandoned or are derelict.

It was at one time thought that we would have been able to utilize this property together with the land in the surrounding area of Forty Acres for housing purposes. Again in pursuance of a recent policy of Government to utilize marginal lands on the periphery of existing villages for housing purposes and this particular property had been earmarked as I said together with the Forty Acres area.

The parliamentary representative for St. Thomas who had identified this area in keeping with that policy has subsequently indicated that near Arch Hall, the Bennetts area spanning a total of about 33 acres would be better suited for housing development in that particular area. In addition to the housing development we are also hoping to include recreational facilities, construction of a police station, construction of a fire station among others.

As a result this means that the property at Glendale would be vacant. The building itself is derelict in a sense and as I indicated we had originally intended to demolish it. Government has now taken the decision that we would dispose of it. It encompasses about 4.790 acres of land. It was put out to tender. There were about 12 persons who had expressed an interest in purchasing the said property and the bid put in by Mr. Michael Cozier was the highest of the bids on this particular property. The Tenders Committee therefore made the recommendation to sell the property to Mr. Cozier who incidentally also owns land in the adjoining area.

This Resolution now seeks therefore to have Parliamentary permission to dispose of the said land to Mr. Cozier. It is hoped that he will be able to refurbish the said property and in this way we will be pursuing the acquisition in Bennetts instead.

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

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Honourable Member for giving way. I will not be very long as the questions which I am going to pose are not questions that the Minister of Housing could easily answer. In fact I believe there are questions for the Minister of child w e who is not present but is in fact at the Olympics.

I suppose, Mr. Speaker, Sir, were he not there I would not know that Barbados had a Minister of Sports but I am very grateful that he did go to the Olympics *so* that the international audience would know that we do have a Minister of Sports.
11.25 a.m.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, Sir, we refer to this Chamber as this Honourable Chamber. We are all Honourable Members in here. It does not behove any of us to trivialise an important matter like this. It is nothing new. A former Minister of Sports went to an earlier Olympics. There is nothing new in that. But this is not the place. I know that Your Honour cannot see who is in the Gallery, but this is not the place to hold up to ridicule a Member of the Cabinet or any Honourable Member of this House. Let us operate at a certain level, please.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: All of those fulminations, Mr. Speaker, will not circumscribe how I debate an issue in this Chamber. I am saying that I am drawing to the attention of this House the fact that the Minister of Sports, who is also the Minister responsible for child care, is at the Olympics. Had I not done that act, we would not have missed him and I am certain that the Honourable Member for the City would agree with me in that regard. That she is upset that I started the debate on that light note. . . .

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, please. Could we proceed, please?

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: I will get on with the substance of the issue. This acquisition essentially arises from the abandonment of the use of the property known as Glendale, which was formerly a Children's Home. Mr. Speaker, as I understood it, the previous Government abandoned the use of Glendale Children's Home because of the condition of the building. I thought it was a very sensible decision to take at the time. At the time it was abandoned I believe I was the Minister responsible for child care and what we had in place at the time was about $200 000, or perhaps even more, which were the proceeds of a telethon held by CBC and the Child Care Board to raise money for the refurbishment and repair of Children's Homes. That particular telethon and the proceeds of it was quite successful and the proceeds were put into a bank account but were never utilised because of problems in the way in which the account was set up and the way in which the persons on the Committee were appointed, *so* that when the refurbishment of those particular Children's Homes was no longer necessary, the question was whether the

proceeds could be used for another purpose. One of the suggestions which came out of it was that a large facility should be built for children at Glendale, which I assume is not now on the cards anymore and the Government is proceeding with its own &sign with respect not only to the use of the Glendale property but also with respect to the use of those funds which were collected by the Child Care Board.

Mr. Speaker, 1 have no problem with the use of those funds for other purposes, but I believe that if the Child Care Board and CBC together have agreed to use the funds for other purposes than those for which they were raised at the telethon, the persons who contributed to that telethon should be told that those funds are being used for alternative purposes, even if those purposes are more worthy than the ones for which the funds were collected.

I do not wish to bestir the Minister for child care from his leisurely pace as a Minister, but I believe he should at least pay some attention, together with the Board which he appointed to oversee child care matters, to that particular aspect of it and attention should be paid immediately to informing those persons who made contributions to that telethon that the funds are being used for other purposes and to seeking their concurrence for the use of those funds in that way.

I was never happy from the outset at how that fund was set up and I assume that whatever arrangements were made between CBC and the Government would be arrangements which are satisfactory to all the parties and that a full accounting will be given to the public, and particularly the persons who contributed to the telethon, about how those funds are being utilised. I have already heard the announcement that the funds are being used to assist in that area and I am not objecting to that, but I believe a full account should be given about how the funds are being spent, in what areas they will be assisting the Child Care Board and that nothing less than that would be acceptable. Perhaps if the Minister were here, in view of the fact that the property therefore is not going to be used anymore for the construction of this modem facility for the children who are brought under the ambit of the Child Care Board, as distinct from those who are fostered in Barbados, perhaps the Government could tell us whether it has agreed with those persons who strongly recommend that almost all of the children in Children's Homes should be fostered out, whether it will be scaling down the operations of the Children's Homes per se, or whether there is some other philosophy in relation to child care which informs Government's decision making since September, 1994.

As I said, while I do not expect those questions to be answered today, and it is regrettable that the Minister is not here, certainly he now has enough time to register the concerns which the Opposition has raised and, hopefully, on a future occasion he can answer those questions and explain more fully the Government's policy relative to child care matters, the operations of the Child Care Board and the approach which will be adopted in relation to children in care.

Those are our only concerns. I have no concerns about the actual acquisition of the land or the presentation of the Minister of Housing per se, and this Resolution therefore will not be divisive and will not be one which we are opposing or are unlikely to support.

Hon. Sir HAROLD St. JOHN: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I just have a few observations not so much on the disposal of this piece of land, because I am one of those who believe that if Government owns land and they have no plans for it that it should be disposed of because Government itself periodically has to acquire land, and unless it disposes of some of its land it will not have the wherewithal without additional taxation to be able to pay for the land it acquires.

In this case I think all of us who follow these matters would be well satisfied with the effort Government made to acquire the best price. I remember seeing a number of advertisements inviting people to submit their tenders for this piece of land and, as I understand it from the Honourable Minister's speech, the land is being sold to the highest bidder as the result of a public tendering process. That is a transparent process and therefore one cannot quarrel with that.

What I am concerned about though is some of the remarks made by the Honourable Member in introducing this Resolution. I am very disturbed over the fact that the Ministry of Housing does not seem at the present moment to have a very clear idea in its mind about the reform of the laws relating to town planning, which although it is not the Ministry's immediate responsibility is a matter which many of us have been raising in here, certainly for the last 25 years.

11.35 a.m.

The town planning law in Barbados is totally out of date. We, periodically, have a review of the plans for the urban and the suburban areas, and the Honourable Minister stated that originally this land was earmarked for the development of a police station, a court and a few other public amenities which are unquestionably needed. There is no doubt that there is a need for a new magistrates' court, there is a need, I understand, having regard to the fact that the experience over the years with that particular area with cane fires and things of that kind, for a fire station in that area.

My understanding of physical planning in Barbados was that the area that was designated for urban development under successive administrations was the area around the Warrens/Jackson/Cane Garden area, that

that was the area that was going to be intensively developed by way of the provision of governmental institutions as well as the provision of land for private sector development. Now that area was picked because of the fact, and those who know St. Thomas would know that Warrens is where the two end, so St. Thomas actually meet at that point. There is one section which borders on St. Joseph and one section which borders on St. James and it is at that cross section that they meet.

It would seem to me that the logical consequence of that would be that the development of a police station, of a court, of a fire station would be in that area. All the bus services, all the other means of communication meet at that point and I would hope that the Honourable Minister from the point of view of the acquisition of land would seriously consider whether, in view of the developments that are taking place there and particularly have taken place there, the infrastructural development in the form of the road systems and all of that, it would not be more desirable for that area to be designated as the area for the public sector buildings. That is of course without prejudice to the legitimate desire which all of us as Members of Parliament must have, that is, the provision of adequate house spots to satisfy the demand of our constituents.

Everybody in here has the pressure and this pressure has been intensified over the years, particularly because of the neglect of the last 10 years in this area. Apart from that, Sir, the point is that no administration has ever been able to satisfy the demand for house spots. It seems to me, Sir, as a person who is interested in the physical planning and who has made a special study of the development of sub towns in Barbados that consideration should be given to the more intensive development of that area which has been designated for public sector buildings without prejudice of course to the acquisition of other lands in an appropriate area in St. Thomas for the housing development of the constituency.

The last thing I have, Sir, is that I still am one of those who believe that we should as a matter of policy try our level best not to utilise agricultural land but to look very carefully to see if we can find alternate rab land for housing before we use agricultural land. I mean by that, within my definition, I don't mean land that has been not utilised for a number of years because of the economics of agriculture. I mean land which has agricultural potential but which has been abandoned and which within the last 10 years could unquestionably have been proven to have been used for agriculture but has been abandoned so to speak for the last 10 years.

I trust, Sir, that these two objectives can be carried out.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Speaker, Sir, I shall not be long and as the Leader said this is not a controversial Resolution. I am glad to see the Honourable Member for Christ Church South has finally been able to say publicly his confession of neglect, because he spoke about the last 10 years and I am sure as Prime Minister during that 10-year period he would have contributed significantly to the neglect of which he now speaks.

Either that, or the present Government has contributed in the last 2 years. I do not know if he is attacking the Government for the last 2 years of neglect or for the 85-86 period. I am glad that he recognises that not much had been done during his time and during the present time.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, I want to ask the Minister if he is giving active consideration to a recommendation which I made in this House since he has been Minister and which I had made before. This whole question of listing all of the properties under the control of the Government, those that are abandoned, those that are derelict, those that are near derelict. There is a fairly large number of properties across Barbados that fall under the aegis of the Government I have a suspicion that nobody knows how much land the Government owns and where. All of us have called for this back and forth from time immemorial, but it seems to me an attempt has to be made and the Minister has an opportunity to list all these properties and take into account what the last Honourable Member said about the planning so that we can have a systematic approach to the privatisation of small tracts of land or small properties so that everybody can get an opportunity to participate in owning some of these properties.

There are some of them that are located in places where the only use that could properly be made of them would be to allow residents in the areas to acquire the bits and pieces of land. I believe that successive Ministers responsible for Lands have tried to do something along these lines, but we still need from time to time to pass the odd acquisition here, the odd approval of sale there and one still has a very sketchy picture of what is happening across the country.

I hope that when the Minister responds he will be able to say that he is looking at or having someone take on this as a project. As a matter of fact, I am fairly certain that in pursuing this as a project, funding for doing it in a systematic way could be made available from one of the agencies, either an agency that is concerned with environmental integrity or one that is interested in development for such. It certainly seems to me that the time has come for the Government to divest itself of some of these properties that lie around the country which are constantly and continuingly, if you would pardon the expression, falling into disrepair. It is not desirable that

the citizens of Barbados should be required to do something about their derelict properties while the Government continues, no matter who is the administration, to have derelict properties with which it does nothing or to which nothing happens.
11.45 a.m.

Mr. Speaker, I have no particular difficulty with the Resolution. I will not speak to the issue of the CBC telethon, although I had some knowledge of how it was brought about and what it is to do. I, too, am interested to hear the Minister's answer as to what finally will happen to these funds, bearing in mind the well-known law of trust principle that funds collected for a particular purpose must be used for that purpose or returned.

Aside.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Either set aside by the courts, as the Honourable Member reminded me, or return the funds to those who contributed them. This is fairly simple ...

Asides.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Not similar purpose. That is for acquisitions. The Honourable Member is saying from his seat similar purpose. Funds that are collected from the public for a specific charity or purpose must be so used or they have to be returned unless the courts, as a matter of policy, agree otherwise. That is trite law.

Asides.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Speaker, Sir, they wish me to act freely. I am not going to do that, Sir.

Sir, I hope that the Minister will give us a response on that because it is important. If necessary, I believe that he can go the courts and ask for a change in the use of funds. It was way over $200 000. My recollection is that the funds were solicited for the repair of Children's homes, so it may be possible to use the funds for the repair of other homes, but we would like to hear what happened to those funds.

Mr. Speaker, on the question of the location of facilities in the St. Thomas area. I am not sure if St. Thomas can bear any more public institutions. It seems to me that recently every time we speak in here about development it is either in St. Peter or St. Thomas. Latterly the City has been getting a "look in" but I do not see any evidence yet. St. Thomas and St. Peter seem to be overburdened. I would just draw to the Minister's attention the desirability of not overburdening the land with too much development.

That notwithstanding, Sir, my understanding was that the land around...

Asides.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: ... the Welchman Hall area. My understanding was, I believe the Member for St. Thomas at one point indicated, that we were putting a Post Office in Welchman Hall. Has that been abandoned? We were going to put a police station in Welchman Hall, and we were going to put a fire station in Welchman Hall. My last understanding was that Welchman Hall has been identified as a kind of cosmopolitan area in St. Thomas that could benefit from the proximity of services, just as the Honourable Member for Christ Church South has managed to get these services in close juxtaposition in Oistins when he had the opportunity to make that very worthy recommendation.

Asides.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: The Honourable Member forgot to add something to his speech when he spoke, Sir. I hope the Minister will be able to confirm for us that the plan to develop Welchman Hall has not been abandoned. If so, what is the alternative plan?

Mr. Speaker, while we are talking about developments in St. Thomas, recently persons have been writing in the newspaper in a very disparaging way about those who had planned the landfill in St. Thomas. I could only conclude that these are persons who are unfamiliar with the breadth of vision of the late Tom Adams, because it was none other than the late Tom Adams who had identified Mangrove as the place for the landfill.

He did that on a scientific basis. Tom Adams had a clear knowledge of the configuration of Barbados' surface, and Tom Adams understood that the Mangrove area is one of the few reasonably sized areas in Zone 5. He wrote on the files, I hope that the files are still available, that Mangrove was undoubtedly the best place in Barbados for a landfill. It was Tom Adams himself, in his own hand, Sir.

Asides.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: The whole of Mangrove. In his own hand. The late Tom Adams wrote it down that Mangrove was the best place for a landfill in Barbados. Check the files and you will find it.

So, Sir, these persons who are writing disparagingly about the lack of planning and the lack of foresight in putting a landfill in Mangrove need not continue desecrating the memory of one of the better planners we have had in the Barbados Labour Party Governments over the last 50 years.

There is no question that Tom Adams had more vision about where landfills should go than any other Member of the Barbados Labour Party.

Asides.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Speaker, I do not understand.

Mr. SPEAKER: Order please, order, order please.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Speaker, I do not understand...

Mr. SPEAKER: Order, please, order.

Asides.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: Mr. Speaker, what evil have I wrought, Sir? I have merely drawn to the attention of the Honourable Minister that planning for St. Thomas was well underway by a representative who understood the concept of representation. The Honourable Member would do well to look at the possibility of resiting those people in Bridgefield, St. Thomas, in keeping with what the Honourable Member for Christ Church South has suggested. A proper planning for St. Thomas would envisage the removal of persons from Arch Hall and Bennetts and putting them in Bridgefield, land that is clear, land that has no difficulty whatsoever and that would allow a great vision of Tom Adams for this country to come to fruition, Sir.

It would help in the total planning of the area where, as the Honourable Member said, the two main spurs come to rest in St. Thomas.

On another occasion, because this is only an acquisition, Sir, and I do not wish to ...

Asides.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: I recognise, Sir, that in the interest of completeness you allowed me some latitude, and I would not wish to trample on your generosity in this matter, Sir. I am very grateful to Your Honour, but I hope the Minister would assist me in my understanding of these matters when he gets up to respond.

Thank you, Sir.
11.55 a.m.

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Giving the poor people land is giving away land, Mr. Speaker? The Minister of Housing and Lands is telling me that giving poor people land is giving away land.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. I have not spoken since the Honourable Member got up on his feet.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: They tell me something about siting a landfill is nothing to do with housing. Once you are in housing anything is housing, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that I am not in here to represent anybody who can pay for anything. I am in here to represent people who cannot afford to pay and who have the right to acquire a piece of land in this country. So if the front bench is telling me that they agree with the mouthings of the Minister, say it. If they are saying that, Mr. Speaker, let them say it.

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I have already stated it. You are telling me, Sir, that if a piece of land in the City is up for grabs that any and everybody can come and use the price factor as the main factor. Let me give you an example.

Suppose now the Honourable Member for the City wanted a housing unit in the City and somebody because they feel they have a lot of money offered the Minister of Housing $5 million when 1 500 people could be housed that we are going to take the $5 million and ignore the 1 500 poor people in this country?

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Barbados Labour Party is taking care of the people in the City. The Pondside building will start before the end of this year.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: You are worrying about the City and not worrying about the poor people in St. Thomas? I live in St. Thomas too so I have to defend them then. I have to defend the people in St. Thomas and St. Lucy. The same way you have a right, and I must congratulate you for looking after the people of the City, that is why I have a right to look after the poor people of this country.

Mr. Speaker, this policy is a dangerous policy and I know that you cannot agree with this, Mr. Speaker, because the people in Bank Hall, Bush Hall and Quarry Road would never get an opportunity to get a piece of the cake. When Government property is up for grabs, Sir, I am saying the price cannot be the only factor.

Mr. Speaker, I have a problem that the same way in this country that Governments tend to use interest rates as the only factor to borrow loans, now they are using the price. You remember what happened to those Japanese loans? Just because the interest rate was the factor and it was low, they ran and borrowed the money and we ended up paying over $60 million to the Japanese. That foolishness must stop in this country. We must have policies in this country that represent the interest of the poor man as long as I am in here.

Let me tell you something. All those people who feel that they have money and they want to sell us, let them continue to try it. I will be fearless.

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I am saying that we have dealt with housing in this country, and I am going into phase 2 now. We have a situation in this country where housing lots were left in this country to be developed and they have not been developed. There are Ministers who want to attack the Honourable Member for St. Lucy for not giving suggestions. I am going to say it in here for the third time. I will give suggestions for lots in St. Lucy when the ones at Mount Poyer are completed and when the ones at Hope Road have been fairly allocated to the people, but you cannot come in here and ask me to go and identify areas so that you can come back later and tell poor people that I took away their land from them.

I am saying, Sir, that we have an area that we compulsorily acquired and when I say "we," I mean the Democratic Labour Party, at Mount Poyer for housing lots. Nothing has been done about that. It happened in 1994 and this is 1996 and you went on television and tell people that you asked me for a recommendation and I have done nothing about it? You asked me to supply roads. I have supplied 40 roads in St. Lucy and I have not seen anything done yet. Furthermore than getting the roads, I cannot even get a road repaired, and you are telling me about suggestions? I will give suggestions and submissions, Mr. Speaker, when I see action. But if you are going to make me put pen to paper and waste money, I have no money to waste. This is a serious time.

Mr. Speaker, Glendale in St. Thomas. I am saying that we have to stop increasing the land bank of people in Barbados and give every poor citizen the right in this country to have a share of the cake. This thing where people feel they can just come and dish out money and get whatever they want, I am not party to that. When the poor people start to get some of the goodies, I will support that, Sir.

Thank you very much.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I want to support this Resolution for the sale of a derelict building at the former Glendale Children's Home, St. Thomas to Michael Cozier who has successfully bid for this property. It is important, Mr. Speaker, for us to look at opportunities for Barbadians and the Honourable Member who has just sat down keeps referring to poor Barbadians, poor black people. Everyone gets up from time to time to represent the poor black people but I wonder if the Honourable Member for St. Lucy has just come to town.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: On a point of order, Sir. Nowhere in my speech have I spoken about poor black people. Not that I want to dissociate myself from those remarks he has made but I have not mentioned it, and I am not scared to use it but I do not want him to put words in my mouth, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, the member referred to poor people. The point must be made that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy had a chance during the period 1986 to 1994 to help give the poor people land in this country. There were lands lying in St. Lucy for a number of years owned by the National Housing Corporation that were never used. I remember one member who has passed away now saying to me a couple of years ago, at one time on that side, when there was an election he decided he wanted to give some people some spots. He went down there with a tape, some twine and started measuring out house spots for people.

We need to set the record straight, Mr. Speaker. Since September 1994 this Government has provided opportunities whereby the poor people of this country can obtain house spots. We have acquired more than 50 acres of land between 1994 and today. All of this is intended to provide house spots for poor people. I have been on record and at pains to say that it is Government's intention to provide house spots for people because we believe that if it is one thing a person should own, it is a piece of land.

There was a time, Mr. Speaker, in this world when people believed in socialism, where people believed the Government should own everything. There was a time in this country and in the world at large when Governments had to own everything. There was a time when the socialist world believed that the State had to own all the resources of a country and the State dished out to people who supported the State, the hierarchy and the executive of that party, a few acres of land and the majority of people had to suffer. But since the days of socialism we are now into a free market society. We are now into a mixed economy, Mr. Speaker, where the State is providing opportunity for the majority of people to own something. This is the first attempt since the 1937 riots that black people have an opportunity to own something in this country. Black people are now owning.

12.05 p.m.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order, Sir. Mr. Speaker, Sir, I draw Your Honour's attention to the need, under the rules, for a Member to be relevant. The Honourable Member cannot make that statement in the light of the sterling role which the Barbados Labour Party, as a Government in this country, has performed in the fifties, and the Democratic Labour Party since then. The Honourable Member might be too young to understand but he must not talk rubbish just for the sake of talking.

Mr. SPEAKER: Please, please, please.

Mr. G. W. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the Honourable Member is a kingpin at distortion.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member....

Mr. G. W. CLARKE: I withdraw the remark, Sir. Mr. Speaker...

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member, please, please! I think that the debate is going a bit far and wide now. Could you focus on the Resolution which is before the House. We do not really want to get into any political debate. Please!

Mr. G. W. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, we are focussing on ownership. The key word is ownership where we are selling this land to a man who has successfully bid. I am making a point and it is open for debate that this is the very first attempt and that Government is serious about making Barbadians true owners of something. I am saying that the records of this House will show that the period of the 1950s and 1960s was a period when Barbadians were given a number of things by the State and the State controlled the majority of the resources of this country. I am saying it is an attempt at this stage to divest some of the resources where Barbadians can own something.

If you look at the plantations in this area, Mr. Speaker, you will find that the majority of plantations are still owned by foreign expatriates and the Government is making an attempt. I am saying if you look at the records, Mr. Speaker, the majority of homes in this country are still rented, they are still controlled by a few landlords, therefore it is Government's intention to provide opportunity whereby poor people can obtain house spots. That is why we have bought the 50 or so acres.

The Glendale Home is not suitable for cutting up into house spots. We have, Mr. Speaker, a number of derelict buildings throughout Barbados. In fact, in the constituency of the Honourable Member for St. George South there is the old medical home, Buttals. Buttals will soon be sold. There are a number of old baths across Barbados, derelict buildings, which will soon be sold and which the Government has committed and a large number of people have offered and have purchased these buildings.

We have, Mr. Speaker, to set a policy in place. The present policy is that the highest bidder would automatically get the property. Are we saying that we want to reverse that decision that was made years ago in this Honourable House? Opportunities are made available to a number of poor people to acquire land. At the National Housing Authority there is a policy in place where only if you own property already you cannot own property again. You can only acquire one property at a time and your income has to be a certain level so that poor people can obtain house spots.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: On a point of order, Sir. Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member is misleading the House. If this is National Housing Land, Sir, and you can only own one piece of land, this person cannot purchase this land because he owns a whole plantation.

Mr. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, this land belongs to the Crown. The point I was making is that a person cannot own more than one piece of land if he wants to purchase a piece of land from National Housing. It is only one piece at a time. But opportunities are there, Mr. Speaker, through the Housing Credit Fund, through the General Workers Loan Fund, for people to obtain loans. The Minister of Housing has been at pains to find out that we need to change the criteria where poor people can obtain loans.

I understand that a number of people get problems but we have been saying and we are moving towards a policy whereby a person can obtain loans at a much faster rate. We understand the problems of red tape but we hope that within the near future we can alleviate some of the problems that are now faced at the National Housing Corporation when obtaining these loans.

Mr. Speaker, there are other problems that we are confronted with today. For example the Honourable Member asked if Government knows the number of areas of land that they own. An institution was set up under the Ministry of Housing, Property Management Division, in 1985 and terrier officers were appointed to look at lands that Government owns. Government owns a number of properties throughout the island. Sometimes we do not know the full amount but I believe it is more than 500 pieces of land that Government owns. A list has now been compiled and sometimes it may not be totally accurate because every time you hear Government owns a property you have it recorded.

The Honourable Member for Christ Church South has told me on numerous occasions that we own a number of parcels of land in the Christ Church area. So Government owns a lot of property. We must divest. When Government divests some of its resources, Mr. Speaker, it will help to increase employment, it helps to increase ownership and it helps to reduce the national debt. So Government has to divest itself of some of its property.

These is another problem that we face today. The Honourable Member was talking about the derelict buildings within his constituency. St. Michael has a host

of derelict buildings that need to be cleaned up. I am glad to see that the Ministry of Health is trying to earmark these buildings for cleaning. Mr. Speaker, what is the cause of these derelict buildings? House fires have been on the increase this year. Only last weekend, Mr. Speaker, there were about 4 house fires. I think there were two in your constituency. So far, Mr. Speaker, there have been 77 house fires for the year. Seventy-seven in comparison with 68 last year. So the house fires have been on the increase. When these house fires occur, Mr. Speaker, these buildings remain derelict for a number of years. Sometimes these buildings are owned by Government, other times they are owned by landlords who live abroad. I passed through Belleville recently, Mr. Speaker, and the number of derelict buildings I see is so amazing that we need to do something about them. Therefore, the sale of Government buildings is important.
12.15 p.m.

Mr. Speaker, I would only want to say that this Resolution is important. We want to support it and I hope that in the near future more and more Barbadians will acquire land based on a policy of the Government.

Mr. W. C. C. CALLENDER: Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this Resolution. I am a great supporter of the poor people of Barbados wherever they reside, whether they reside in St. Lucy or, to the other extreme, in Christ Church East or St. Philip. But I believe that one has to look at any situation that comes before Parliament in a realistic manner. One has to look at the facts and one then has to arrive at some kind of solution based on the facts that are presented.

Mr. Speaker, I do not really relish the idea of just bandying about words to create an impression and therefore to mislead the Honourable Chamber and then perhaps find other sources to mislead Barbados. The issue before us has nothing whatsoever to do with what the Honourable Member for St. Lucy would have us believe it has to deal with. It is not a question of selling this land to one person instead of to another. As a matter of fact, if the facts were checked one would see that there was no poor person who really wanted this land.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House, because the Minister in his opening remarks said it was sold to the highest bidder. The impression given therein is that they had more than one bidder. If there was one bidder the Minister would have said that at that time.

Mr. W. C. C. CALLENDER: Mr. Speaker, I wish to make the point, and as the Minister will speak he will clearly show, that there were no poor bidders in this exercise.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order, Sir. The Honourable Member has no access to the files. The Honourable Member is in no position to instruct this House as to what the Minister will say, because my understanding of the system we have is that the Honourable Member would have had no access whatsoever to the files, and unless the Honourable Member can state categorically that he has perused the files and he now knows what he is speaking of, I think the Honourable Member is misleading the House.

Mr. W. C. C. CALLENDER: Mr. Speaker, I believe that in any good party system members will be advised generally of matters that are brought before the House. So in speaking generally, Sir, I am saying that I am in a position to say that the people who were bidding for this contract were not poor ordinary people like myself, but rather a number of people who already have a number of properties under their belt, and that the gentleman to whom the Government is selling this property is a reasonable hard working gentleman who has been engaged in agriculture for many years, a hard working citizen of this country whose property lies next door to Glendale Children's Home and who wants to acquire the land for diversification of agriculture, which is so important to us. A gentleman who employs a number of poor people in St. Thomas. A gentleman who is acquiring this land not for housing development, like so many others.

Mr. D. J. H. THOMPSON: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. The people who work hard in agriculture in this country are the people who cut canes and use a hoe and a dung basket and work hard in the fields in the hot sun. The person who is buying this land is not one of those people, and those are the people on whose behalf the Honourable Member for St. Lucy is speaking. He can defend his interest, we will defend ours.

Mr. W. C. C. CALLENDER: Mr. Speaker, I am not here to defend the owner of this land, but what I can tell you is that the owner I know is one who would have worked in the fields as well. The point I am making is that the sale of this land will afford this gentleman to employ other people from the area to work and it will not be just for housing development to rich people, some of whom wanted to buy this land, in order for a few people to make all the money and nothing filters down to the poor black man. This is not one of those cases, Sir, this is a case where this land is being sold to a gentleman for agriculture, which is so critical at this time to this country. Is there anything wrong with that, Sir?

Additionally, Sir, why I have to support the Resolution is that the money which will be gained from the sale of this property will be used for housing

for people in the lower income bracket. This is what I understand, so this is the ultimate policy, a policy that will bring benefits to the people I love so much, like Mr. Kellman, the poor, humble people. These are the people I deal with and have dealt with all my life and this is why I have to support the Resolution, because the benefits will filter down. This is what it is all about.

Sir, this Resolution highlights co-operation between the Government and the private sector where the Government will sell land to the private sector for beneficial purposes that will filter down to the masses. It also symbolises that Government will be prepared to acquire land from private citizens for use of the poor, humble people, such as my people in Inch Marlow, whom I understand will be getting the iand in Inch Marlow, which will be sold to them by a good, decent, private citizen for the use of the regular boys and girls in Silver Sands, Breedys, Inch Marlow and all those places. This is the ideal model for representation.

Sir, I have no problem whatsoever with this Resolution. It shows a sense of order, a sense of representation, and I want to congratulate the Minister for making this decision and I am sure there will be methods put in place to ensure that this land will be used for the purpose for which the person has said it will be used.

I thank you.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, this debate ranged far and wide and I do not intend to go into any detail on matters not relevant to the Resolution before the House, but I feel there are just one or two points that should be made. I am somewhat surprised at the comments which have been made by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy, whose only contribution to debates in this House with reference to any development in St. Lucy is to call for the building of an airport, and he has now declared his hanc in stating that he represents the people of St. Thomas. I was wondering who he represented, but with reference to his call, I mean it is the most ridiculous call I have ever heard by any member of this House. It reminds me of his call for the buses to be handed over to the ZRs at the time when they were wreaking chaos in this country. He did mention that we should sell the houses or properties where they have gone out for tender to the lowest bidder and he son of insinuated that we should ignore the highest bidder.
12.25 p.m.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: On a point of order, I never said the lowest bidder. I said that the poor people of this country have a right to have the opportunity to own some of these properties, that the rich people that the Honourable Member for St. Andrew is giving property that belongs to the Government to... I feel personally that the poor people of this country have a right to get some of these properties and that money should not be the only factor in this debate.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, as I was saying, I think he has made his argument a little more ridiculous by this point of order. We are constrained by certain financial rules and when matters go out to tender even though we do not have to sell the land to the highest bidder we have to give a very good reason why we do not sell the land to the highest evaluated bid. A previous administration would know what has been the result of its attempt to bypass the tendering process. As a matter of fact, Government found itself as far as the Privy Council to answer certain charges by someone who was "unfaired" as a result of the Cabinet of the day...

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: On a point of order, Sir. The Honourable Member is misleading this House. I know of no case where the Privy Council has reversed any decision and their Government has to compensate anybody or has compensated anybody for a decision of Government.

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I think that the Highway 2A process and what transpired during the awarding of the contract for Highway 2A is a matter of public knowledge and I would not even want to go into that.

Mr. B. M. TAITT: On a point of order, Sir, the Honourable Member if he is going to give information really ought not to mislead the House. The Honourable Member knows that the Privy Council was not decided upon, did not take cognisance of, was not related to the tendering process. For him, a lawyer, to get up in this House...

Mr. SPEAKER: Please! Don't go down that line!

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: With reference to the point which was made by the Honourable Member for St. Michael West for the listing of properties, we have already instituted a programme in the Ministry whereby all Government owned properties are being listed. We have identified most of them. Almost every month some property is being added to the list. It is difficult in a situation whereby we did not have proper records in the past to be able to give a correct list of properties which have been owned by Government. I can assure him with respect to his query that with the assistance of the Land Valuation Department that this list will be finalised and updated from time to time.

Mr. Speaker, the other point relates to Warrens. The Honourable Member for Christ Church South did mention the fact that this is an area that needs to be upgraded.

We are hoping to put out a White Paper very shortly which will address Government's planning in this particular area. We are hopefully encouraging a private sector to assist us in this area and Government will act as a facilitator in ensuring that the housing programme in that area becomes a reality.

I would like also to say that there has been for some time a development plan for the Warrens area which has included in recent times the construction of a Government Headquarters on lands at Warrens, an area opposite the cigarette factory. The plans for that area it would appear as though they had been abandoned during the last Administration and very shortly we will be seeking a meeting with all the private owners in that area in order to revise the plans for that area,

Mr. Speaker, with those few remarks, I need not reply to mention the telethon which is a matter which I believe the Honourable Minister for Community Development would be in a better position to answer, except to say that the last Administration's principal contribution to child care in this country was the bad selection of a Director of the Child Care Board and this is public knowledge.

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

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

Mr. SPEAKER: We will revert to Question Time.

QUESTION TIME

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member is not presently in his seat. What does the Honourable Minister wish?

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: I beg to move that the Reply to Parliamentary Question No. 23 asked by the Honourable Member for St. Lucy be laid.
12.35 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. G. W. PAYNE: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the House be adjourned until Tuesday, July 30, 1996 at 11.00 a.m.

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

The question was put and resolved in the afirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly.
12.38 p.m.

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Hon. G. W. Payne, 3441.

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MILLER, Hon. Miss B. A. (City of Bridgetown)
PAYNE, Hon. G. W. (St. Andrew)
St. JOHN, Hon. Sir HAROLD (Christ Church South)
TAITT, Mr. B. M. (St. Michael West)
THOMPSON, Mr. D. J. H. (St. John)