

THE

House of Assembly Debates

(OFFICIAL REPORT)

FIRST SESSION 1999 - 2004

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY

Tuesday, July 20, 1999

Pursuant to the adjournment, the House of Assembly met at 11.20 a.m. on Tuesday, July 20, 1999.

PRESENT

His Honour I. A. ROETT, B.A., Dip. Ed. (Speaker)

His Honour J. M. EDGHILL, J.P. (Deputy Speaker)

Hon. Sir Henry FORDE, K.A., Q.C., M.A., LL.M. (Cantab.)

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS, Q.C., LL.M. (Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs) (Leader of the House)

Mr. L. R. TULL, Q.C., M.A. (Oxon.)

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER (Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade)

Hon. G. W. PAYNE (Minister of Tourism and International Transport)

Mr. D. CARTER (Chairman of Committees)

Hon. R. N. GREENIDGE, B.A., LL.B. (Minister of Labour, Sports and Public Sector Reform)

Hon. G. A. CLARKE, B.Sc., Dip. Ed., J.P. (Minister of Housing and Lands)

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL (Acting Minister of Environment, Energy and Natural Resources)

Hon. H. F. LASHLEY (Minister of Social Transformation)

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN, LL.B. (Minister of Commerce, Consumer Affairs and Business Development)

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN

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

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

Mr. M. Z. WILLIAMS

Mr. T. A. PRESCOD, B.A.

Rev. J. J. S. ATHERLEY, B.A., B.Sc. (Parliamentary Secretary to the Attorney General and Minister of Home Affairs)

Mr. D. T. GILL, B.Sc.

Mr. N. A. LYNCH, B.Sc., M.B.A.

Hon. A. P. WOOD, B.Sc., M.A. (Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development)

Hon. R. R. FARLEY, B.Sc. (Minister of Industry and International Business)

Prayers were taken by Canon Father Ivan Harewood.

Mr. SPEAKER: The House is now in session.

MINUTES

Mr. SPEAKER: The Minutes of Tuesday, July 6, 1999.

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the Minutes for the Honourable the House of Assembly for its meeting of Tuesday, July 6, 1999, which Minutes have been circulated, and subject to any observations that Honourable Members may have on these minutes or amendments thereto, 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 these Minutes stand confirmed.

ANNOUNCEMENTS BY HIS HONOUR

Mr. SPEAKER: I am to report that I am in receipt of the Accounts and Statements from the Accountant General for the month of December 1998.

PAPERS

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Right Honourable Prime Minister, I am commanded to lay the following:

Duties, Taxes and Other Payments, (Exemption) (Coronation Golf Club Limited) Order, 1999.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am commanded to lay the following:

Health Services (Private Hospital, Nursing Homes, Senior Citizens' Homes and Maternity Homes) Regulations, 1999.

GOVERNMENT NOTICES

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, I beg to give notice of a Resolution to approve the grant of \$10 700 000 from the Consolidated Fund to supplement the Estimates 1999-2000 as shown in Supplementary Estimates 1999-2000 No. 4 which forms the Schedule to the Resolution.

In giving notice, Mr. Speaker, let me inform the House that this Resolution has just come down. In the circumstances, Honourable Members would not have had ample opportunity to study this Resolution. I therefore propose that this Resolution be dealt with at our next Sitting on Tuesday, July 27, 1999.

SUSPENSION OF STANDING ORDERS

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Speaker, I beg to move that the following Standing Orders be suspended for the remainder of today's Sitting: Standing Orders Nos. 6, 16, 18, 20, 23, 42(5), 43 and 44.

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

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

GOVERNMENT BUSINESS

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

ORDER NO. 1 - RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE COMPULSORY ACQUISITION OF LAND AND THE BUILDINGS THEREON AT BUSH HILL, AT ST. ANN'S GARRISON, SAINT MICHAEL FOR PRESERVATION AS A HERITAGE TOURISM SITE

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, Sir, the matter for consideration of this House is the approval of a Resolution

to acquire the property known as Bush Hill House, which is situated at Bush Hill, the Garrison, St. Michael. The site contains 7 245 square metres of land and accommodates four buildings. The purpose of this acquisition is for its preservation as a heritage tourism site.

Mr. Speaker, Bush Hill House which is also referred to as George Washington House is a substantial two-storey structure which was built around 1750. Its stone walls are two feet thick. Its architectural features are typical of houses which were built in the 17th Century and 18th Century. However, recent changes have been made with extensions to the front and rear, but the Barbados National Trust has confirmed that the main fabric of this 18th Century house remains.

Mr. Speaker, historical evidence has shown that around 1751, George Washington, a former President of the United States of America, visited Barbados when he was only 18 years old and stayed at Bush Hill House with his 33-year old half brother, Lawrence Washington. This visit was the only occasion on which George Washington left the mainland of America.

Mr. Speaker, when one looks at the era, one recognises that during that time there was an inter-trade between the Americas and the Caribbean islands, especially Barbados. Historical facts have shown that Barbados was one of the most precious jewels within the English-speaking countries. Barbados grew, in those days, sugar cane and exported sugar and molasses, while the trade from America was basically cod fish, wood and some other types of food for most of the inhabitants at the time. It was also reported, Mr. Speaker, that it appeared to be very interesting times for most Barbadians and Americans. It was an era where there was trade, not only in terms of cargo, but it was an era when slaves came from Africa moving from Africa to the Caribbean Islands and Barbados was one of the first stop-over ports.

It is also important to note that visitors travelled widely during those years. It is estimated that over 30 000 Barbadians travelled between the USA and Barbados during those early years. And what is important too, Mr. Speaker, is that there was no need for passports. There was no need for work permits or anything of the type. It was a movement between Barbados and the Americas, especially South Carolina and places like New England, New York and Pennsylvania.

The movement of people in those days seemed to be very great and the trade was important. In fact, it is believed that Bridgetown was a very striving town during those years - beautiful buildings with lush green sugar canes through the countryside - and of course, the commerce to supplement the trade. This is what made Barbados the precious jewel in those years.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note too that there was a family connection between the Washingtons and persons in Barbados like the Tyrrell, the Rumbold and the Bristol families. It is also interesting to note that the young Washington's mother was also married to the family of the Bristols and he was therefore very supportive of Barbados and this is why George Washington would have come to Barbados as the only place outside the Americas. And that is very important, because his family was living here, his young brother was sick and it was believed that Barbados had the cure for his young brother who was plagued with tuberculosis.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, Sir, although the weather did not cure him - he died subsequently - George Washington wrote interesting speeches about Barbados as a very lovely place. A place where you could see the Wharf and a place where you could go during those days unmolested. He believed that that era represented a culture which we will want to return to our island. 11.30a.m.

Ever since then, Mr. Speaker, large sums of money were spent on trade between Barbados and the Americas. We can also say, Mr. Speaker, that the trade in tourism between the Americas and the Caribbean still continue and we will want to see that trade continue for a long time.

Mr. Speaker, it is important to note today that the Bush Hill property which is currently owned by the Barbados Light and Power comprises the following. There is a two-storey building with a ground floor of 3 294 square feet and an upper floor of 1 274 square feet and this is in good condition. There is also a small house which comprises of 1 575 square feet of total floor area. There is a small office on the outside which comprises of 1 080 square feet. There are also small offices within the compound and a parking area of 20 000 square feet.

Mr. Speaker, in 1998, the Cabinet agreed that this property should be acquired from the Barbados Light and Power for preservation and as a heritage tourism site. Cabinet also asked the Ministry of Housing and Lands to acquire the property by private treaty first and if this private treaty was not acceptable then we should do it by compulsory acquisition.

I want to say, Mr. Speaker, that between 1998 and early this year, talks were proceeding well. However, when we came to the point of compensation that is where both sides differ. It is important to note that the Barbados Light and Power was asking for over \$6 million for the property. Government through the Ministry of Housing and Lands and the Commissioner of Land Tax agreed to pay just over \$3 million for the property.

It is also important to note that it was agreed that the Bush Hill property was to be vested to the Barbados National Trust to facilitate this restoration and preservation as a heritage tourism site. We believe, Mr. Speaker, that the Barbados National Trust have the capacity and the will to preserve this property to make it into the property that it was 250 years ago.

It is important to note that the Barbados National Trust has preserved properties throughout Barbados like the Gun Hill Signal Station and, of course, Tyrol Cot. These two sites are today heritage tourism sites and they are bringing in tremendous revenue to Barbados. We believe that this site once it is vested to the Barbados National Trust will be properly restored and that it will also attract many visitors out of the United States of America and, of course, other parts of the world. The restoration fund has started and it should attract a lot of funds from persons who believe that this property will be of benefit to Barbados.

Mr. Speaker, as I have said before, we have now reached a point where negotiations have broken down but we will want to continue. Even though we are acquiring this property by compulsory acquisition today, it does not mean, Mr. Speaker, that we will not try to continue the negotiations. We will continue the negotiations but it is important for us to acquire the property today in order to restore the property.

Only this morning I visited the site and I can report that there are some outer buildings that have now started to deteriorate and it is necessary for us to stop the deterioration and put the property back in fine shape.

Mr. Speaker, the Town and Country Planning Department have supported the acquisition of Bush Hill property because they consider this property to be a good heritage tourism site. It is a very attractive building that will enhance the Bridgetown area.

Mr. Speaker, on the 4th of January 1999, the Lands and Surveys Department provided a plan for the property known as Bush Hill. It is correct to say that by their surveys department it is indeed 7 245 square metres of land. The plans are available for the Honourable Members to examine. The Attorney General has approved this Resolution for introduction into Parliament.

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

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

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, I must admit it is rather regrettable that this particular Resolution will have to come before the House when one considers what it is needed for. I do not know the haste that Government is proceeding with, neither do I know the reason. I thought

that the Minister, in the speech, would have been given the reason why Government will have to break off negotiations with a company in Barbados and come to the House with an Act to compulsorily acquire land without giving a reasonable reason for having to do such.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Yes, a reasonable reason, I will stick by that because if you give a reason it might not be reasonable so I do not know what you all are laughing at. You are dealing with the wrong person.

I am saying that if this land is important to Barbados, then the Government has a right to tell Barbadians why it wants to compulsorily acquire this land with this speed. It is known that over the last five and a half years that this Government has acquired large parcels of land and up to today they have not done anything even though they gave us one day's notice to debate the particular issue because they said it was important and up to today nothing has been done.

I am not saying that this is something that has been done by the present Minister but I am saying that this Government has been guilty of that and I will want to know why the haste. I would also want to find out from this Government if, in accepting the valuation from the Land Tax Department, they sought to get a valuation from a private valuer. Because the record of this Government is such that they do not know the value of their own property and we will hear a lot more about that sometime in the distant future. 11.40a.m.

Governments are known for selling property at book value without first ascertaining the true market value. I will give you one example, Sir. In 1991-92 NHC brought a proposal to sell land to a commercial bank in Barbados at \$10 a square foot and when the Board asked NHC to increase the price the Bank readily accepted the price and that was at Black Rock, at the bottom of University Hill, and they were able to get \$12 a square foot. I made the argument at the time that if they had put it to \$20 a square foot the Bank would have paid it.

We have to find out whether that same type of policy has been dictated to the Minister. That is why I say there is a conflict between the prices. You cannot tell me that a property that has so much significant value in a location as this one stands cannot value more than \$3 million when you are going to tell me it has over three buildings that are all important. There are buildings on the West Coast with no value at all but yet they can fetch \$8 million.

I am not here to put a case for Light and Power. Let it be known that I am no agent for anyone different from the small man in this country. The point is that when I see facts

I deal with facts and I will tell you why I have to deal with this particular matter the way I am dealing with it. The same way I expect Government to pay a good price for their land when they want to buy it, I expect Government to get the best price when they are selling land too. So let me lay the wicket. In this case, it has been laid, rolled and well prepared.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: On a point of order. Is the Honourable Member saying that Government should break the Treasury to pay Light and Power?

Mr. SPEAKER: That is no point of order.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: The Honourable Minister of Housing, the Honourable Member for St. George North, would know I would never expect the Government to break the Treasury to pay any rich company in Barbados but that is expected of the Government because that is a consistent way they compensate their friends.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying that if we are saying that this particular site can bring back the American tourist to Barbados then I can recognise and accept the haste with which this Resolution was brought to Parliament. If this site is going to be different from the approach we took to Mobil then I can understand the reason for this acquisition.

Aside.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I can talk about Mobil. I was in here from 1994. I can talk about anybody. I have nothing to worry about.

I am saying that Government with haste acquired Mobil and asked Mobil to do certain things and I do not see the same speed to rectify the particular area Mobil gave up and even gave up before the time it was asked; and that is why we have so many potholes in the roads in Barbados today.

Heritage Tourism should also be seen by the National Trust. When places like Sandy Lane was allowed to bulldoze a whole hotel and starve this country of foreign exchange Heritage Tourism should also have been seen then. Any rightful thinking Government in thinking about Heritage Tourism would not allow the National Trust, because they are the agents of Heritage Tourism, to allow that when it is convenient to them and it depends upon the person owning the property. If it were a poor man somewhere in Barbados bulldozing that property, they would be asking Government to do all sorts of things like compulsorily acquiring it but, because it was the owners of Sandy Lane, they did not do it. That is why I feel strongly that the Government should have intervened and threatened Sandy Lane to acquire that land compulsorily for Heritage Tourism and force them to build a new hotel at the Naval Base which meant that we would

have had a new hotel and Sandy Lane would still be bringing in revenue for Heritage Tourism and we would not be starved for foreign exchange as we are right now because of the loss of the use of Sandy Lane.

I am saying that if this property could generate the amount of revenue and if you need it urgently I can support it; but I do not expect you to come to this Assembly with all the haste and hurry and two years from now you are still telling me you are thinking of what to do with the property.

National Trust needs to put its house in order because it seems to me it has a particular interest to represent and that interest and my interest do not coincide. It must understand that Heritage Tourism cannot only be seen in the eyes of the rich but there are poor people who have properties that can be regarded and used for Heritage Tourism and the National Trust if it expects patronage from the Government of Barbados and the taxpayers of Barbados must understand that the patronage they get from the taxpayers of Barbados must be used for the whole of Barbados and not a "too few".

If the right reasons are given for this Resolution, I have no problem with supporting it, but the reasons as they stand right now are flimsy and need to be brought together and a presentation needs to be prepared.

I can understand the history and I appreciate the Minister. He did a good job. If we had a Ministry for historians I would have to give him because I must admit he did a good job in presenting the historical aspects of this Resolution.

I am saying, Sir, that this must also be a message for any past Minister of Tourism or any present Minister of Tourism to understand that there was a historical link between America and Barbados and we must find out why it is that that link is not there anymore.

We must ask ourselves these questions. Why is it that we cannot attract the American tourist as we used to? In the 17th century and the 18th century, the American saw Barbados as somewhere to come and we have developed so quickly and yet today they cannot see it in the same light. Is it that we are lagging behind and the slaves who had less equipment and less resources than us were more productive than us? We must ask ourselves some serious questions.

We must not only ask ourselves serious questions but we must seek to find out the answers to these questions and solve them. If we do not, Mr. Speaker, we are going to be a country in the Caribbean that used to be the number one country and we will continue to be lagging. We must feel that we give people patronage and people cannot give us patronage on the other hand.

Mr. Speaker, I am saying to you, Sir, that if the slave leaders could have been so thoughtful, why is it that in 1999 we are going down the hill and not going up? I am also saying that the Honourable Minister said that Heritage Tourism had brought in a lot of revenue to this country. I agree with him and that is why I am saying that the main place that brought in this revenue was Sandy Lane, one of our best heritage sites, because when one listens to the reason the Minister gave for wanting to acquire the house at Bush Hill the same reason could be given for keeping Sandy Lane, the same type of wall structure, the same type of scenery, *etcetera*. If those things are common then that would have been a good reason for keeping Sandy Lane.

If 30 000 Barbadians used to travel previously without passports to the United States and back and they at that time came back to their land, I want to know how come today it is so difficult to get a visa to get to the United States when Barbados is supposed to be so progressive. If Barbados is so progressive why would Americans want to believe that they have something that we want to remain there for? We must question ourselves as to whether we are forward thinking and whether this country is as developed as we think it is in the eyes of other people. It is clear to me that the Americans seem not to think so. I think that it is forward thinking and progressive. It is clear to me that other people do not think so. So we need to do the things to make them understand that our country is important and if it means a tit for tat that might be the necessary road to go.

We must understand that Barbados used to be a prominent place to be in the 17th and 18th centuries and I want to know how come we are going into the 21st century and we are not as prominent as we used to be. What has changed? What are we doing wrong? Is it that we are behaving as if we are a banana republic where we feel that the might of Parliament is the place to solve all matters? Or is it that before we used to use dialogue to achieve what we wanted but today we use the Parliament of Barbados to pass the necessary Resolutions and Acts to deal with the particular issues?

Mr. Speaker, I rest my case.
11.50a.m.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, much has been said on the historic aspect of this matter already. I was one of those persons who first urged upon the Government the importance of acquiring this property. It is the only place outside of the United States where George Washington ever lived. He brought his brother Lawrence here. The doctors in the United States suggested that Lawrence should go to a salubrious climate in order to make a good convalescence.

As the Honourable Member for St. Lucy has quite rightly pointed out - he has talked a lot of things not quite rightly, but on that score he was correct. As he quite rightly pointed out, even then, it was recognised that Barbados was a most salubrious climate to which you could come. Health tourism was on the way even then.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: They stayed at that house. It has been suggested that they might have stayed at another house but all of the evidence points to the fact that they stayed at that House. It was on a hill, on an incline, a wonderful prospect across Carlisle Bay.

The House is not in good condition and neither are the outbuildings but they are certainly not beyond restoration. We still have the remains of an excellent mill-wall. The old stables are still there. Terrible things, of course, have been done to them, Sir, as indeed, over the years, several things were once done to this building. Look at it today, once it has been restored.

It is intended, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that the House would be put, as the Honourable Minister has pointed out to us, in the hands of the National Trust for the process of restoration and that, once restored, it would become the repository of artifacts and other things which would speak to the long historic relationship between the United States and Barbados. Indeed, that is an interesting history.

I like to point out to Americans as often as I get the opportunity to do so, that the institution of Parliament in this country is this year going to be 360 years old and that Bridgetown, as a town is 350 years old. In the United States of America they have celebrated a bicentenary just a few years ago. There was a Bridgetown in Nova Scotia in Canada which derived its name from this Bridgetown in the days when we used to sell them our rum and molasses and we brought from them pine, salt fish and so on. That entire area around the Garrison, Sir, redolent of history. It is not only the old Garrison itself and the Garrison Building. The Museum is now housed in one. The CXC Headquarters is housed in another. The old Main Guard, which needs too to undergo restoration, all of that is part of the wonder of the Garrison. The Garrison was not only a military Garrison in those days, Sir, but a naval installation as well. In Barbados, we have never been able to boast of a natural Deep Water Harbour as we have in other islands in the Caribbean. We had to make a Deep Water Harbour but Carlisle Bay was always viewed by the naval and the military as a marvellous bay because the roads into Carlisle Bay were excellent. Warfare is not unknown. Even in this century there are those still alive today who can remember when the Cornwallis was torpedoed by a German U-boat right in Carlisle Bay.

Mr. Speaker, Sir, that we should want to restore George Washington House as part of our heritage, not only for tourism purposes, but generally speaking for our heritage, I think is a good thing. If you went into St. Paul's Church today, if you went into St. Matthias Church and you looked along the wall, you will see part of the commemoration of the history of the military and the naval might that Britain garrisoned here in Barbados.

Sir, an interesting thing happened when George Washington was here. I like to tell this story and it thrills Americans every time I tell it to them. When George was here, if I might be permitted to call him George,...

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: ... he was inoculated against smallpox. It was done very crudely in those days, Sir. They would just scrape the skin with a knife and introduce pus from a person who had been a victim. It was a very fatal disease. He was inoculated while he was here in Barbados.

Of course, he went back to the United States and became a President of the United States. He became involved also in a very important war in the United States of America. During the course of that war, Sir, he was a great General and his soldiers were falling down and dying off like flies as a result of smallpox but George Washington did not succumb to smallpox because, of course, he had been inoculated in Barbados. I like to tell Americans that if he had not been inoculated in Barbados, the history of the United States might had been different but for what occurred in Barbados.

I believe that the Barbados Government and the National Trust would hope that once this building is restored, Mr. Speaker, that the President of the United States of America would come to Barbados to do the official opening and inauguration of that building.

The US/Barbados connection is a very historic, as I have said, but an adventurous one. The Honourable Member touched on the route of the slave trade and all the trade that moved with the slave trade - other commodities like rum, sugar and so on. That route was very much Barbados as the first land fall of the Atlantic - Barbados, Antigua and the Carolinas. I think that most Barbadians would know by now that the first eight Governors of the Carolinas were previously Governors of Barbados. Many- of those who owned estates in Barbados later on owned estates in the Carolinas. We have established a Barbados/Carolinas connection. Indeed, within a few days, if they have not gone already, a sizeable delegation of Barbadians are going up to two major festivals in the Carolinas. If you go to the Carolinas today you will find places like Christ Church and St. Michael. On islands off the Carolinas, they live a small

community of black people who are known as the Gullah people who speak with a very strong Barbadian accent to this day. There are many other historic and other connections as well.

The Honourable Member for St. Lucy asked the question about Sandy Lane. It is clear that the Honourable Member has no proper understanding of the reason why Sandy Lane and the Hilton will have to be demolished to make way for tourism plant which will answer the demand of visitors to Barbados in the early 21st century. The hotel room of 1966 cannot service the visitor of the year 2000, 2010 and 2020. Sandy Lane is not a heritage property in that sense. There were a few people who made a few noises at the time of the demolition but Sandy Lane is barely 40 years old. Do not let us get giddy as to what is historic and what is not historic in Barbados. The records show, Mr. Speaker, Sir, that heritage and nature-based tourism are the two aspects of tourism which have dominated in these last years of the 20th century and will certainly dominate tourism demand in the early years of the next millennium. We are well endowed in Barbados but, Mr. Speaker, Sir, we have not cared our heritage. We have a series of beautiful churches in Barbados. We have a series of very interesting forts in Barbados, of lighthouses in Barbados. We have not begun to scratch the surface of what heritage can do for us in tourism and not to mention what heritage can do for us as a people fully understanding what our antecedents and our heritage is. 12.00 noon

One fort, Fort Charles, which is to be found on Needham's Point at the site of the Hilton is one of the few forts that we have seemed to use. We have a series of signal stations across Barbados. The Gun Hill Signal Station right up above the Lion, is a small signal station. This was before the days of drafting and the new technology, fires will be lit and other signals will be used from one high point to another, the Cotton Tower in St. Joseph, the Gun Hill in St. George and Brittons Hill in St. Michael. Gun Site Road in Brittons Hill was not called Gun Site for nothing. All that was part of a military installation by which signals were passed very quickly when ships were sighted off Barbados.

The Gun Hill site last year received 75 000 visitors, Mr. Speaker, Sir. Tyrol Cot which is very recent now as a heritage location in Barbados received 12 000 visitors. Sunbury House had 35 000 visitors in 1998. These are figures that I confirmed this morning. The most visited site by tourists in Barbados, I think everybody knows, is Harrison's Cave. It is a marvellous site.

Aside.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Oh yes. It goes back to the days when Barbados was two islands when there were coral terraces on the west and the south coasts as we still do today,

but oceanic upthrusts on the east coast and when there was a channel of water between the two and over the eons that arose and became what is now the St. George valley. And to this day, we quarry our best coral stone, including all that you see inside this building out of that St. George valley.

Aside.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Oh yes. If you want the history of Barbados, you come to me.

But, Mr. Speaker, Sir, the second most visited site after Harrison's Cave is the Gun Hill Signal Station. It used to be Sunbury House. Sunbury House has fallen off because of the routing that tourists take on account of the state of the roads in Barbados at any given time. But a few years ago certainly, Sunbury was the number two visited site. This is because tourists are so interested in the heritage.

I remember when there was a move to demolish the synagogue here in Barbados and I was one who literally got down on my knees and said, "Please, don't do this."

This is the second oldest synagogue in the Western Hemisphere. It is older than any other synagogue in North America or Latin America. The oldest synagogue is found in Curacao and there is still a lot of work to be done in it. Magnificent restoration has gone on there. The graveyard is still to be properly restored and that little house under the tamarind tree at the corner of Synagogue Lane - and that is why it was called Synagogue Lane. Because, there was a time when there was a large Jewish community in Barbados and Swan Street used to be called Jew Street in those days. The house where the Rabbi lived upstairs and kept the school downstairs is still to be restored. Every person of Jewish ethnicity who comes to Barbados makes it his or her business to visit the Synagogue.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that once George Washington's House is restored and it is furnished in the period of the time when he was here, and the ladies of the Society of the Ladies of Mount Vernon - Mount Vernon is the place, the show piece, residence, house, in the United States where all to do with George Washington is commemorated. They have promised to give us an artifact or two for our George Washington House and they have promised to be part of the fund raising.

Indeed, Sir, the majority of the fund raising for the restoration and the furnishing of George Washington House will occur outside of Barbados. There are many foundations and many societies which have already indicated their interest. This I have confirmed this morning with the Barbados National Trust. I do not want to be misleading anybody but it is mostly led by the Society of the Ladies of Mount Vernon and they are going to take a very keen interest in that.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that every American tourist who comes to Barbados wants to visit George Washington House. I believe, Sir, that it will become possibly the second most visited tourism site, if not the first, in the early 21st century. The kind of money we are talking about that is currently being negotiated by private treaty or whether it comes to compulsory acquisition, Mr. Speaker, is but a drop in the bucket. You have to look at this in the long term.

I believe, Mr. Speaker, that it will do a great deal to give a much needed lift to tourism out of the United States. The question is being asked why is it that we are seeing such a fall off. It is not only Barbados, although it is no comfort to us. That is true across this region. I am not saying that I have the answers, Sir, but I believe that there are many factors ...

Aside.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: ...the restoration of the Naval Base is neither here nor there in that.

If the Honourable Member for St. Lucy feels so strongly about that, he wants the Naval Base restored and he wants an airport in St. Lucy, then, he will have to form a foundation and find the funding for that. But, Sir, I think it has to be recognised ...

Aside.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: We see it every day on Communication Network News (CNN), but we see and we do not register. Domestic tourism within the United States has tripled and quadrupled in recent years. You see it. You turn on to CNN and they tell you to come to Orlando. Come to the Carolinas. Go to Texas. The President takes a vacation in Montana on horseback. Everybody wants to go to Montana and take a vacation on horseback. They are telling you to come to the last frontier. Sail to Alaska.

Added to that, Mr. Speaker, we have to recognise in tourism in Barbados that the kind of 7-night packages which we were selling to Americans over the past 25 years are perhaps not as relevant today as they were 25 years ago. People are taking more vacation breaks and shorter vacation breaks. We need to be able to offer three and four-night packages to Americans, but there are those who believe that we are too far south for three or four-night packages to be attractive to Americans. That is not true. We have to sell those packages in that market segment which will buy them, where money is no object. There is such a market segment and we have to find it and we have to exploit it. And I do believe that this will help us in that process.

So, Mr. Speaker Sir, I have no doubt in my mind that this is a Resolution to which all Honourable Members should

give their support. It can do nothing but help to uplift the profile and the image of Barbados in every respect.

Aside.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: I hear the Honourable Member for St. Lucy making reference to the haste. There is no haste here. When President Clinton came here over two years ago, Mrs. Clinton inaugurated the whole concept of the restoration, and in fact, I think a plaque was raised to that end. Since that time the planning has been going on apace.

Everybody knows in Barbados today that we are in a crisis in construction. The Government's Capital Works Programme is being slowed now because you cannot get a plumber in Barbados. You cannot get an electrician in Barbados. You cannot find a steel bender in Barbados who is not currently employed.

I really do not know what we are going to do. The economy is heated. The construction sector is heated and I am hoping that the restoration process is going to call for those fine skills which we have, Mr. Speaker. The responsibility was given to me for the restoration of this wing of the Parliament. All of this wood work that we sit up to, all of this carving that we see there dominated by the Tudor rose, the motif, the desk to which we sit, the chairs here, these were all made by Barbadian hands. The prisoners of Barbados did this work. 12.10p.m.

Master stone masons in Barbados were responsible for all of this. When I was a child, this was all plastered and painted a dark - what I call hospital sludge - ugly green. I remember the morning I came in here, the late Ken Gardner was the architect, and I said to him, now the first thing you have to do is to take that plastering down because we want to see the beautiful natural coral stone of Barbados. He told me: "Madam, I do not think I can undertake that." Mr. Speaker, I said to him: "Is there a mason here?" There were several of them. I said to him: "Give me a hatchet." I stood up over there and I hacked away for six minutes and then handed it to the mason and told him to continue with the job. Within two months, Mr. Speaker, nobody could remember what this building used to look like when it was horribly plastered in that way and that is how human nature is.

The Barbados National Trust has transformed George Washington House in the way that they transformed Tyrol Cot - which is a beautiful place today - and in the way that I am hoping that Culloden Farm will be restored and transformed into the first Protocol House that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would have in Barbados and in the way in which we transformed and restored Ilaro Court. I went up to Ilaro Court with the late Tom Adams one day, it was being considered then as a site for the Ministry of Education and I

said, Prime Minister this is a resident fit for a Prime Minister.

Asides.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, anything that I could do to help to restore the heritage that is ours in Barbados, I am willing to do. I am particularly dedicated to the redevelopment of Bridgetown and that in my view goes right up to the Hilton. I have made this point in this Honourable Chamber before, Mr. Speaker, that we wasted the Needham Peninsula. All of that is going to be contiguous to Washington House.

We speak of American tourists. I do not know if the average Barbadian is properly aware of the fact that the average hotel size in Barbados is 45 rooms but the Europeans and the Latins love that. They love those intimate "boutique" type hotels. They bring their children and their families back year after year. People come here 35 times and sometimes 52 times. But the North Americans and the Canadians like the big hotels. They like the vast lobbies that are all in marble. The kind that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy wants at the Naval Base he tells me.

The master plan which has been developed for Needham's Point shows that we can easily site there a beautiful landscaped 350-room hotel to help us to attract that North American traffic. It is possible that on that site we can also house a custom designed convention centre fed by the immediate area with no less than 2 000 rooms and it is in process.

Grand Barbados is there due for expansion. Island Inn is there already indicating its expansion. We now have the Savannah Hotel, the former Sea View Hotel and going right up to Hastings. The Garrison is all part and parcel of that. All that will happen when George Washington House is restored in that heritage area, that is the Garrison - and Honourable Members will recall that it even has its own committee of people who live in and around the Garrison area - is that heritage and recreation will combine because heritage to my view, Mr. Speaker, should not be a sterile thing. There should be some functionality associated with it so that people can feel that they are part and parcel of it. George Washington House will be another wonderful, beautiful heritage niche within the greater heritage area that is known as the Garrison Savannah in Barbados.

When you are flying over Barbados in the daytime, it is perhaps one of the easiest landmarks to pick out. Bridgetown as you know, Mr. Speaker, is really a very naked city in terms of greens and we need to embark on the greening of Bridgetown. Therefore, in my view, it is a good thing that George Washington House when it is completed will be set already in a mature green area which is the Garrison.

Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that I would lend my support and urge upon Honourable Members to give their support to this Resolution and to do what we can in the coming years to assist the Barbados National Trust in its fund-raising effort so that yet another heritage property will come to good resolution.

There are a number of estates houses across Barbados which we are letting go to rack and ruin. Sunbury and Francia Plantations are wonderful examples of what we can do with restoration. We take these things for granted and we left out these things.

If you go to Nevis, Mr. Speaker, the Four Seasons is the only modern purpose built hotel on Nevis. Nevis has converted all of the old plantation and estate houses into small hotels and it makes it into a unique destination which is very attractive to the up-market across the world.

The Prime Minister and myself and a number of Barbadians both private and public sector people were in Cuba last month and I insisted that we should go to see Old Havana. The Cubans are restoring Old Havana lovingly stone by stone by stone. It is a wonderful thing and people from all over the world will come to see that.

There are other places right here in the Caribbean where restoration is the order of the day. Barbadians go in great numbers to San Juan. They go to shop. They go to the Plazas. How many of them go to the Old Fort at Old San Juan to see what you can do with a fort?

I have been to places in the world where I reckoned they have robbed me of my money. I once went to Stratford-upon-Avon thinking that I would see the house where Shakespeare lived and the Globe Theatre. They put me in a coach after I paid my money and drove me past an open site, nicely lawned and somebody in the coach through the mike said "this is where Shakespeare used to live." I said "my God I have been robbed."

I went to Cozumel and paid my money again. They told me they were going to show me an old Mayan site. They put me in a coach, carry me to this site and all I saw was some big rocks and some lawns and little signs telling me this is where this was thought to be and that if you use your imagination this is what you might have seen. I said I have been robbed.

Then I consider what we are asking people to pay in Barbados to see heritage sites. Can you imagine people are going to Gun Hill and paying BDS\$9.20 to see that? They should be paying at least US\$10 because all the accoutrements are there. You go to Sunbury Plantation and you will see all of the old carts. That is how Sunbury started out. You get a real experience and a feel of it.

When President Clinton came here and I happened to entertain the foreign ministers, I gave them lunch at Sunbury House. To this day they have never forgotten it. From time to time they write, "Billie, you remember that place you took us to." All the beautiful furnishing was there. This is the real thing. This is the real McCoy. Do you know that that word comes from an Afro-American?

Asides.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member has two minutes to conclude.

Hon. Miss B. A. MILLER: Mr. Speaker, I am much obliged to you. I would use the two minutes left to me simply to urge upon Honourable Members the importance of this and ask them to give it their support bearing in mind as I have tried to point out what it can do not only for the general heritage restoration in Barbados but what it can do for the tourism industry and particularly that component of it which would come out of North America during the early 21st century.

Mr. Speaker, I am much obliged to you.
12.20p.m.

Mr. N. A. LYNCH: Mr. Speaker, I noticed when this Resolution was introduced by the Minister of Housing and Lands, it certainly has, as has been well stated by the Honourable Member for the City, wider tourism implications for Barbados. I will preface my remarks by saying that I am in support of any kind of initiative that would seek to increase our tourism receipts and particularly so from the United States of America.

Now, it is very clear that our U.S. tourism, Mr. Speaker, is waning and if by acquiring this house where George Washington slept, lived or stayed, or whether he came here and was vaccinated or anything of the sort will seek to enhance our ability to get more tourists from the U.S., I am in favour of it.

Let me say, Sir, that I support this Resolution 100 per cent. However, there are some things which we need to put into perspective regarding where our tourism is going and particularly our tourism from the United States of America.

Mr. SPEAKER: The Honourable Member, this debate is about a Resolution relating to an acquisition. I will not allow this debate to get into any general tourism matters. All the speakers before you have focussed on heritage tourism. I would like you to restrict your comments to the Resolution, please.

Mr. N. A. LYNCH: Sir, I will do so because I am quite clear in my mind that heritage tourism, and I just

wanted to bring this to the correct perspective, that even though our bread and butter is still wrapped up in sun, sea and surf, that if Barbados is to really create as comparative an advantage among its other jurisdictions, that Barbados will have to diversify its tourism product.

In that regard, heritage and nature-based tourism will be the products of the future that people are looking at. However, Sir, it must be stated that the ability to get to Barbados, for example, to be able to partake of any of these sights must first be enhanced by Barbados having a tourism product and a way, means and mechanism of creating the best tourism product for Barbados.

Sir, I am clear too when it comes to how the U.S. sees Barbados that the one problem we are having with the U.S. is the whole concept of branding. What is the Barbados brand in the United States of America? Is Barbados just like the Bahamas? Is Barbados just like Jamaica? Is Barbados just going to be like St. Lucia? One of the structural problems we have as it relates to our tourism product particularly in North America is the brand and Barbados must be interested in creating that advantage that the other destinations do not have.

The Honourable Member for the City quite rightly stated that the things people come to Barbados and are attracted to, things like the Cave and Sunbury House, are the areas which people that come from the United States of America want to visit. At the same time, we need to even go further and create additional products that people would be able to see and would be interested in.

I know the Honourable Member spoke about George Washington, health tourism and the inoculation with the knife and the salubrious climate and everything else, but clearly the only way in which anyone is going to be able to partake of any heritage site is for them, first of all, to know about it before they arrive in Barbados and that would put into perspective the whole concept of our hotel plant, for example. How is our hotel plant suited to the US market? We continue, Sir, to have good receipts out of Europe, for example, because we have a hotel plant that is suited to that market.

In Barbados at the present time a lot of the hotels that we have on the west coast of Barbados which are old quaint hotels in the same mode as Sandy Lane that the Honourable Member for St. Lucy spoke about and the same way in which the house is constructed these are things that do not necessarily immediately appeal to the US market. For example, there are places on that west coast of Barbados which are quaint sites which have all the old English architecture but in terms of the US market some of them do not even have airconditioning in their rooms. If we are ever going to make any real serious impact into the US market we

we will have to be clear about what we want out of tourism in Barbados and how it relates, for example, on one side of the Atlantic to the other.

Sir, what brings this whole debate into focus is that once this US market continues to decline, and other people around us, particularly people who are closer to us, do not have what we have to offer in terms of heritage and nature base but at the same time these people are so much closer to the United States of America.

For example, we talk about The Bahamas, or Jamaica, people can make one jump down to Barbados. You get a case, for example, where a man leaves Texas at 5.00 o'clock in the morning to get to Barbados and he does not get in here until 8.00 o'clock at night. He has already lost a day of his vacation in a vacation in which lifestyle changes have affected how the US views these tourism destinations. What you end up finding is that a man has already lost a day of his vacation when vacations in the US are now limited to three and four days and no longer five and six days that they used to be.

Sir, these are the interesting issues that even if we are going to create a product that the US market is going to be interested in that one of the things that you must be able to be clear on is how you structure your tourism to be able to go after that market and to be able to achieve what you want out of that market. Sir, there are many structural problems.

The U.S. tourists, for example, are being encouraged to stay at home and do most of their vacationing at home. Even this summer now they have reduced gasoline prices and people are being encouraged to drive and stay within their own confines. All of that we are up against. Also included is the fact that we are up against other jurisdictions and other neighbouring islands which have to offer the same thing we have to offer so I am most interested, Sir, in being able to diversify our product.

The other point is that I do not think we are into competition with some of the other jurisdictions in terms of cost structures because Barbados cannot compete with the Cubans and the Dominican Republic in terms of cost so the tourists we must be aiming at are tourists seemingly that have a little bit more to spend. We are not after any \$40 a night tourist. The ones that step up the ladder, the ones that are a little bit high up the totem pole in terms of their social status are the ones who are interested in aspects like heritage and nature-base tourism. I think, Sir, this would most likely be more than an appeal to them.

I am one who is concerned about even how we present Barbados to the U.S. visitor. When we go into serious marketing, how do we present a Barbados to them? A lot of people have complained in recent times even our advertising in the U.S., this big rock in the ocean that we always seem to

present, some people thought that the big rock was Barbados in itself. When we start to focus in on the things that we need to do, these heritage sites, these nature sites, the whole Cave, the same Sunbury House, the same Tyrol Cot, these are the things that Barbados needs to start including in its advertising particularly in the United States of America because these are the things that will draw the upper echelons of the society, the people that we really want coming into Barbados. What I am seeing is a hodgepodge of presentation of Barbados beyond one's imagination all right, I could live with that, but when you present only the rock in a sea, and the rock down Bathsheba and some other things that I see it really does not give a good focus of what Barbados is and what Barbados has to offer to a potential US visitor.

I, Sir, am one who wants very much to call on the Minister to be able to create a new and a different Barbados for the U.S. visitor because Barbados is not in any way appealing. We have our own problems in terms of things like brand name hotels that we do not have. We only have one U.S. airline that flies into Barbados, things that must be fixed up but if Barbados is ever going to go anywhere in tourism, particularly in this first decade or so of the century, we are going to have to change the way in which we do business in Barbados as it relates to tourism.

Sir, a lot of these heritage sites are not only going to appeal to the U.S./North American market but Barbados needs to start looking south. Barbados needs to start looking toward South America and other areas of Latin America, people who do not only have money to spend but their history is in sync with ours and people who understand the way in which we do business.

I know Brazil escaped just a little bit but there are people out there who would appreciate the kind of history, the kind of heritage sites and perspective that we are putting together by acquiring this piece of property. I do not think it is in any haste with which we are acquiring it. I think it is important that we have other things that people will want to see. 12.30p.m.

Now, Sir, when you talk about South America and South Africa, Barbados is in the perfect place between north and south, the perfect bridgehead in terms of investment, in terms of looking south, in terms of tourism, but we continue to believe that the only place that we can appeal to tourists is from one side of the Atlantic over there, the ones that can play cricket just like us and the other side, the ones that play baseball; but there are a lot of them south of Barbados who would want to be able to get it.

The other thing that this does is that these heritage sites also increase our lead in terms of inter-Caribbean tourism. There are a lot of people in St. Lucia, Trinidad and Jamaica who can appreciate a heritage site because a lot of them do not have. They have not developed their tourism product in

the same way in which we have developed ours in a very new and vibrant way. I think that it also means that it also enhances our ability to be able to attract tourists also coming from the neighbouring islands but we have not at all focussed on the things that we need to focus on in terms of creating and diversifying our product.

Sir, in terms of South America, even in terms of the peaks and troughs that we have in tourism, South American visitors because of their change in climate travel in the summer when we experience most of the problems in Barbados in terms of visitors. If we were able to present the package to them that is attractive enough they would also want to come to Barbados.

There are some other small things in terms of airlines and trying to create the perfect airline to come to Barbados but there are ways and means and mechanisms to be able to subsidise the cost of travel to Barbados and be able to look at attracting other US airlines. We have not focussed enough on doing the things that are going to bring people here.

We are also lacking in Great Britain. The tour operators do a lot of work for us. In the United States it is the travel agent and I do not think that Barbados has brought in enough travel agents for example to "fan trip" this island to death in terms of looking at these sites, being able to experience what Barbados is outside of the box of what the other countries have to offer and being able to put it in their faces and keep it in their faces long enough.

Sir, unless we are able to create in Barbados in the next two to three years a whole different tourism product the only way that Barbados can determine where it is going to go economically is to look outwardly at the global economy, see what it is serving up particularly in these economic areas and see where we can best place ourselves to take advantage of what that whole world economy is throwing out.

If tourism is one of the best things and travel is where people want to go, Barbados has to look to position, recreate its products because this is a mature destination which is not recreating itself enough in terms of tourism and we need to be able to come back to the drawing board.

I do not think there is a definitive study in Barbados on the carrying capacity of Barbados and what tourism does for Barbados and what are the returns that we are really getting from tourism. Are they focussed enough in terms of the social implications that they have for our country? There is no definitive study in the last ten to twenty years to be able to tell people in Barbados even what the carrying capacity of Barbados is, how much space a man needs on a beach to be comfortable, how does it impact upon the disciplinary forces. Will we put twice the population of this country on the island between December and February? It does not tell us how it will affect our disposable solid waste, our water resources,

our health services. These are the kinds of issues that we need to start focussing on if we are ever to take our tourism product and make it what is applicable and what we need in the 21st century.

Sir, I am making a call again to the Minister of Tourism and to the Ministry to be able to focus in on the things that are going to change structurally the tourism industry. Things like the heritage site are important. Yes, we are able to change and diversify our product but Barbados needs a new thinking in terms of its tourism. Barbados needs to have a clear idea of the way in which we are going. This will add to and enhance the product but I want to make an appeal for us to get down to the academic side of what makes Barbados different and how we can create that product that is really going to be appealing and will serve into the 21st century. I am obliged to you, Sir.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, with those remarks made by the Honourable Members, I beg that this Resolution do now pass.

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

ORDER NO. 2 - RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE COMPULSORY ACQUISITION OF LAND AT HOYTES VILLAGE, ST. JAMES

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, this Resolution before the House seeks permission to acquire nine parcels of land totalling 18 237 square metres at Hoytes Village, St. James for housing development.

Cabinet at a meeting on August 7, 1997 agreed to the acquisition of the said property belonging to Mary Cumberbatch, deceased - 988 square metres, William Holmes - 1 048, Timothy Forde - 2 170 square metres, Leo Smith - 1 310 square metres, Adolphus Thompson - 2 127 square metres and Philip Gill, deceased, 1 673.

There were also three other parcels totalling 7 413 square metres which are considered to be worthwhile for approval. These parcels belong to Eldon Richards, deceased - 2 688 square metres, Carlyle Richards, deceased - 2 703 square metres and Preston Richards, deceased - 2 022 square metres.

There are presently no houses on these lots open and it is important to note that they adjoin a parcel now owned by Government, a parcel that was acquired in 1989, totalling 39 314 square metres. This was compulsorily acquired by Government in 1989.

Today, Mr. Speaker, 26 starter homes are currently being erected at Hoytes Village and these starter homes are all sold to prospective home owners and it is a joint venture

where you have two contractors erecting these homes. It is expected that they should be completed during the month of September. This adjoining parcel of land also contains recreational facilities which is in keeping with the programme that the Government has said since four years ago that in all residential areas we are trying to put in recreational facilities for the residents.

The Town Planner has commented that he recognised that this site is important and he has approved for house development. Therefore, Mr. Speaker, the surveyor plans are here for Honourable Members to see.

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

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Speaker, the Honourable Member stated that there are nine parcels of land and no houses on the particular site. I want to inform this House that even though a piece of land might not have a house on it that that person who owns the land might have family and somewhere down the road somebody in that family might need a piece of land to site a house.

I have already said in this Assembly that it is very important that whenever Government is compulsorily acquiring land that it recognises that it has a social obligation to the people they are purchasing the land from to offer them alternative pieces of land and not just to offer them money. Land is becoming a very scarce resource in this country. 12.40p.m.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Too often, this Government has been taking up parcels of land belonging to poor people in this country and offering them only monetary compensation. I am saying that it is wrong. If one were to go back to a newspaper some two days ago, one would recognise that in this country one man can own the majority of land. I am saying that if land is important to the rich in this country, land must also be important to the poor people in this country. I am saying that when a small man has a parcel of land that it is even more important to him than a man who has 1 000 acres of land. The Government must recognise that the same way there is a group of two or three people walking around Barbados trying to acquire every single piece of land that is available for sale, that that small plot of land, to the small man, is important to him because everybody in Barbados, who is worth their salt, would like to be able to write a will to leave a substantial amount of property for their offspring or relatives. This right cannot only be seen in the eyes of the rich. It must also be seen in the eyes of the poor people too because they are also people and they must also feel that they have something to leave to their offspring.

I am saying, Mr. Speaker,...

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Well, whether I said it in January or not, and it did not work, the important thing is that I did not say it for votes. I said that because I felt that it is a conscious issue and I will continue to say it. If the Government feels that they can use their power all the time to deprive poor people of land and they can only speak against it if they are looking for votes, I am very sorry because I am not in here to speak just for votes. I am in here to be the social conscience of this Assembly and to make sure that the interest of the underprivileged is protected in this Assembly.

You can talk about 26 to 2 and that you have the power and mandate to do anything but the important thing is that the interest and importance of the small man in this country will always be protected once I am in here or once my comrade is in here. People must understand that because they do not have large sums of money to offer to political parties that they must be recognised as people too. That point has to be made. You have to stop coming in here and trampling on the rights of those people just because they do not have the monetary power to fight against you.

I am going to tell this House that if a survey was to be carried out and you were to ask those people whether they wanted to give up their land or not, you will find that 99.9 per cent of people will tell you that they want their land. In another place where a large company in this country wants to acquire land for a particular reason, every single person is telling that large company that the land means something to them.

I am saying that if they are telling the private sector that the land is important to them, that they must be telling Government the same thing. I am saying that Government must understand that when they want land, they need to go to the people who have the land and who can afford to give it up and stop taking land from people who cannot afford to give it up.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased with the Resolution before the House because the nine lots which are to be compulsorily acquired will be for housing construction within my constituency. This will be an extension to another parcel of land that was acquired in the last two or three years where some 26 or so houses are now under construction. It represents a relatively large parcel of land that has been idle for some considerable time and for which persons, who live in the area had expressed an interest in using for one purpose or another.

The demand for housing in Barbados is tremendous. At every level, there are those persons who are trying to do rentals and there is a core of persons who indeed, will not be able to afford to purchase their own homes. Very often they

cannot start in any big way but if Government makes an initial parcel available where a starter home is constructed, that is the kind of property that they will go after - usually, single women or single men, young couples and some without children.

In fact, in the constituency of St. James South, where this parcel falls, there are already projects which started like this as starter home concepts. Oxnards Crescent is a typical example of the starter home project where people bought the very small houses offered initially and then, over time as their circumstances improved ...

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: These properties were purchased initially, the very basic starter home that is provided and over time as persons' financial circumstances are improved, massive extensions to these properties have gone on and people really have developed substantial homes. It is that core of the market that Government is seeking to satisfy. A lot of young people are interested in these particular properties. As a matter of fact, I will be happy to supply the Ministry of Housing with some names of people who will be thrilled to live in these properties and who, in fact, have funding and there are some young married couples, who are interested in acquiring a property.

Perhaps before I leave Hoytes Village, I should make the point that, in passing, the Minister alluded to the fact that a recreational facility would be part of this housing development. That is indeed very important because the constituency of St. James South has given Barbados, over time, some of its best recognised sports people and cricketers, in particular. Many Barbadian cricketers who have played not only for Barbados but for the West Indies, have come out of the bowels of the constituency of St. James South. Desmond Haynes, Franklyn Stephenson, Adrian Griffith, Vasbert Drakes, Philo Wallace and one could go on.

Asides.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North is confusing himself about where Philo Wallace originated. Philo Wallace originated in Haynesville and that is where his family is from. His sister still lives in the constituency and his father continues to live in Haynesville. So do not confuse his historical roots. I can also tell you where he is registered to vote. But that is not the point, Mr. Speaker.

It is important in these days when we are talking about opportunities being available to young people and the possibilities for using sports as an avenue of upward social mobility, to bring to constituencies, to bring to communities, an area of recreation for young people to participate in, for

them to gather, have activity and to develop their social and other skills. This is very important.

Here at this site, at Hoytes Village ...

Mr. SPEAKER: Could we hear the Honourable Member, please?

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: The gallery is attracting their attention. Here at this particular site, at Hoytes Village there is a cricket ground, very widely and very frequently used. Competitive sports are played there. Sometimes there is football but primarily cricket is played on this site. It is one of the few sites in Barbados that has absolutely no pavilion. In fact, the sportsmen who play on this site are accustomed changing under a tree across the street and then crossing the road to play on the cricket pitch which is immediately in front of the place where the houses are now being constructed and immediately in front of the area where the extension will go. 12.50p.m.

Prior to January of 1999 the policy was, and I hope that the Minister of Housing and Sports can assure me that it continues to be the policy, there was a plan that on that area a pavilion would be built. But, further bearing in mind the fact that this constituency has generated so many national sports persons, sportsmen and sportswomen, that we want to continue to ensure that there is an active and vibrant sporting community and a sports programme in Barbados, particularly at the community level, so our young people can have somewhere to go in the evening to participate in wholesome activities and to improve themselves and indeed, even to go on to develop their skills so that they can use sports as an area for revenue generation. It had been agreed that on this particular site we will add to the cricket ground, a basketball court, a volleyball court and a netball court. So that a massive sporting complex will go in there.

It is significant to note that this area of Hoyte's Village falls within the largest constituency in Barbados, having just under 10 000 people and having a large number of young people, many of whom compete for space to play and to participate in recreational activity within the community.

There is an inadequacy of recreational facilities within the constituency and it was intended that this Hoyte's Village site, because of the absence of the pavilion or any kind of club house there, that that would be extended. Not only would a pavilion be put on, but that there would be an extension of the kinds of sporting facilities there. There is a Hoyte's Village Volleyball Team that is doing very well and frequently that team has no home court to play on. They walk, Mr. Speaker, Sir, or catch the ZR van from Hoyte's Village to Queen's College where they occasionally have access to the facilities.

On many occasions on my way home, because Hoyte's Village is near to my own residence, I have picked up some of the members of the team walking home from volleyball practice some evenings in the rain where they have gone down to Queen's College to play. It would really be extremely convenient if they could have a facility located closer to where the core of the team live and a facility built specifically for their own sports, because the one at Queen's College, though it is a well-maintained facility on the Queen's College compound, the competition for access to that facility is tremendous.

In addition, the basketball court will also be useful, but I am very pleased that apart from volleyball, there will also be a netball 'Court. The reason being is that the only other facility within the constituency is at Husbands, which is used by the Lakers team, they do not...

Aside.

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: Well, there are two others, one on Holder's Hill and one at Husbands. But, the one at Husbands which fall within the largest polling district in the constituency has no facility for girls to play. There is only the basketball court and very often when the girls seek to use it for netball it is totally utilised by the boys who practise and play there every day. So the young women in the area really need to have some facility that is dedicated specifically to the use of playing female sports or netball and volleyball in this instance. So that this will be really outside of the Holder's Hill facility which falls within the second largest polling district, and this one will help to satisfy the demands across the constituency and will specifically cater to the many young women who live in the area.

We have many national netballers. We have generated in the constituency people who are excellent coaches and we can only maintain our standards in sports at the national level, at the regional level and in fact develop a name on the international arena, if in fact we provide adequate facilities for young people to play and participate in sports and to ensure that they have adequate coaching to enhance and improve whatever native or latent skills they might have.

There are other housing projects also going on in the constituency at this time. Because the Government is trying to meet the needs not only of one core of the market that want housing, but the entire range of individuals who are looking for houses in Barbados or for land. Because, right across constituencies now, MPs tell you that the two things for which most people come to see them and make representation to them continue to be jobs at a certain level, but most frequently, housing or land. A lot of those persons who were previously unemployed and are now working are seeking themselves to own a piece of the rock, as we like to say, and therefore they want house spots to erect their own house on or they want house and land to buy,

Particularly now that the Government has developed the new policy of making 100% funding for mortgages available and that the National Housing Corporation itself is lending large sums of money, either for repairs or for home construction or home improvement that more than ever before a core of Barbadians have, for the first time at a young age, the access to resources to build and own a property before they are 25 years old and 30 years old and long before they reach their fourth decade, which used to be the time that people were able to afford houses. The Government is now making 100 per cent mortgages available and complete access with a reduction in the interest rates and this is important.

So that cognizant of the need for housing lots and land available, I would wish to remind this Honourable Chamber that there are 133 lots available at Husbands in St. James, adjacent to Queen's College. There is also a proposed extension - and these are all Government projects, they really have nothing to do with those projects which are going on in the private sector within the same area. There is also an extension proposed to Husbands Gardens which some people call the "Venezuelan Projects". That was again another project intended primarily for first time home owners or for young people and persons perhaps going into retirement or wanting a smaller type house. So that development will also be extended.

So that there is a continuous move to keep upgrading the housing stock in Barbados, to keep making sure that all of the persons who want to have properties and own properties or to own a piece of land have access to it. There are those persons who are buying lots of land for their children, buying a piece of land to build a house to retire on, or trying to own a smaller property to retire into.

Very often people build large houses and their children grow up and move away or they go off to university and so they find that the space is too large for them to live in. If the arthritis and so come on, they cannot get around the whole house and therefore they are the kinds of persons who will then go to buy houses in areas like Husbands Gardens. Or even a starter home, but these houses are also equally available to people who are first time owners.

Those persons who in this Chamber knew what it was like to buy and own their first home, to turn that key for the first time and know that the property belongs to you, or go and see a piece of land after you have just signed on the conveyance, know the immense sense of pride and accomplishment, particularly for young persons that the ownership of property and the ownership of land gives to the individual.

I am very pleased today to give support to this Resolution which will increase the housing stock in Barbados, but particularly in St. James South, a place that is very close to my heart and in general was very generous to me.

I am much obliged to you, Sir.
1.00p.m.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank the Honourable Member for St. James South by explaining what is happening in her area as far as housing is concerned.

I just want to say that the nine additional lots would provide more than 30 house spots. Surely, there is a strong demand for housing in the St. James South area. About 15 or 20 years ago, the Government of the day bought Husbands Plantation and it has paid off today because over those years we have seen a number of developments that have taken place at West Terrace and at Husbands. We will have to do a similar thing to buy another plantation where we can put a large housing area in some part of Barbados but we are looking for it.

Mr. Speaker, I will also like to make the point that when Government purchase land or acquire land from an individual we do not give them land in return, we usually compensate them fully to the market value. We have never done that. So I want to thank the Honourable Member for speaking in this debate.

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

Hon. Miss H. E. THOMPSON: I beg to second that.

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

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: I beg to move that the House be now suspended for lunch until 2.00 p.m. today.

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL: I beg to second that.

The question that the House be now suspended until 2.00 p.m. was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. SPEAKER suspended the Sitting accordingly. 1.03p.m.

RESUMPTION Mr. DEPUTY

SPEAKER: This Sitting is resumed.

ORDER NO. 3 - RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE SALE UNDER SECTION 5 OF THE CROWN LANDS (VESTING AND DISPOSAL) ACT CAP. 225 OF LAND AT FONTABELLE ST. MICHAEL TO MILL REEF COMPANY LIMITED

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, the matter before this Honourable House is a Resolution for the sale of Crown land which total 2 397.6 square metres or 25,807.77 square feet of land at Prescod Boulevard, Fontabelle, St. Michael to Mill Reef Limited - Chefette Restaurants - for commercial and other purposes.

The lands are inclusive of five parcels and a storm drain as indicated on the attached survey plan No. 303/99 which was certified by Mr. Andrew Bourne, Land Surveyor and recorded in the Lands and Surveys Department on the 27th April, 1999.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, Mill Reef Limited currently lease this property which consists of 171.9 and 1 631 square metres of land which is being used for landscaping and car parking facilities respectively at a total cost of \$ 16 295 per annum which Chefette Restaurants currently pay in lease per annum.

However, on the 16th April, 1994, Mill Reef Limited through its attorneys FitzWilliam, Stone & Alcazar indicated its willingness to purchase the land. The Chief Town Planner was consulted about the parcel for the proposed sale and have commented that there was no objection so long as the parcels south of the existing building be kept in grass.

They have also made the point that the lands which lie between the concrete pavement on Prescod Boulevard are unsuitable for physical development and wherever possible such strips of land should be used for landscaping purposes only. These areas are currently grassed and more detailed landscaping including the provision of trees would improve the visual amenity of the highway by providing a landscaped buffer area between the buildings and the highway. In the circumstances the Chief Town Planner has no objection in principle to the sale of this land.

Cabinet, at its meeting on the 1st January 1997 approved the Crown lands for sale. Since then, the Ministry of Housing and Lands were in constant contact with Chefette Restaurants Limited. Over the last one or two years, the agreement was not concluded. The offer for sale was followed by protracted negotiations which centred on Mill Reef Limited objecting to the price, the value of the land.

However, on the 3rd November, 1998, Mill Reef Limited indicated its willingness to purchase the land for BDS\$20 per square foot. They agreed to purchase the 25 807.77 square feet at BDS\$20 per square foot and Cabinet approved the sale based on:-

1. That the sale be subject to the covenants restricting the development of lands, which are west of and inclusive of the drain marked "B" and "E" on the storm drain plan.
2. That Mill Reef Limited should surrender the unexpired period of the two leases in order to facilitate the sale of the land. 2.15p.m.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this entire proposal started over two years ago and we have now reached a conclusion.

It is important to note that over the years Chefette Limited has established more than nine restaurants in Barbados - three barbecue bams, six drive-throughs and four playgrounds. These are located throughout Barbados. It is important to note, Sir, that Chefette Limited now employs more than 550 workers.

I believe and the Government believes that Chefette Limited or Mill Reef is a worthy company. Checking with the unions, it is understood that Chefette Limited is one of their best companies paying the workers on time and also looking after other benefits for the workers.

Chefette Limited is currently expanding. They are expanding northwards with a branch to be set up in the Speightstown area and also they will be coming to the central parish of St. George. I understand that a new restaurant will be established at Charles Rowe Bridge, St. George, within the near future.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Crown therefore in selling this land to Chefette Limited where it will still remain in car parks and in a grass area believes that we are doing the right thing, especially when we want to encourage private business to improve their surroundings.

The Attorney General has certified that the attached Resolution is in order today. Therefore I beg to move that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL: I beg to second that, Sir.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is regrettable to hear a Minister in an assembly like this saying that Chefette Limited will be constructing a restaurant in St. George North and one in St. Peter and that they are employing over 500 people, which is a good thing, employing the 500 people, but one must remember that in the north of Barbados there are many farmers who grow vegetables, who raise chickens, they have poultry farms and

this is the same said company that over the last two years has been using import licences to help destroy farmers in this country.

The other mistake was that import licences were issued in this country which were allowed to expire and then they turned around and used those import licences to help create havoc and problems for small farmers throughout Barbados.

It is also rather interesting, Sir, that another company which is also in the fast food business is undergoing severe pressure to survive and certain groups within Barbados are using their power to put enough pressure on that other group...

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The Honourable Member said that over the last two years Chefette Restaurants Limited has been granted licences to import chicken and so on. That is not correct and I wish the Honourable Member to withdraw the remark.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I am very sorry, Sir, that the Honourable Member for St. Michael North is not aware of the debates that went on in this Assembly and outside of this Assembly with the Barbados Egg and Poultry Association re import licences for that particular company.

I am saying, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that at a time when another chain in this country is under severe pressure from the private sector and at a time when they are using their telephone to call around to stop credit to another sector, it is rather strange that this pat on the back for Mill Reef Limited can be accommodated for the simple reason that in 1991 the Royal Bank of Canada had to pay \$12 a square foot for land at the bottom of University Hill and now Chefette Limited or Mill Reef Limited is only paying \$20 a square foot for land in Bridgetown, right outside our Port. Nowhere in this world could they get land outside of the Bridgetown Port for only \$20 a square foot when land at Bay Street is selling at \$15 a square foot. Land in Sunset Crest is selling for over \$20 a square foot and even at Fort George Heights land is selling at \$15 a square foot and a company that a Minister can boast can have as many as nine branches can get a pat on the back and they are allowed to get land at only \$20 a square foot.

I am saying, Sir, that if this land was put on the open market the Government could get nearly \$50 a square foot. I want to know from the Government if this land was put on the open market because at a time like this, we need to get the highest price for our land as was dictated to the Government by the IADB.

I want to know who were the other people who were offered this land. I would like to know if this land was also offered to R. E. Brancker & Company Limited or even further down to Oran Limited. I am saying that \$20 a square foot is too low a price for this prime commercial land to be given to

Somebody must tell some people in this country that they do not have a right to get everything from Government free and it is rather strange that this particular company seems to be able to get everything they want. In St. Peter they were able to get land that was declared as flood-prone land to build a restaurant. Now they come back to Bridgetown and get land at \$20 a square foot. The next thing you know in some Government building they would want to put a restaurant and permission will be given to them to build that restaurant.

It seems to me that the priority of this Government is wrong. It seems to me that once you are turning the right money you can get whatever you want. It is rather strange that they were negotiating this since 1994 and you can now see a Resolution like this right after election that Chefette can get everything they want after an election.

I am not aware there was any trouble in 1998 between Government and Mill Reef Limited. I want to know how come Mill Reef Limited did not get this land in November 1998 and why it had to come after election? How come Mill Reef Limited feel they can only get ice cream from Trinidad and chicken and vegetables from Trinidad? How come they cannot support local industries but yet still they can get the cream of local industries?

I want to know, Mr. Deputy Speaker, how is it that only certain people in this country seem to be able to gain Government's patronage? I am sorry that the Honourable Member for St. George South is not in this Assembly today because there are men like them that I would like to hear their voices on them. I am not going to leave out the Honourable Member for St. Michael East because I want to hear his voice on this matter. I want to know what happened to Mr. Greene and those guys who own Kentucky if they are going to get the same type of patronage. I want to know why is it that so much pressure is being placed on Kentucky at a time when a company is coming from Trinidad? Is it a plan? I would hope that the Government has no involvement in this plan where the Trinidad company is supposed to take over the operations of Kentucky and that certain people within the private sector are putting pressure on Kentucky so that they can sell to the Trinidadian connection. 2.25 p.m.

I want to know what is the role of the Government in this and I want to know why is it that pressure is being placed on Kentucky at the same time patronage is being given to Chefette. I would like to know this because if we do not watch ourselves the Barbadians who own restaurants in Barbados will not be able to survive. It seems to me that once you are from Trinidad you can own anything in Barbados, all the patronage you want when the restaurants in this country should be looking to utilise the flying fish that our fishermen are catching. They cannot get it because we cannot go into

the Tobago waters but the people from Trinidad can come to Barbados and get everything they want.

I am one who supports Caribbean unity but I do not support Caribbean unity at any price. If people within the Caribbean expect Barbadians to do the right thing they must do right too. We cannot tell people in the Caribbean that they have a right to export salt fish to our country and at the same time our fishermen cannot fish in their waters. I am saying that we must operate on a level playing field and that is why today I need to ask this Government to take this Resolution away from this Assembly, put this piece of land on the open market and let us get a fair price for it. The days of political patronage for big businesses must stop. This type of political patronage must be given to the small man of the country.

When are we going to stop building the big businesses and deprive the small ones of this type of patronage? This patronage cannot continue to be given to these people but it must be given to the small man to help uplift him. Let me tell you something. I cannot understand that two days ago a man from the same clique was able to brag of the amount of land he owns and now this company brags about the number of restaurants they own and the Government gives them more power. Are we fooling ourselves? Are we selling our souls? Or are we behaving like crabs only to crumble our own and allow the others to get away?

If we do not watch ourselves this country called Barbados will be best known to be a banana republic where a "too few" gets everything and the majority have to beg to get a job. Do you know what they will say, Sir? The hoe is still there. The peck is still there and we need to cut trenches and so on while they amass their riches. This Government that brags itself of being a Parliament dominated by black people every single Tuesday they are prepared to come in here and give lip service for that notion that they represent the interest of the small man in this country while in the Cabinet room of Bay Street they give the power to the people they claim they are fighting against and then they use all kinds of bogus arguments about freeing black people and removing Nelson and all of that foolishness.

What sense does it make to remove Nelson and you bring foreign people and give them all the liberties and all the rights? This Government must ask itself some serious questions. Any person with a conscience on that Side would have to support me on this particular Resolution and must acknowledge that the Government needs to get its highest value and it needs to get its priorities right. If it does not get its priorities right, this country will continue to go where it is going.

Do you know what is amazing, Sir? At a time when the civil servants cannot get their eight per cent back and a flying fish is thrown across the passage where people are

saying that they are prepared to repay the eight per cent. The civil servants are not seeing the trap. In other words, it is obvious to me that this Government needs revenue and the only way they can get revenue with an excuse is by repaying the eight per cent so that they can inflict more taxes on the people of Barbados. If they do not repay the eight per cent they cannot raise taxes because John Public would tell you that you just had enough money from VAT so they have to find an excuse to solve their revenue problem and that is why they are suggesting to this House and country that they are prepared to pay back the eight per cent. Politicians like myself would see through things like that, Mr. Deputy Speaker, and I am saying if you need revenue this is a golden opportunity to get some revenue and tell Chefette instead of paying half a million dollars for this property that you want millions or even a million. This type of money is not enough, not when you can go to Bay Street and land 1; being sold at \$50 a square foot. In Sunset Crest, land is being sold at over \$20 a square foot and the Government of Barbados outside our Bridgetown Port is handing a deal to Chefette at \$20 a square foot.

If you go by CBC - only a radio station - you can get land for housing, not commercial land, at \$15 a square foot, at Fort George, but the Government, the "Great Combination", is offering Chefette land at \$20 a square foot and depriving Barbadians of \$30 more that they could easily get from that company.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North is offering me a right to sit with the "Great Combination", as he calls it, to sell the souls of the poor people to the rich. No way would I join a band.

Mr. Deputy Speaker you know, Sir, I am convinced that there has to be some people on the Other Side who are thinking like me and I do not want them to only think like me I want them to get up and express their views, like the Honourable Member for St. Michael South. I know he feels strongly about this. He feels strongly about maximising the revenue of the country and, of course, my friend from St. Michael West. I can understand the turbulence going through him right now.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Resolution cannot be seen as handing a company a piece of land at \$20 a square foot. It must be seen as a Resolution depriving the country of valuable revenue and that is why I am calling on the Minister of Housing if he was handed this to take it back where it came from because I know that previous decisions were made where they had to be overturned because of the low price. That is a policy of civil servants.

If this land was given to the private sector to be sold you would be surprised the amount of money that they would pay Government for this land but because somebody feels it does not belong to them they just sell it at \$20 a square foot, give it away. No. It cannot happen, Mr. Deputy Speaker. We must treasure our jewels.

Every time the Government gives away a piece of land to the rich in this country it is more taxes that the civil servants have to pay. The more revenue that comes in through this tunnel, the less taxes. The less revenue, more taxes and it must be seen in that particular light.

I am calling on this House today to use their consciences and to make sure that they put their hearts where it is and that this decision be reversed and this land be put on open tender. I do not know and I will have to ask a legal mind but somehow I got the impression that Government could only sell land when it was put out to tender. I am not sure, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that Government can just up and sell land like that. I will have to seek some legal advice on this particular sale. Somehow I am under the impression that this particular land was not put for tender. I want to know from the Minister in which newspaper this land was put out for tender? 2.35 p.m.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Yes, I want to know from the Minister. I want to know who were the ones who bid on the land or whether this is the highest price or the lowest price. Mr. Deputy Speaker, I need to know these things because Mill Reef Limited cannot continue to behave as if they own Barbados or if they own politicians. A certain politician once said to me. Kelly, Mill Reef own all of them but not me.

I am saying, Sir, that Mill Reef Limited must be given the message that when they want land belonging to the Crown, there is nothing wrong with getting it but they must pay the right price. Today, Sir, they are not paying the right price. I would have loved to see the Honourable Member for St. George South in here. I would like to hear him on matters like these. I also want to hear my friend too - I want to hear the next Prime Minister from that Side in the budding. I would like to hear what she has to say on this matter. I would also like to hear her opponent down at the end. I would like to hear what he has to say on this matter. And the fastest growing Prime Minister material, the Honourable Member for Christ Church West Central. I would like to hear him on this matter too. Of course, he has an opinion on these matters too. It is time that he starts his image and this is a golden opportunity.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: It is a golden opportunity for him to start his image and let Barbadians understand his philosophy for Barbados. To let Barbadians know that he will stand up and get the maximum for his country. That he will not be prepared to sit back and allow land to be given to Mill Reef. I will await that brilliant speech to come from the Honourable Member for St. Michael East. He cannot have changed so dramatically over the past two years. His

heart has to be still in the right place and that is why on a matter like this, where the under-privileged is being deprived of over \$0.75 million because the true value of this land is not ascertained today, I would expect the Honourable Member for St. Michael East to explain to his constituents how Government will be able to raise that \$0.75 million that they did not get from this sale.

I am saying to this House that land at Bay Street sells at \$50 a square foot. I will repeat it. Land at Fontabelle cannot be selling at \$20. Something is wrong, something is fishy and even the fishermen cannot find the fish in this one.

Asides.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: I do not know, Sir, what role Mill Reef Limited would have played in the 26 to 2. I do not know. I hope that this land sale has nothing to do with 21st January. I would hate to believe that any Government would compensate a player in the Elections by giving expensive land at a cheap price.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, I leave my case there.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is important to note that Chefette Limited started its operation in 1972 way back when the Democratic Labour Party was in office when they started their first branch at Fontabelle. It is also important to note, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that from 1981 onwards Chefette Limited was leasing the lands that we are talking about. All the lands that we are talking about, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are lands for access roads, for drainage, for greening, grass and so on. The Town Planner has restricted any building on the land.

Asides.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: There is a covenant on the land so they cannot build on the land. They have been leasing the land since 1981, Mr. Deputy Speaker. They applied to buy the land in 1994. There was a whole series of negotiations and it is in keeping with Government's policy to ask for a valuation from the Commissioner of Land Tax which we have received and this is the valuation which they have agreed to pay.

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

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

ORDER NO. 4 - RESOLUTION TO APPROVE THE
COMPULSORY ACQUISITION BY THE
CROWN OF THE PARCEL OF LAND
AT RESERVOIR ROAD, LODGE
HILL, ST. MICHAEL

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy Speaker, this Resolution before the House seeks permission to acquire 1 586.37 square metres and 8718 square metres respectively at Reservoir Road, St. Michael for recreational facilities. Cabinet, at its meeting held on September 4, 1998, agreed to the acquisition of approximately four acres of land at Reservoir Road, St. Michael for recreational purposes.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, it is important to note that these two parcels of land, owned by Miss Julianna Branch, were identified by the Parliamentary representative for St. Michael North for recreational facilities for the area of Lodge Hill, Hinds Hill and Husbands Development. It is also important to note that within this densely populated area there are no immediate recreational facilities. It is felt that in keeping with Government's promise to provide recreational facilities to all developed communities, that this particular area is to be provided with recreational facilities as well. It is also important to note that within this particular area there are a number young children growing up, a number of small communities springing up and the Chief Town Planner has no objections to the acquisition. The Chief Surveyor has supported the acquisition by the surveying of the parcels and the terrain. The Chief Sports Officer has agreed to the acquisition for sports and it is in keeping with their policy. The Ministry of Housing and Lands and Cabinet have no objections to this parcel of land for recreational facilities. The survey plans, Mr. Deputy Speaker, are available for inspection by Honourable Members.

With those remarks, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I beg that this Resolution do now pass.

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: I beg to second that.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I have no reason to object against this land acquisition by the Government but I would like to ask a couple of questions. I would like to find out from the Government if they have fairly compensated the lady that this land belongs to and whether alternative lands were offered to her.

Sir, as you know, I have always stated in this Assembly that I feel that whenever land is taken from a poor person in this country that the Government should, as a first resort, offer alternative lands to that same said person for the simple reason that land is becoming a very scarce commodity in Barbados today. The land sharks are out there buying up every single piece of land. Those poor people who do not have land by the year 2000, do not stand a chance of getting a house spot after the year 2000 for the simple reason,

Sir, that there are people moving through Barbados claiming to be buying land for themselves and buying large tracks of land for people outside of Barbados. If you doubt me, go back to the newspapers some two days ago and you will see that people admitted that they were only fronting for other people with interest elsewhere.

We, as a fair Government should make sure that we protect the interest of those people who do not have the money to buy the land or to compete with the man who is walking around with a suitcase and a cheque to buy every piece of available land. 2.45 p.m.

It appears to me that only rich people in this country can appreciate the value of land. But this Government seems not to understand that land has a value and I will keep reminding this House that land is a precious jewel and it must be treated that way. The same way that rich people think that it is precious, poor people like myself think so too. So when they go and compulsorily acquire land they should not be interested in whether the Town Planner and everybody different to the owner of the land is happy. I am not happy because in my opinion, the poor person they are taking the land from they must first seek to make sure that that person is happy. And once that person is happy, I am happy. But once that person is not happy, I will not be happy. And, I keep reminding the Government of its social obligation to poor people in this country and that it is its duty to protect their interest. But, it seems to be the complete opposite.

This Government seems more bent in protecting the interest of those who have already and filling their guts, but they seem to be quite prepared to take from those who can least afford it.

Thank you, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, I wish to say a few words on this Resolution. Many Resolutions have come to this Honourable Chamber before and many Bills, but I do believe that this is the most revolutionary social Resolution that has ever been brought to this Honourable Chamber. Also, there was never an issue that was more potentially divisive of friends and note that 'friends', I am using that word in its ordinary name, and parliamentary friends than this.

The former Minister of Housing and Lands, the current Minister of Housing and the former and current Minister of Sports can tell you the fever that existed in the discussions that took place between myself and them in relation to the acquisition of this land. The discussions were quite hot. In fact, on occasions some language was used that could not possibly be repeated, because this is something that I have really been pushing for, for a very long time. When the facts were explained to me, I understood the delay, but certainly this was something that was very long in coming.

This matter, Mr. Deputy Speaker, has a very sordid history. The simple fact is that for years...in fact when I went into St. Michael North and got very heavily involved back in the late 1980's, I found a set of very talented young men and women, using a certain playing area which they themselves had taken the time and expense to develop within their means to have a playing field and certain facilities for themselves. They had even put certain physical small scaled infrastructural works in place to accommodate themselves with make-shift pavilions and what not and they were using it for years. Then, in August of 1994, they went one day to use the same playing field to find tractors on the site, subdividing it for middle-class house spots.

What was very sordid - now August 1994 - note the time, neither outgoing parliamentary representative, nor the incoming hopeful for the Democratic Labour Party at the time, saw it fit to either warn the youngsters before the act was done that it was going to be done, or even after it was done, neither one of them saw it fit to even spend five minutes nor ten minutes with the youngsters to explain to them what had happened and why it had happened. It is as if they were determined that it was happening and they had to accept that it was happening.

I, having been elected, Mr. Deputy Speaker, in 1994, a month or so later, after it happened, I was then charged with the task, indeed I felt the pressure on a daily basis, of trying to find recreational facilities for the youngsters of that area, who were deprived of the playing facilities that they themselves have paid substantially within their means to develop over the years.

I had difficulty because, St. Michael North, like I believe a large number of constituencies in St. Michael, are not endowed with a lot of land. St. Philip South and St. Philip North at a moment's notice can point out to the Minister of Housing or the Minister of Sports, a certain area of land that can be taken to accommodate playing facilities. In St. Michael North we have no such luxury and in fact attempts were made by myself to really try to find accommodation for the fellows in terms of playing facilities.

When you pass the area now, Mr. Deputy Speaker, as you go near Queens College and you see that lots are being developed there, if you cast your mind back to about mid-1997, you will recall that you would have passed and seen Rayside's tractors and so on that site. And, the work that they were doing had nothing to do with any work that the National Housing Corporation subsequently went on to do. In fact they benefited from the work that had been started, because it was Rayside's tractors that were used when the area was being ploughed up, dug up and cut up to take away the playing field. And he then made a promise, because I approached him in question, and he said that anything in his power he could do to restore a playing field, he would be willing to do at his own cost or a shared cost between him and me.

Aside.

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: Of course, the MP has to put in something. You are not going to get off that easily. And, if you remember 1997, it was Rayside's tractors that were out there on that site levelling it off. In fact, a large sum of money - I would not want to quote the figure in this Chamber at this time, was spent out there with the intention that the youngsters were going to get that place to be their playing field. And it was to my shock and dismay ...

Asides.

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: ...I would never forget, a Boxing Day of 1997, I passed by and saw all sorts of notices up there stating that the work was going on by NPC and National Housing Corporation and all sorts of entities. Again, frustration for the young people of that area; Lodge Hill, Reservoir Road, Husbands New Development, Pipers Avenue have been deprived with no end in sight in terms of a solution to their problem. They were left to play really on an area that was no bigger perhaps than this Honourable Chamber and that is literally true, Mr. Deputy Speaker.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: Mr. Deputy Speaker, on a point of order, the Honourable Member for St. Michael North is misleading the House, Sir. The Honourable Member is giving the impression that while he was a Minister in Cabinet that one of his Cabinet colleagues went behind his back and removed a piece of land that was used by the youngsters in the area to be divided into house spots.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: The Honourable Member for St. Michael North, please proceed.

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: The removal, Mr. Deputy Speaker, took place in August 1994 and efforts were made since then to provide a playing area at the loss of that playing field. So they were left to play in an area no bigger literally than this and right next to some houses outside an area called Rock Dundo Heights - if you know the area, and of course there were a lot of complaints about the ball going over the fencing and so on. So they really have been stranded for some considerable period of time.

When I took then, the former Minister of Housing and I showed him the predicament that we were in, he really assured me that he was going to restore it. He took all his officers. He took a tour. The then Parliamentary Secretary, now the Minister of Housing was also anxious to assist, once they saw the calamity and the distress.

There was no point in telling the youngsters from Lodge Hill to go around the corner and play in Cave Hill or to go into Eden Lodge, because the Cave Hill pasture at Montgomery is already a defective pasture and needs some work. I have to report to the Minister of Sports about that as

well. That is slightly up hill on one area and it serves a large catchment area already anyhow. So you cannot tell those fellows, a new set, to go down there and use those facilities and they are very small, nor in Eden Lodge. Eden Lodge services again a large catchment area, Green Hill, you name it. They all come down to the Eden Lodge pavilion and pasture to use it as well. 2.55 p.m.

We have to get facilities for these young people. I am very pleased that we did. I must compliment the Honourable Member for St. Andrew, the former Minister of Housing, and the current Minister of Housing. The former Minister really gave some directives and so on.

Naturally, as the parliamentary representative, I wanted to see things happen faster than perhaps they have happened in hindsight. Sometimes there were some agitations. But all in all I must commend the work done by the former Minister and the current Minister in this particular area. That Reservoir Road area is a very decent neighbourhood and it is one of the most decent neighbourhoods in this country and that is a fact.

Mr. D. St. E. KELLMAN: On a point of order. The Honourable Member is misleading the House. He is giving the impression that the only decent area in his constituency is Reservoir Road. I will like to say that that is not so. There is also a place called Eden Lodge and Grazettes and those are also decent areas.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER: Proceed.

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: I think you will agree, Mr. Deputy Speaker that that is no point of order. I never said or gave any such impression. But Reservoir Road is a very, very decent neighbourhood. You would get the odd complaint about misbehaviour but by and large it is a neighbourhood where the fellows believe in a lot of self-help and they have a lot of pride in themselves. Were it possible for them to do this without calling on Government they would do it because that is the mentality that they have in that particular area. There are a large number of talented young men as well. So I expect to see now when we get this facility in place people like 'Hambone', 'Mad Cow', 'Bull Jones' and all these fellows will now undoubtedly excel once they have these facilities.

Asides.

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: The plan for the area is a thorough plan in terms of recreation facilities because the immediate intention is to provide a playing field. I am saying this now because I believe there are some people in this Honourable Chamber within my hearing who can hear me who will have the power to repeat certain things and I

am pleased to say for their benefit that the Minister of Sports has assured me that once we come out of Parliament today and this Resolution is passed that in a very short period of time, a week or two or maybe less, that the work will begin in Reservoir Road in relation to this playing field. That is the assurance that the Minister of Sports has given me.

That is step "A", but there is a step "B" and a step "C" because the Director of Sports also assured me of the plan which is at my request as well. We are looking also at a multi-purpose hard court and a pavilion for the area as well.

I am not an unreasonable man. I do not expect that we will get the playing field, the multi-purpose hardcourt and the pavilion all at one time. I have already discussed that with the Minister of Sports and he agrees with me. We have agreed that he will start right away with the playing field and that in a year or two we will come back and we will start to work then on the multi-purpose hardcourt or the pavilion and then in another two or three years we will then get the playing field or the hardcourt whichever one was not done.

Mr. Deputy Speaker, this is something that is gladdening to my heart. I know that those who will benefit are very grateful for it. I will now feel a lot more comfortable driving through the area, I must tell you, because the heat was becoming very enormous because it was now about four or five years of promising that this would happen.

Asides.

Hon. R. St. C. TOPPIN: I expect that they will be truly pleased. I will spread the news with them over the weekend and anyone else who can repeat what I am saying now I will

appreciate it if they can convey to them that this work is being done and that their parliamentary representative has done all that he possibly can to ensure that this will be done.

With those thoughts, Mr. Deputy Speaker, I once again wish to fully support the Resolution.

Hon. G. A. CLARKE: Mr. Deputy, Speaker, I am grateful to the Honourable Member who spoke and I will just like to say that I am very happy that this Resolution can pass this House today because I can now rest in peace.

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

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL: I beg to second that.

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

ADJOURNMENT

Hon. D. A. C. SIMMONS: Mr. Deputy Speaker, that concludes Government Business for the day. I beg to move that this Honourable House do now adjourn until Tuesday, July 27, 1999 at 11.00a.m.

Hon. R. D. MARSHALL: I beg to second that.

The question was put and resolved in the affirmative without division and Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER adjourned the House accordingly. 3.07 p.m.